

SPACE AND IDENTITY FORMATION IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY CANADIAN  
REALIST NOVELS: RECASTING REGIONALISM WITHIN CANADIAN  
LITERARY STUDIES

by

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation develops and demonstrates a new mode of regional literary analysis. I begin by assessing the work of five Canadian literary regionalists from perspectives provided by human geographers and spatial theorists. Although discourses of Canadian literary regionalism vary, I argue that this field has tended to rely upon a reified understanding of regional analysis, a mystified conception of regional identity, and a passive construction of regional space.

I offer a means of disrupting these tendencies by re-imagining the process of regional literary analysis. As I define it, literary regionalism is the process of demonstrating patterns in the way that literary texts deploy representations of socio-material space to enable performances of identity. This approach foregrounds literature's capacity to elucidate space's social efficacy. It also directs literary regionalism towards a more contemporary understanding of space and identity.

In part two I begin to apply my mode of analysis to eight twentieth-century Canadian realist novels by introducing the concept of place. Because place-studies focus on the organization of social relations within a single text, I argue that they offer a useful means of initiating cross-textual, regional analyses. I demonstrate this point by analyzing the relationship between place and gender identity in Charles Bruce's *The Channel Shore*, and then looking for parallels in the way other novels articulate this relationship.

In part three I construct a "region of denial and purgation" by interrogating how and why authors deploy representations of nature to deny the social origins of identity formation. I relate the power such representations have to articulate seemingly epiphanic

shifts in identity to the sublime's enduring legacy. Because sublime experience enables characters to reconstitute themselves as new, it facilitates their desires to purge those aspects of their personal histories that have caused them guilt or shame.

I conclude that this dissertation makes two contributions to Canadian literary studies. First, it advances a productive dialogue between human geography and Canadian literary studies. Second, by re-imagining the practice of Canadian literary regionalism through alternate disciplinary lenses, this dissertation helpfully foregrounds the heterodox character—and unexplored potential—of a regional mode of literary analysis.

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## Introduction

This study was inspired more by a long-standing fascination with the process of identity formation and a consistent interest in interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Canadian literature than from an extensive history of engagement with the field of human geography. The desire to take my work in a fresh interdisciplinary direction is what led me to space. Since I began this project with only a beginner's knowledge of the issues and debates that shape the field of human geography, it appeared to me as a wonderfully open-ended avenue down which I could take a thought-provoking interdisciplinary jaunt, stopping off here and there to select a concept or cite a provocative passage, and moving on as I saw fit. That jaunt turned into something more closely resembling a rigorous marathon, but it is a hard-fought journey I would gladly undertake again. My encounter with human geography has changed the way I view literary narratives and the way I see the world. Beyond persuading my readers of the merits and soundness of the arguments raised here, I hope to convey to them some small sense of the defamiliarization that has been amongst my own richest rewards for these efforts.

This sea change in my own perceptions has altered the way I view this dissertation. I began by envisioning it as a study that would explore three concepts of shared significance to human geographers and Canadian literary critics—region, place, and nature—in order to enrich our understanding of the relationship between space and processes of identity formation. Although I have retained both this thematic focus and this organizational schema, I now view this dissertation's three parts as so many steps towards a singular goal: to recast regionalism's role within Canadian literary studies. In

other words, I did not at first foresee the central place the literary region would come to occupy in this dissertation's final incarnation. In retrospect, I think I intuited its centrality long before I became conscious of it; although this dissertation has undergone many transformations over the course of its production, I never questioned my decision to *begin* with discourses of Canadian literary regionalism. I started with literary regionalism because I thought (as I still do) that this field of study constituted Canadian literary critics' most overt and sustained engagement with the relationship between human spatiality and identity and, as such, represented my most logical point of departure. What took considerably more time and effort for me to see was my own investment in a spatial imaginary that saw regions as entities that pre-exist the process of regional analysis, entities that had a *proper* function to perform, if only I could decipher it.

Thus one of the most valuable discoveries I have made over the course of this dissertation's unfolding is a disarmingly simple one—namely, that literary regions are nothing more and nothing less than the products of a regional mode of literary analysis. Yet this seemingly obvious insight provided the key to this project's overarching form and purpose because it enabled me to re-imagine regionalism as a malleable process of analysis, one that I was not only critiquing, but inevitably participating in. It was only after recognizing regionalism's status as an analytic process that I came to realize that Canadian literary regionalism's potential has been unnecessarily circumscribed by the very spatial imaginary I had been subject to, and that I had been endeavouring to expand this field's horizons not only in part one's critiques but also in my subsequent analyses of place and nature in parts two and three.

Because I recast regionalism's role in Canadian literary criticism largely by clarifying its spatial domain and expanding its thematic domain, this dissertation's target audience extends well beyond the practitioners of literary regionalism, Canadian or otherwise. I envision this work being of interest to scholars of Canadian literature or to scholars of all literatures who bring to their work an interest in space, identity, and/or interdisciplinarity. For those scholars from the humanities who are interested in integrating the concept of space into their modes of social analysis this study could constitute for them, as it has for me, an introduction to some of the ideas currently occupying the imaginations of human geographers; it also demonstrates some of the possibilities a spatially informed imagination can offer up. With its focus upon questions of representational equity, on the politics of spatialization, on the constitutive role social relations and spatial practices play in regulating gender identity, and on the means by which spatial strategies can be deployed to mystify processes of identity formation, this project offers insights of value to social theorists, scholars of cultural studies, and feminist scholars from any branch of the humanities. Though I have little to teach human geographers about the concept of space, that fraction of human geographers curious to see the directions in which other disciplines take their work will hopefully find something of interest on these pages.

The materials I work with here include both critical articles and full-length studies from the field of Canadian literary regionalism as well as a collection of 8 Canadian novels written in English and published between 1925 and 1996: Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese* (1925), Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* (1945), Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* (1954), Charles Bruce's *The Channel Shore* (1954), Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981),

Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* (1990), and Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees* (1996)).

I have selected these novels to ensure that they emerge from a variety of subject-positions and that their themes address a spectrum of social differences. This diversity was necessitated by my desire to maximize my own capacity to discover relationships conjoining particular spatial strategies to particular social identities. Though such processes of selection can never be exhaustively inclusive, I have taken care to ensure that differences of social class, gender and sexuality are explored in some of these texts, as are processes of racialization. In addition, I have chosen novels that represent four of Canada's more traditional geographic regions; two take as their primary setting Canada's east coast, two Canada's west coast, two the Canadian prairie, and two central Canada. I have sought texts set in metropolitan centres as well as in more rural contexts, while also ensuring that some of the novels explicitly address metropole/hinterland tensions.

Social and spatial differences were not my only criteria of selection. I have also chosen these novels because of their shared status as narratives produced by a mode of writing that is traditionally classified as realist. In applying this term I acknowledge that there is nothing essential that distinguishes the realist novel from that of, say, the modern, the naturalist or the postmodern novel; as Hugh Holman observes in *A Handbook to Literature*, "Attempts to classify the novel usually come to logical grief . . . for the terms [utilized to classify them] are by no means mutually exclusive" (302). I do not mean to suggest by my application of the term realist that more overtly expressionist or experimental twentieth-century Canadian novels (such as, for example, Leonard Cohen's

*Beautiful Losers* or Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*) produce narrative worlds that are somehow *unreal*.

Yet in order to avoid making grandiose generalizations about *the twentieth century Canadian novel*, some more particular term seemed called for. And it seems to me that the aesthetic and thematic qualities I have looked for in my novels are most accurately captured under the rubric of realism. These qualities include a relatively close narrative focus upon what might be termed, after de Certeau, the practices of everyday life—novels that pay attention to such seemingly mundane details as how characters earn their living, where they shop, what occupies their leisure hours, what motivations drive them to new places of residence, etc. I have also sought narratives that bring a relatively close attention to the articulated character of self-perception and social interaction.

Though some of the novels I work with (and I think in particular here of Kogawa's *Obasan* and MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees*) explore how dreamscapes interface with and modify more conscious levels of self-understanding, these narratives also allow the reader to distinguish between the worlds of sleep and wakefulness. These novels can be classified as realist to the extent that they are narratives governed by the assumption that there is, as David Lodge puts it, "a common phenomenal world" we can refer to, though the meaning of that world remains "much more problematical" and, I would add, contested (47).

In so far as I examine how both primary and secondary literary narratives articulate the relationship between space and identity, I add my voice to the long list of scholars (Clifford Geertz being one of the first) who strive to complicate the distinction often maintained between academic and artistic representations. As Geertz stresses

through his notions of “thick description” and “blurred genres,” all representations are fictions “in the sense that they are ‘something made,’ ‘something fashioned’—the original meaning of *fictio*” (*The Interpretation of Cultures* 15). Yet, as my list of materials suggests, I have done little to blur the distinction between traditional literary genres. My focus on the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel reflects my conviction that my efforts to re-think the practice of regional literary analysis should begin with a sustained engagement with regionalism’s traditional genre of choice.

I do not mean to suggest by my singular focus on the novel that the mode of regional literary analysis I advance here is only applicable to this genre. Though, for reasons listed above, the realist novel is particularly well suited to this mode of analysis, drama offers another excellent vehicle. Because drama articulates its social relations through performances enacted upon the social space of the stage (whether this stage is conjured in the mind or viewed in the theatre), and because these social relations are not mediated through a narrator, this genre would prove a wonderfully flexible and relatively straight-forward vehicle for regional analysis. Some kinds of poetry would, however, prove more challenging. Because my mode of regional analysis focuses attention upon relationships between processes of identity formation and what I will call, for the present, material space, those kinds of poetry that work to articulate relationships between metaphoric spaces of subjectivity or to complicate any easy distinction between material and metaphoric space would not be well-suited to the kind of regionalism I advance here. Yet those long, narrative or documentary poems that place a more than typical emphasis upon disclosing plot and narrating social relations (such as Daphne Marlatt’s *Steveston*,

Dorothy Livesay's "Call My People Home," Gwendolyn MacEwen's *Terror and Erebus* and Earle Birney's "David") certainly offer up intriguing possibilities.

In the ensuing pages I make frequent reference to the concept of identity, often speaking of it as a process or a performance. I would like to pause here to say a few words about the theoretical underpinnings that inform the understandings of identity formation that motivate these figurations. This study is guided by the premise that identity is a relational phenomenon, and further, that the articulation of all identities is contingent upon a particular collection of spatial, temporal and social circumstances. As Ernesto Laclau expresses it, "identities and their conditions of existence form an inseparable whole" (21). When I speak of identity formation as an on-going process, I allude to its status as an inevitably ragged-edged and unfinished social product. Because identity is a construct that we rely upon others to legitimate through recognition, and because such recognition is never universally proffered or entirely free of resistance, identities remain incompletely constituted. Put somewhat differently, because identities are always constituted relationally or through difference (I am I because I am not you), they are never fully constituted "since relations do not form a closed system" (Laclau 21). Far from playing a solely destructive role in the constitution of identity, then, antagonism plays a crucially productive role in this process: forces of antagonism bring social differences into being. Laclau captures the paradoxical means by which antagonism both frustrates and enables the articulation of difference when he explains that "every identity is dislocated insofar as it depends on an outside which both denies that identity and provides its conditions of possibility at the same time" (39). It is in this sense that Laclau describes this "'outside'" as "'constitutive'" (17).

It is such a conception of identity production that informs my discussion of Wilson's *Swamp Angel* in part three of this dissertation, where I argue that Maggie's constitution of herself as a bourgeois subject is in part enabled by her marriage to Edward Vardoe. While at one level Maggie's affiliation with the non-bourgeois Edward frustrates her desire to perform her desired identity, on another level it is Edward's failure to conform to bourgeois norms of behaviour that enables Maggie's constitution of her own class difference. In this scenario, Edward functions as Maggie's "constitutive outside," as a social agent who both frustrates and enables her ability to conform to the regulatory norms of a bourgeois subject-position (Laclau 17).

It is the work of Judith Butler that informs my tendency to represent identity formation as a performance. The metaphor of performativity captures effectively the sense in which the recognizability or intelligibility of a subject's identity depends upon the degree to which he or she conforms to *pre-scripted* sets of signifying practices. Performativity also suggests the contingency of identity, the need to repeat or reiterate that performance again and again in order to create a guise of stability or to produce what Butler calls "substantializing effects" (*Gender Trouble* 145). Yet it is important to bear in mind that, as Castree and Braun remind us in reference to sexual identity, "performativity here should not be confused with free choice, as if one simply decided on sexual identity as one decides on what clothes to wear in the morning" (20).

In studies such as my own, which endeavour to explore moments of particular significance to processes of identity formation, it is hard to avoid an ironic tendency to deny, through my procedural focus on such momentous instances, the very "processual"

character of identity that I seek to demonstrate.<sup>1</sup> Keith and Pile capture this tendency towards irony through metaphor when they explain that,

At times, in order to make sense of a particular moment or a particular place . . . this process [of identity formation] is stopped to reveal an identity that is akin to a freeze-frame photograph of a race-horse at full gallop. It may be a ‘true’ representation of a moment but, by the very act of freezing, it denies the presence of movement. (28)

Though I have endeavoured to foreground the processual character of identity formation, I wish to underscore at this early point that my close focus upon narrative moments, when characters first come to perform novel subject-positions, should not be interpreted as instances of closure. This is an inevitability that is hard to escape: as Keith and Pile explain, “the very act of representing the ceaseless process of identity formation is based on a moment of *arbitrary closure* which . . . is both true and false simultaneously” (28).

I deliberately resist the impulse here to introduce readers to concepts from human geography that this dissertation relies upon because doing so would only find me re-invoking, in less detail and with less nuance, material that I cover extensively within the body of this work. I have organized this dissertation in a manner that addresses the needs of newcomers to human geography: I assume very little knowledge of this field and introduce its concepts as they become necessary to my argument. Because of my decision to introduce concepts and debates from human geography as my arguments require them, literary critics may find part one of this dissertation to be somewhat more dense than parts two and three. It is in part one that I introduce, and engage most substantively with, debates from human geography about how best to compartmentalize

human spatiality, yet I advance upon these issues by stages as I explore, and critique methodologies in search of the most productive means of classifying the field of Canadian literary regionalism according to assumptions about space and identity. While all of the concepts I introduce in part one are exemplified and explored through direct engagement with discourses of Canadian literary regionalism, their salience extends well beyond this particular field of scholarship. Thus part one fulfills several goals at once: it constitutes an historical overview of Canadian literary regionalists' understandings of regional space; it offers a critique of two of the more persistent means by which regional space has been produced in these discourses; it advances an alternate mode of regional analysis and, finally, it serves as an introduction to most of the concepts and debates within human geography that I invoke in parts two and three.

In part two, which is organized into two distinct sections, I turn from the concept of region to that of place as I begin to implement the process of regional literary analysis I introduce in part one. In section one I introduce the understanding of place I work with and relate it to the concepts of region and social space. I argue that place studies provide an excellent point of departure for regional studies because, as I understand them, regional studies are cross-textual in focus while place studies focus attention upon the organization of social relations within a single text. Thus place studies provide a convenient point from which the analyst can begin to look for regional congruences in the way literary texts deploy space to articulate identity.

It is in order to address the issue of place-boundedness that I engage with the understanding of place Doreen Massey champions in *Space, Place and Gender*. By contrasting Massey's argument for a global sense of place with those exhibited by

characters from my group of novels, I explain why I think the analysis of literary places is best served by a more bounded, contestatory sense of place than Massey argues for. Because of this contextual deficiency in Massey's understanding of place I look to other sources for a more agonistic sense of place, and in particular to Tim Cresswell's work in *In Place/Out of Place*. I conclude section one by introducing the terms I have found both useful and necessary to applying place theory to realist novels, key amongst these being Cresswell's notion of normative geographies.

In section two I conduct an analysis of place in Charles Bruce's *The Channel Shore*. It is the relative stability of the social world Bruce depicts, and the thoroughness with which he articulates its social relations, that makes *The Channel Shore* an ideal text with which to demonstrate how realist novels establish normative geographies. Here I delineate the means by which Bruce's narrator establishes a normative geography of place by disclosing some of the spatial practices that encode characters' behaviours as appropriate or transgressive. I focus particular attention upon how these rules establish norms for the performance of gender-identity, and argue that these norms tend to articulate a female character's desire to wander from home with her inclination to stray from norms of female gender propriety. It is at this point that I begin a cross-textual comparison to decipher the extent to which this norm operates in the other novels I address and, by so doing, exemplify how literary critics can move from a study of place towards the regional mode of literary analysis I champion.

In part three of this dissertation I conduct a more fully fledged regional analysis as I work to demonstrate the existence of a pattern in the way my group of novels deploy representations of an "asocial" nature to articulate shifts in personal identity.<sup>2</sup> I divide the

process by which I construct what I term a region of denial and purgation into three sections. In the first section I lay the groundwork for my explanation by introducing those concepts which I feel offer the most persuasive means of explaining the work that nature is performing in these scenes. I begin with the concept of nature itself, and focus on how this concept is currently being imagined by post-structuralists. Because I relate nature's identity-producing capacity to the sublime's enduring legacy, I also introduce some of the contemporary interpretations of sublime experience currently being offered by philosophers and literary critics. I place particular emphasis upon the analysis of the Kantian sublime, as Terry Eagleton develops it, in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* because, like Eagleton, I am especially interested in the Kantian sublime's ability to perform ideological work

In section two I demonstrate the primary means by which sublime experience—or what I call “the residual sublime”—manifests itself as an agent of identity production in the collection of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels I work with. By identifying and characterizing the spatial tropes, rhetorics and social practices through which the residual sublime enables authors to deploy natural imagery to convey shifts in identity, I demonstrate the existence of a region of nature within my group of novels.

It is in section three that I construct a region of denial and purgation from the region of nature that emerges from my work in section two. This more specialized region comes into relief as I draw attention to the ideological and psychological work the residual sublime performs. I argue that the residual sublime performs ideological work in that it encourages characters and readers alike to imagine themselves as autonomous individuals, subjects whose identities do not result from social interaction, but from

mystified acts of self-creation. Because the residual sublime encourages characters to believe that nature has itself induced a quasi-transcendent level of experience in them, sublimity fulfills their desire to imagine themselves as wholly new. By buttressing characters' desires to believe that they have undergone epiphanic moments of rebirth in a seemingly asocial nature, residually sublime experience performs psychological work because it provides them with an opportunity to cleanse themselves of those aspects of their history that cause them guilt or shame.

It is through this tripartite process that I disclose and exemplify a novel role for regional literary analyses to enact. Though markedly different, this role is not wholly new: while I retain this field's traditional focus upon space and identity, I re-think the *kinds* of space and identity regionalists should be pursuing. I hope that my readers will join me in viewing regionalism's new role as one that offers Canadian literary critics a more clearly defined, wide-ranging and self-conscious means of deploying the power of the regional spatial division.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Here and throughout this dissertation I use the neologism "processual" as the adjectival form of the noun process.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "asocial" as an antonym for social, not to signify the condition of being unsociable or hostile. When I speak, for example, of an asocial conception of space or identity, I suggest such a conception's failure to acknowledge or account for the social character and/or origins of such phenomena.

## Part One

### Steps Towards Overcoming the Two Solitudes of Canadian Literary Regionalism

We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology.

(Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 6)

#### Section One: Introduction

My eventual goal for this first of my dissertation's three parts is to propose a new way of thinking about Canadian literary regionalism, one that proffers an alternate understanding of what constitutes a literary region, a work of regional literature, and the practice of regional literary criticism. But much ground needs to be cleared and prepared before I can clarify both the need for a new approach, and the merits of the one I propose.

In part one I focus my critical gaze almost exclusively upon studies of Canadian literary regionalism, with a particular emphasis on the work of five influential thinkers from this field—Henry Kreisel, E.A. McCourt, Eli Mandel, W.H. New and Dick Harrison. Despite this rather narrow focus, the problems I identify and address here extend beyond this field of scholarship, as does my impetus for undertaking this project. At the most basic level, this study emerges from my sense that too many Canadians have become accustomed to thinking of regions as stable *things*, that too many of us have lost sight of regionalism's status as a social *process*. This state of affairs has not arisen overnight. Rather, it is the result of a long and multifaceted process of social sedimentation

through which the characteristic of the regional has gradually become reified. The adjective *regional* is more often used to describe supposedly stable characteristics of seemingly natural divisions within the Canadian nation-space than to denote the products of a regional mode of analysis, one that seeks, at its most basic level, to articulate relationships between human spatiality and social relations. Whether in academic discourse, newspapers, cookbooks, radio talk-shows or casual conversation, references to regional literatures, as well as to regional musical traditions, radio programmes, politics, dialects, ways of life, geographies, cuisines and patterns of consumption abound. What I suspect is that the majority of those people who utilize the term regional rarely pause to consider where the spaces that render this category meaningful begin and end, or what social and cultural differences are effaced in the interests of collectivizing subjects under the rubric of the regional.

Canadian literary regionalists have played a part in reifying the process through which the Canadian nation-space and Canadian cultural products have been divided into regions of various sorts. Yet it is not a unitary role they have played because the field of Canadian literary regionalism is not unified by a single understanding of what literary regions are. And herein lies another motivation for this study: the discourse of Canadian literary regionalism carries so much accumulated ideological baggage that its contents need to be unpacked, aired and sorted lest the more objectionable items included therein come to be wrongfully attributed, *en masse*, to the group of past and present scholars who are united by their interest in regional literary analysis, but divided about what such a mode of analysis entails.

As things now stand, calling oneself a literary regionalist denotes very little because it connotes so much: this academic label can bespeak an interest in literatures that take a hinterland or rural area as their setting, in literatures produced by the politically marginalized, by authors who focus upon what is often called local colour, or by authors who were born in, live within, or have come to be associated with a particular geographic area. Literary regionalism is also a field of study that arouses scorn or suspicion in those who have come to associate an interest in the regional with reactionary longings for *a simpler time that never was*, a time when socially, ethnically and religiously unified communities supposedly populated this country. As this study will demonstrate, such longings are undeniably part of the tradition of Canadian literary regionalism; it is no coincidence, for example, that the canon of texts typically termed regional is overwhelmingly—if not exclusively—composed of white authors and deals primarily—though not exclusively—with the lives of white characters.

Such reactionary longings do not, of course, characterize all scholars who practice a regional mode of literary analyses. At one level, this study is motivated by my determination not to see all Canadian literary regionalists tarred by the same brush. Moreover, this determination derives from my conviction that literary regionalism has always occupied a valuable place in Canadian literary criticism as the field of study that focuses attention upon the relationship between two concepts—space and identity. Yet I am equally convinced that this field has reached something of an impasse because it has failed to keep abreast of changes in the way these two concepts are being conceptualized. In order for this field's potential to be realized, it is necessary to assess Canadian literary regionalism from a fresh perspective. This I will do by re-presenting the tradition of

Canadian literary regionalism as it appears through the conceptual lenses offered by a select group of spatial theorists and human geographers. By defamiliarizing this field of study I hope to uproot many of the associations conjured by the label regional and, in so doing, clear the way for an alternate means of imagining and practicing a regional mode of literary analysis.

In order to justify the direction I think this field of study should take at this stage in its evolution, it is necessary to specify where it has already been and what perspectives on regional production and analysis have been offered by these locations. In other words, while my overarching aim in part one is to enlist the help of human geographers and spatial theorists to proffer a new means of understanding the literary region, the regional, and the practice of regional literary criticism, I get there by stages. As a result, part one serves several functions simultaneously. This study serves as an historical overview and critique of how regional space and identity have been conceptualized in discourses of Canadian literary regionalism, as a processual search for a methodology that can articulate this field's different approaches most productively and coherently, and as a position-piece that recommends an alternate means of practicing Canadian literary regionalism.

In my search for a methodology, I will draw attention to problematic facets of the literary region's history as they emerge from my efforts to classify Canadian literary regionalists. Because of this approach, I dedicate more attention to delineating the shortcomings of the various schools of Canadian literary regionalism I identify than to adumbrating the historical and geographic contexts that render these shortcomings explicable (though not inevitable). Although this study has a substantive critical

component, I hope that its processual approach foregrounds the extent to which my own ideas have been enabled by the tradition I speak not just of, but to.

Given the recent appearance of David Jordan's *New World Regionalism* (1994), W.H. New's *Land Sliding* (1997) and the edited collections *Regionalism Reconsidered* (1994) and *Diverse Landscapes* (1996), the discourse of Canadian literary regionalism shows signs of flourishing at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Yet it is a flourishing that has occurred within a relatively insular ground, one that has remained largely undisturbed by disciplinary perspectives external to Canadian literary studies. This insularity is somewhat surprising given that Canadian literary regionalism is a field that articulates a relationship between processes of narration and spatialization. Though we in English studies are ideally equipped to investigate processes of narration, processes of spatialization are not the *forte* of literary critics, but of geographers and spatial theorists. Yet Canadian literary regionalists have not, as yet, forged any substantive links between these branches of scholarship.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Canadian literary regionalists have dedicated relatively little attention to interrogating regional space.

The time seems right to interrogate the space of the Canadian literary region: as Derek Gregory notes in his discussion of regions and regional geography in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, we are much more aware today than we were in generations past of the ways in which "scalar distinctions" such as those that produce regions and nations are "historically produced and hence enmeshed in constellations of power, knowledge and spatiality" (689). By examining a selection of critical studies of Canadian literary regionalism I will demonstrate how the discursive production of literary regions is "enmeshed" in such "constellations of power, knowledge and spatiality" (*ibid*).

More specifically, such an examination will allow me to foreground how it is that the discursive production of Canadian literary regions always entails the production of a vision of regional society and of the kinds of subjects who compose such societies. By delineating the characteristics of such regional societies, I will demonstrate how discourses of Canadian literary regionalism produce varied understandings of the kinds of subjects who compose them. In so doing I will foreground the different social exclusions that come to be enacted by discourses of Canadian literary regionalism. Regions are, of course, always *exclusive* in so far as they focus attention upon particular facets of the relationship between human spatiality and social relations and, by so doing, necessarily de-prioritize (or ignore) other facets of this relationship. Yet the kinds of exclusions enacted by critical studies of Canadian literary regionalism vary greatly. Accordingly, the process of assessing the field of Canadian literary regionalism is one that will eventually require me to form and justify my own opinions about what kinds of collectivity Canadian literary regionalism should focus upon.

Perhaps the primary reason why literary regionalists have lacked spatial critiques of their work is because scholars of Canadian literature lack the conceptual vocabulary that such critiques require. My reading in the fields of spatial theory and human geography has convinced me that closer attention to the insights and conceptual vocabulary offered by such thinkers could open vistas of analytic possibility that have not yet been seen by Canadian literary regionalists. In particular, my reading of marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and spatial theorist Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* has demonstrated to me that Canadian literary regionalists have been trapped, unnecessarily, between two opposing conceptions of regional space. Until

now, Canadian literary regionalists have tended to imagine regional space in one of two ways: as the natural products of essentialized regional environments (regional literature being that which articulates such essences) or as dematerialized spaces of literary representations. Within these opposing spatial imaginaries, literary regions appear as the products of either an asocial nature or regional authors. I argue that this polarity is unnecessary and, moreover, that it has delimited the kinds of texts and identities regional analyses can focus upon and the kinds of insights into spatiality, identity and social interaction that we can gain from a regional mode of literary analysis.

Without a methodology that can enable the classification of literary regions, attempts to assess the field of Canadian literary regionalism are almost certain to end in frustration. One of the reasons why the process of assessment is contingent upon a process of classification is that Canadian literary regionalists define their regions in a variety of ways; in some instances they provide multiple and logically incompatible definitions of the spaces they work with and in other instances their definitions remain unstated, and must be inferred through analysis.<sup>2</sup> Canadian Geographer William Westfall suggests that this problem of definitional ambiguity is not unique to Canadian literary regionalism. He argues that “The term ‘region’ can be frustratingly imprecise” and that, “for the most part[,] disciplines tend to back away from analyzing the assumptions that they invest in the concept, preferring to take the regional structure of Canada as a given” (6). Though no substantive links have yet been forged between spatial theory and Canadian literary regionalism, Westfall has come closest to doing so in his survey article, “On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature” (1980). Because Westfall’s piece is the only work to date that systematizes the field of Canadian literary

regionalism according to assumptions about space, it provides the inevitable starting point for my own efforts to classify this field.

Yet I must acknowledge at this early point that the methodology Westfall utilizes has its analytical blind spots. While I will be testing the precision of Westfall's methodology by examining the work of many of the same literary regionalists whom Westfall addresses and classifies, in so doing I will be performing two tasks simultaneously. My examination serves both as an explication and an investigation of the categories that Westfall utilizes to systematize the field of Canadian literary regionalism.

## Section Two: Westfall's Methodology

The methodology Westfall introduces in “On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature” is itself a significant contribution to the field of Canadian literary regionalism. This methodology involves a process whereby Westfall classifies Canadian literary regionalists according to two categories he brings from his home discipline of geography. According to Westfall,

In general, geographers employ the term region in two ways. The first uses region in the way most non-geographers understand the term: to connote an area that exhibits a similarity of features. This sameness draws the region together and separates it from those areas that do not share this quality. Regions that are characterized by such a similarity are called “formal” regions. The second way uses the term to group together the elements that are functionally related within a system. Here similarity is not an issue: diverse elements can form a region if they are integrated within a set of functional relationships. These are called “functional” regions. (7)

As Westfall suggests, the concept of formal regions is relatively easy to grasp because of its familiarity. However, two points should be noted. First, the most “elemental” kind of formal region is an *environmental* region, one “defined according to a similarity of topographical features and climate” (Westfall 7). Second, formal regions can be based on features far less obvious than topography and climate. Westfall tells us, for example, that “French Canada . . . is a formal region based on the criteria of ethnicity and culture” (9).

The concept of functional regions is perhaps more elusive to those unfamiliar with geographic discourse in particular, and to those outside the social sciences in general. Janine Brodie utilizes Westfall's distinction in her article "The Political Economy of Regionalism," and in so doing, provides a helpful supplement to Westfall's definition of functional regions. Brodie explains that the functional method of regional definition does not propose concrete regional boundaries that isolate one region from another. Nor is it concerned primarily with discovering similarities and differences in geographic space. Instead . . . regions are seen as part of an interconnected whole in which one regional configuration is largely a function or an expression of another. Regions, in other words, are not arbitrary constructs but effects or consequences of historical relationships.

(141)

Brodie's definition highlights a key point about all regional divisions, but a point that is often effaced by those who rely on the formal mode of regional definition. In concluding that functional regions are "effects or consequences of historical relationships," Brodie suggests that the regional divisions so commonly thought of as strictly *spatial* are also inevitably *temporal* (141).

Westfall applies the formal/functional distinction to discourses of Canadian literary regionalism in order to unify a disparate collection of writings. The system that results from this grafting is simplified considerably: Westfall argues that Canadian literary regionalists have progressed from a formal mode of regional definition (popular in the 40s 50s and 60s) to a more functional approach in the latter decades of the

twentieth century. Functionalists participate in what Westfall terms “the new regionalism” (6).

Westfall names Henry Kreisel and Edward McCourt as the two most influential proponents of the earlier, formal approach to Canadian literary regionalism (6). As the writer of a survey article, and one that covers extensive ground, it is understandable that Westfall gives these formalist forefathers somewhat cursory treatment. He quotes briefly from McCourt’s *The Canadian West in Fiction* (1949; rev. ed. 1970) and Kreisel’s “The Prairie: A State of Mind” (1968) in order to demonstrate that these works typify the formal, environmental mode of regional definition in action. According to Westfall, McCourt and Kreisel argue that “physical features and climate not only define the shape of regions, but also explain their character” (6). Though Westfall’s brief sketch is accurate, it leaves a great deal unsaid.

My own work on Kreisel and McCourt has led me to question whether Westfall would not have chosen to reconfigure his formal/functional *distinction* into something like a continuum had he analyzed Kreisel’s “The Prairie: A State of Mind” and McCourt’s *The Canadian West in Fiction* in greater detail. This reconfiguration seems called for because, while formal literary regionalists *claim* that their regions derive from “physical features and climate,” the process of legitimating these claims through argument inevitably opens logical fissures that, when explored, deconstruct these claims (Westfall 6).

What makes formalist discourses of Canadian literary regionalism so vulnerable to deconstruction is their incapacity to incorporate the role played by the social and the temporal in the production of literary regions. Formalist discourses tend to construct

nature as an asocial realm imbued with an essence that is, by definition, immutable. It is the range of this essence's influence that determines a region's boundaries, as it is the character of this essence that ensures the distinctness and aesthetic integrity of regional literatures. Yet it is difficult for formalists to argue for the existence of a tradition of land-based regional literature without addressing the role humanity has played in shaping and re-shaping such seemingly asocial natures and such seemingly organic regional literatures. The role of the social and temporal inevitably intrude to interrupt the logical consistency of discourses of environmental determination, and in so doing, blur the tidy distinctions they seek to maintain between the natural and the social, the immutable and the temporal. A more substantive engagement with the works of Kreisel and McCourt will demonstrate this point through analysis.

Henry Kreisel's argument in "The Prairie: A State of Mind" is perhaps the purest example of the formal, environmental approach to regional definition found, to date, in the work of Canadian literary regionalists. In this essay Kreisel does not refer to regions or regionalism, and provides no definition of "the prairies" or "the Canadian west"—terms he uses interchangeably (254; 257). It could be argued that Kreisel's failure to provide a definition of the prairies, his key analytic term, is itself a means of naturalizing this regional division; to leave the term undefined suggests that the spatial division of the prairies speaks for itself, and is incontestable.

Yet I need not rely on an absence to mark the presence of Kreisel's naturalization of the prairie region. Kresiel makes this naturalization and his indebtedness to a formal mode of regional definition plain when he asserts that "All discussion of the literature produced in the Canadian west must of necessity begin with the impact of the landscape

upon the mind" (257). Such a statement imbues "the landscape," and not the writers who participate in the social construction of this landscape, with the capacity to consolidate "the prairie" into a spatio-aesthetic unity (Kreisel 257; 254). Within Kreisel's mode of literary regionalism, writers articulate the "state of mind produced by the sheer physical fact of the prairie" when they produce regional literature (256).

Yet Kreisel entertains a more functional understanding of regions when he questions whether temporal flux could have altered the "state of mind produced by the sheer physical fact of the prairie" (256). For Kreisel to question whether time could alter the essence of his prairie region is to question whether the prairie region's seeming essence is in fact a trick of historical circumstance. And to historicize this essence is to convert Kreisel's formal region into a functional one since it is functional regions that are "shaped and reshaped by 'flows of some kind'—political, social, and economic . . ." (Brodie 141). Though Kreisel acknowledges that "There have been social and industrial changes on the prairie" (266-7), he concludes that "much," and apparently *enough*, "still remains unchanged" (266). The most crucial element that has remained constant over time is, conveniently, Kreisel's chief agent, "the vast land itself," which he assures us "has not yet been finally subdued and altered" (266).

Yet Kreisel's belief that "the vast land itself" is imbued with a stubborn inertia results more from a desire for, than a logical demonstration of, such regional stability (266). This desire leads Kreisel to recognize nothing less than the utter transformation of his prairie region as alteration. While he admits that his region is dynamic ("much has changed in the west," he tells us), he insists that this dynamism has left the prairie essence unimpaired ("the vast land itself has not yet been finally subdued and altered")

(266). It is no wonder that, despite the environmental determinism evinced in Kreisel's claim that the prairie essence inheres in "the vast land itself" (266), he figures this prairie simultaneously as a "state of mind" (254). Kreisel's prairie does seem a state of mind, and indeed, the product of a mind so invested in regional constancy that it misrecognizes flux as stasis.

Edward McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction* provides an interesting contrast to Kreisel's article. Unlike Kreisel, McCourt begins by demonstrating explicitly his affiliation with the formal method of regional definition. This declaration occurs in the preface to McCourt's ground-breaking study where he claims that "the Prairie Provinces constitute the most homogeneous of the great natural geographic divisions within this country" (n. pag.).<sup>3</sup>

Yet, like Kreisel, McCourt does not use a *purely* formal approach to regional definition. In his preface alone McCourt points to both formal and functional factors to argue for the unity of his prairie region. He invokes formal, environmental factors when he argues that Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba "are primarily flat and agricultural; they are hot in summer and cold in winter" (n. pag). But he also appeals to functional factors such as the political culture of the prairie provinces relative to others. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, he tells us, "are young, aggressive, and united in their hostility to Ontario" (n. pag.). But neither these environmental nor functional factors provides sufficient grounds for McCourt to assert the incontestable homogeneity of his region. He acknowledges that "Saskatchewan is flatter than Alberta and less wooded than Manitoba, and the wind seems to blow harder there than anywhere else in Canada. Manitoba, possibly because it borders on Ontario, is less radical in politics than Alberta

or Saskatchewan" (n. pag.). In the end, then, why does McCourt's "Canadian West" constitute a unified region (n. pag.)? After acknowledging these gaps in environmental and politico-cultural coherence, McCourt turns to a less tangible formal characteristic to substantiate his claim that this geographic area constitutes a unified region: "But," McCourt insists, "there is a remarkable unity of spirit prevailing among prairie dwellers; and a way of life as distinctive as the region which fosters it" (n. pag.).

While Kreisel explicitly links the uniqueness of the prairie to the "state of mind" he contends that his seemingly homogenous environment produces in its inhabitants, the origin of McCourt's prairie "unity of spirit" and/or "way of life" is somewhat harder to glean (Kreisel 254; McCourt n. pag.). Any attempt to garner the origin of this phenomenon from McCourt's preface only strands his readers within a logical tautology—this "way of life" / "unity of spirit" is fostered by the region, he tells us, yet the only factor that causes the region to cohere to his own satisfaction is this same "way of life" / "unity of spirit" (n. pag.). A closer examination of McCourt's overall argument in *The Canadian West in Fiction* enables our liberation from this infinite loop.

Unlike Kreisel's "The Prairie: A State of Mind," McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction* is a study that explores the reasons behind McCourt's belief that "a native regional literature" of the "Canadian West" had not yet arisen as of 1970 (12; n. pag.). If anything, Kreisel's article, which first appeared nineteen years after *The Canadian West in Fiction*, demonstrates the extent to which a nationalist ethos had gained a foothold within Canadian literary criticism over a mere twenty years. While in "The Prairie: A State of Mind" Kreisel accepts and examines western Canadian writing without displaying any need to justify the exercise via international standards of literary value,

McCourt's text looks to the world stage for validation. Thomas Hardy's novels of Egdon Heath constitute *the* standard to which the texts McCourt examines are held and found, by and large, wanting. McCourt concludes his study with the "hope" that the "people" of the "prairie scene," whose energies have thus far "been devoted to the production of wheat and political parties. . . .will some day produce a book that the world will not willingly let die" (126). Thus *The Canadian West in Fiction* is, largely, an extended attempt to answer the regional version of the question that once dogged Canadian literary criticism—why hasn't "the great novel of the prairies" emerged? (McCourt 57).<sup>4</sup>

It is his attempt to answer this question within a meaningful context that leads McCourt to review not only narrative representations of the Canadian prairie from the time of the colonial explorers to his own day, but also the historical and cultural factors he believes to have weakened the quality of this prose in "a part of nature [which, like Hardy's Egdon Heath, McCourt believes is] 'absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind'" (126). McCourt looks to the early dominance of British literary standards (ironically) (14), to the adoption of the American frontier myth (94-5), as well as to the relative transience of the prairie population (119), to the rise and fall of the family-run farm (121-2), and to industrialization and urbanization generally (125) to explain this failure of excellence in regional literary production.

McCourt's examination of the social, economic, demographic and cultural context of prairie fiction not only serves to explain why a "native regional literature" of the prairies had not emerged as of 1970 (12). This examination also serves as a means of determining the essence of his prairie region (12). These processes coincide because the act of addressing the various forces he believes to have arrested the development of

prairie literature engages McCourt in a process whereby these *dynamic* factors can be eliminated from the features that produce the necessarily *static* essence of his prairie region. It is this essence that produces the “unity of spirit” and “way of life” McCourt invokes in his preface to suture the gaps in regional coherence (n. pag.). Through a process of elimination the origin of this regional constancy comes into clearer focus. In his conclusion he tells us that “Industrialization and urban development may continue to pollute prairie streams and obliterate farmlands, but it is impossible to conceive of a time when the enormous vault of sky will be blotted out by smog and the great plains wholly defiled by man and his works” (125). McCourt’s isolation of what is left behind time’s fluid wake shows marked similarities to Kreisel’s briefer assessment of a temporal flux that he believes has spared only “the vast land itself” (266).

Because McCourt addresses the effects of social, economic and cultural flux quite thoroughly, the only claim of regional constancy he can make by his text’s conclusion is that “the prairie environment preserves a measure of inviolability . . .” (125). Though he grapples with historical dynamism to a degree far greater than Kreisel, it seems that the very dynamism of temporal factors leads McCourt to reject a functional approach to regional definition—an approach his argument is sufficiently nuanced to support. Instead, McCourt falls back on a formal, environmental mode of regional definition that accords with his premise of regional constancy. McCourt’s mode of regional definition shares profound affinities with Kreisel’s. The prairie environment is the only regional constant, and is, therefore, the only possible determinant of the “unity of spirit” /“way of life” given as evidence of regional integrity in his preface (n. pag.). And because McCourt projects the (social) agency necessary to construct the prairie region onto a

seemingly asocial nature, his theorization of regional space is virtually indistinguishable from Kreisel's.

To summarize, in my analyses of Kreisel and McCourt's arguments I have demonstrated that two ostensibly formal literary regionalists introduce evidence that could easily support a functional understanding of regional definition. I have argued that Kreisel and McCourt reject this evidence because they are reluctant to recognize their regions as not just spatial, but temporal, and thus *temporary*.

This reluctance emerges as a great irony when it is situated within a wider historical context because time has everything to do, not only with the construction of regions, but also with the emergence of Kreisel's "The Prairie: A State of Mind" and McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction*. By the latter half of the 20th century, the (relative) social and class homogeneity that was fostered by the dominance of the independent, family-run farm was splintering into an increasingly overt heterogeneity, primarily because of the oil boom.<sup>5</sup> Neither McCourt nor Kreisel denies the social transformation occurring across the prairie provinces. McCourt addresses it when he writes of "dying villages," of senior citizens whose children have "long since gone far away" and whose "family farm[s] have] been sold—merged with a larger unit as likely as not owned by strangers" (123). It is these circumstances that have left a generation of prairie residents without "any tangible connections . . . with their own past" (123). In contrast to the decline of traditional rural communities, McCourt reports that "the urban community flourishes" (*ibid*).

Kreisel's comments present much the same picture of a prairie in transition: in 1968 he writes of how the "social and industrial changes" on the prairie have "been

rapidly accelerating in the past ten years or so" (266). In his conclusion Kreisel mentions, significantly, that he must now *leave* the "great cities where hundreds of thousands of people now live" to encounter "the great, vast land-sea" that symbolizes the essence of his prairie (266). It takes no great act of imagination to see the comfort McCourt and Kreisel gain by investing their beloved prairie with an essence that is seemingly immune to the social and economic tumult occurring all around it. In doing so, they foster the comforting delusion that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

Human geographer Doreen Massey argues explicitly in "Politics and Space/Time" that space is anything but independent of time. Massey stresses "the necessity of thinking in terms of space-time" to a very particular end (84). The alternative of theorizing space and time discretely leads inevitably to a "view of space which, in one way or another, defines it as stasis, as utterly opposed to time" (67). While time is seen typically to embody movement, flow and dynamism, space, as time's antithesis, represents the absence of such flux.<sup>6</sup> What Massey finds so disturbing about the widespread belief that space is time's inactive other is that such a belief effaces space's social effectiveness as a phenomenon that is "full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and co-operation" (81). If we understand the political to be that which is socially contestable, then de-temporalizing spatial divisions effectively removes them from the realm of the political.

Kreisel's and McCourt's pieces provide ready examples that demonstrate how the act of theorizing regions as timeless tends to depoliticize regional space. As Massey suggests, this depoliticization is enabled by the belief that forces of social contestation are

evinced only by time, which Kreisel and McCourt accredit with no (explicit) role in the production of their regions. And it is this very belief that legitimates Kreisel and McCourt's claims that their prairies produce a collective "state of mind" and "unity of spirit" amongst prairie dwellers (respectively) (Kreisel 256; McCourt n.pag.). By negating the role time plays in the production of their literary regions, Kreisel and McCourt are able to imbue these spaces with a guaranteed level of social unity. This land-based social unity effectively depoliticizes regional space by mitigating the inevitability of social contestation within regional borders. Such an approach also places questions of social difference outside of the interpretive paradigm because it works from the *assumption* of intra-regional social cohesion. And to assume—without demonstrating—the existence of a shared regional consciousness is to refuse to recognize even the potential existence of subjectivities that could belie such a claim.

The socially repressive model of regional society that Kreisel's and McCourt's mode of literary regionalism produces is cast in particularly stark relief when their arguments are re-situated within a context of regional literary criticism. As intuition might suggest, formalists construct regional writers as rather passive figures. They are not believed to participate in the on-going construction of literary regions; rather, their writing is thought to reflect or express the regional essence that seemingly pre- and post-dates them. It is the task of regional writers to "understand and describe the influence of the region upon the people who live within its confines," McCourt tells us, and to convey through their work "the subtle modifications of character which inevitably result from the influence upon ordinary men and women of a highly distinctive environment" (56). Kreisel has already been shown to mirror this position in asserting that "all discussion of

the writing produced in the Canadian west must of necessity begin with the impact of the landscape upon the mind" (257).

If the aim of regional literature is to reflect a regional essence, the role of the regional literary critic follows in rather straightforward fashion: a belief in a seemingly land-based regional essence supports a parallel belief that the "land itself" produces an ostensibly objective standard of literary value (Kreisel 266). An investment in such an objective canon-measure displaces concerns about a regional critic's particular interpretive bias, be it gender-, class-, sexuality- or ethnicity-based, right out of the interpretive paradigm. As Alison Calder comments while interrogating the genre of prairie realism, this kind of attention to a seemingly immutable "landscape precludes consideration of gender, race, and class conflicts included (or suppressed) in these texts" (57). According to the formalist school, canonical works of regional literature are those that reflect with the greatest accuracy the inevitable effect that a land-based regional essence exercises uniformly on its inhabitants.

It perhaps goes without saying that space does not exercise an even effect on subjects and that formalists examine regional literature from a highly subjective perspective. To consider but one example, it takes no great act of imagination to see a gender bias operating when Henry Kreisel names "Man, the giant-conquerer, and man, the insignificant dwarf always threatened by defeat" as "the two polarities of the state of mind produced by the sheer physical fact of the prairie" (256). Where do we situate prairie women within this model, the women whose sphere of existence is delimited with a striking regularity within canonical works of prairie realism to home and garden? Her collective existence as prairie woman, house-bound helpmate is given little recognition

within Kreisel's model because, though it pretends universality, this model describes with greatest precision a state of mind generated by a very particular set of social and economic circumstances—those that govern the life of the overwhelmingly male, rural, agrarian prairie dweller. It is the prairie farmer who ekes out an existence between the extremities of earth and sky, economic self-actualization and environmental devastation, whose "state of mind" is most likely to find expression in Kreisel's bipolar vision of "man, the giant-conquerer, and man, the insignificant dwarf always threatened by defeat" (256). And a gender-bias is not the only one operating in Kreisel's model of regional consciousness. It represents no more accurately the state of mind produced by the *urban* environment within which the majority of male *and* female prairie dwellers now work and live than it does that of the house-bound female help mates who inhabit the novels of Robert Stead, F.P Grove and Sinclair Ross.

\* \* \*

Having now re-assessed Westfall's formalists, I would like to offer some preliminary conclusions on what my analyses tell us about the methodology Westfall introduces in "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature." To begin, I must stipulate that Westfall's comments demonstrate that he sees little value in formalist and environmental approaches to regional studies. He makes this clear when he characterizes environmental formalism as "reductionist" and argues that "Complexity and change must be recognized in any analytical approach to regions in Canadian studies" (10; 12).

However, Westfall seems less aware of the degree to which the methodology he utilizes not only fails to critique, but actually *perpetuates* the very reductionism and stasis he points to in denigrating the formalist mode of regional definition. What my more detailed analyses of Kreisel's "The Prairie: A State of Mind" and McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction* have demonstrated is that these two ostensibly formal literary regionalists can be classified accurately as formalists only if we *join them* in suppressing the evidence of temporal flux which they acknowledge in their social commentary, but deny in their dogged insistence that the prairie is a natural and timeless spatial division. What this tells us is that the category of the formal literary regionalist that Westfall utilizes is incapable of articulating a nascent, yet crucially important, understanding that percolates beneath the surface of Kreisel's and McCourt's arguments—namely, that formal spatial divisions are also inevitably temporal divisions. Given that the historicization of formal, environmental regions constitutes a fundamental shift towards a more functional mode of regional definition, and a shift from a land-based to a society-based understanding of regional origins, this critical blind spot constitutes a substantive limitation within Westfall's methodology.

The value of Westfall's methodology is also limited by its status as a neutral analytic tool. Its function is to describe the field of Canadian literary regionalism as it is rather than to critique the vision of regional society that formalist thought gives rise to or to envision an alternate means of conceptualizing regional space. Classifying Kreisel and McCourt as formalists does nothing to critique the socially repressive vision of regional society that environmental determinism produces. Any normative analysis Westfall provides takes the form of supplementary commentary; it is not an integral component of

the classification process itself. As I shift my focus from Westfall's formalists to his functionalists, these limitations in his mode of classification will necessitate the introduction of an alternate methodology.

### Section Three: Towards an Alternate Methodology

Westfall names Dick Harrison, Eli and Ann Mandel, and W.H. New as “The key figures” within the functional school of Canadian literary regionalism (10).<sup>7</sup> In several regards functionalism appears to have arisen from its members’ desire to reject the premises that inform the formal approach to Canadian literary regionalism. Most crucially, the functionalists have rejected the environmental determinism that founds the formal mode of regional definition. As Westfall tells us, the functional approach “avoids many of the problems that stem from the reductionist assumptions of physical environmentalism” (10). Though I will demonstrate in section four’s analysis of Dick Harrison’s *Unnamed Country: the Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* that Harrison continues to rely upon key facets of formalism, this aspect of Harrison’s thought distinguishes his work from that of the other functionalists. By and large Westfall is correct to argue that functionalists appear to have deliberately distanced themselves from formalist thought.

This distance is apparent in the role functionalists ascribe to regional authors in the process of regional identity formation. As Westfall explains, in contrast to the formal school, within the functional school,

Writers no longer simply reflect the region they describe; now they help to create the region itself. Art and identity are linked closely together.

Regional writers take the cultural material of a place and transform it into a mythology that the people of the region can identify as their own.

Without this mythology the cultural region would not exist. (11)

While formalists imagine regional authors as singularly passive figures who give voice to regional identities that emanate from the “land itself,” functionalists construct them as singularly active agents who produce their regions’ (seemingly unitary) cultural identities through the writing process (Kreisel 266).

Although I join Westfall in championing the distance functionalists have gained from environmental determinism, I argue that the functionalists’ efforts to liberate regional space from a strictly material determinant has injected a new set of problems into Canadian literary regionalism. In particular, the functionalists’ very desire to reject the simplistic materialism of environmental determinism has led them to theorize regional spaces as a dematerialized conceptual frameworks that regional writers activate by filling them with cultural material. This approach is typified in Eli Mandel’s contention that the Canadian prairie is “a region of the human mind . . .” (“Images” 203). When considered together, formal and functional literary regionalists have theorized regional space into a needlessly binary opposition I figure as the “two solitudes” of Canadian literary regionalism.

Although the two solitudes of Canadian literary regionalism that I depict bear considerable resemblance to the formal and functional schools of literary regionalism that Westfall utilizes, there are significant differences. These differences are primarily—though not exclusively—differences of intent, and differences that reinvoke my critique of Westfall’s methodology as analytically neutral. As my analysis of his formalists has suggested, the neutrality of Westfall’s methodology presents a problem for my project because the critiques I bring against Westfall’s formalists and functionalists do not arise

from neutral analytic ground (indeed, I query the existence of such a ground), and as a result, they cannot be articulated within the vocabulary of Westfall's methodology.

In order to articulate these critiques of functionalism I will now instigate a break with Westfall's methodology and introduce an alternate means of systematizing the field of Canadian literary regionalism. Because this second methodology operates with a greater degree of ideological self-consciousness, it enables, and foregrounds the critiques I have to make. Yet, just as I characterize the functionalist approach as a *qualified* advancement over the formalist approach to literary regionalism, so the alternate methodology I introduce represents a *qualified* advancement over Westfall's methodology: as will be seen, this alternate methodology has its own critical blind spots.

This second methodology, which I derive from Henri Lefebvre's work in *The Production of Space* and Edward Soja's refinement of this work in *Postmodern Geographies*, offers two advantages for my own project of assessing the spaces of Canadian literary regionalism. First, it introduces a more precise and critically inflected vocabulary of space. With this vocabulary I can simultaneously classify *and* critique the tradition of Canadian literary regionalism and, in so doing, foreground the reasons why I think the time has come to once again re-think the premises that inform this field. Second, this methodology provides a more precise means of systematizing the field of Canadian literary regionalism than Westfall's because it addresses the points of intersection that conjoin first- and second-solitude thought within a single problematic. It is these points of intersection that cannot find expression within Westfall's methodology, based as it is on a hard and fast *distinction* between formal and functional thought.

The problematic I speak of is the extent to which the conceptualizations of regional space produced by formalists and functionalists alike tend to efface space's status as a phenomenon that is both socially produced and socially productive. Formalists efface space's social productivity when they project the power to produce regional identities onto an asocial nature. By contrast, functionalists efface space's social productivity when they project the agency to produce regional identities onto regional authors. Regional space typically emerges from functionalist discourses as an empty container or void whose identity-generating capacity inheres in its capacity to contain the material regional authors produce. Thus both formalists and functionalists have imagined regional space in a way that effaces the myriad of ways in which social practices imbue space with a social efficacy; through these processes, space takes on a social agency that enables it not only to mirror or contain identities, but to produce them.

Canadian literary regionalists' ignorance of the social character of spatial production does not set them apart as a group that is singularly lacking in something the rest of us are not. Far from it. Lefebvre's theory of spatial production is dedicated to explaining (among other things) why space's social effectivity eludes so many of us. Lefebvre explicitly links our wide-spread ignorance of the social origins of spatial production to the prevalence of two illusions. The two solitudes of Canadian literary regionalism that I identify are but one emanation of a more generic "double illusion" that Lefebvre argues has operated to "conceal" the fact that "(social) space is a (social) product" (27). Each of the two facets of this "double illusion," he explains, "refers back to the other, reinforces the other, and hides behind the other. These two aspects are the

illusion of transparency on the one hand and the illusion of opacity, or ‘realistic’ illusion, on the other” (27).

People operating under the illusion of opacity tend to overemphasize the physicality of space and to think that space’s “natural simplicity” speaks for itself (Lefebvre 29). Within this illusion social agents are not thought to play a role in processes of spatialization because spatial divisions are not thought to be produced at all, but are believed to be *found* in an asocial nature. The illusion of opacity accurately characterizes the work of Kreisel and McCourt, both of whom have been shown to account insufficiently for the role society plays—and they themselves play, as active members of their society—in producing regional spatial divisions. Within their work, literary regions are posited as natural material divisions that derive from natural regional environments.

The superiority of the two solitudes methodology over that of Westfall’s is exhibited by its capacity to explain the social consequences of theories of regional identity. For instance, the illusion of opacity explains the configurations of regional society to which Kreisel and McCourt’s first-solitude arguments give rise. In his refinement of Lefebvre’s work in *Postmodern Geographies*, Soja explains that within the illusion of opacity, “Time and space . . . are represented as a natural relation between things, explainable objectively in terms of the substantive physical properties and attributes of these things in themselves . . . ” (124). First-solitude regionalists’ adherence to the illusion of opacity, which leads to the “submergence of social conflict in depoliticized geometries,” explains Kreisel’s belief that there is a “state of mind produced by the sheer physical fact of the prairie” (Soja, *Postmodern* 124; Kreisel 256). The

machinations of this illusion are also apparent in McCourt's contention that there is a "remarkable unity of spirit . . . amongst prairie dwellers; and a way of life as distinctive as the region which fosters it" (n.pag.).

By contrast, people operating under the illusion of transparency tend to conceptualize space as an invisible, unproblematic phenomenon "giving action free reign" (Lefebvre 27). Lefebvre looks to the "good old idealist school" to explain the origins of this illusion, positing its kinship to the belief that the subject, "his thought and his desires," has a greater reality than "things" (29). Within such an epistemology, space is reduced to a subjective condition, or, as Soja characterizes it, "to a mental construct alone, a way of thinking, an ideational process . . ." (*Postmodern* 125). While the illusion of transparency reduces space to a subjective condition, the illusion of opacity inflates it to a universal given; while the former dematerializes space, the latter objectifies it. However, both illusions operate in tandem to obscure the fact that "(social) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre 27).

I invoke Hugh MacLennan's metaphor of "two solitudes" to capture the particular effect Lefebvre's double illusion has had on the ways in which Canadian literary regionalists have imagined regional space. My choice of MacLennan's metaphor has, admittedly, been influenced by my desire to domesticate for Canadian literary critics two interrelated concepts that emanate from unfamiliar disciplinary turf. However, MacLennan's metaphor strikes me as an apt one for other reasons as well.

Though my interpretation of MacLennan's epigraph is one amongst many, it seems to me that he invokes Rilke's poeticization of a condition of amorous intersubjectivity to articulate his vision of a kind of bicultural nationalism in which unity

is enabled through the mutual recognition of difference. It is the mutuality of this gesture that establishes a kind of conceptual bridge across which “two solitudes” can “protect, / and touch, and greet each other” (n. pag.). This kind of unity within difference also characterizes accurately Lefebvre’s two illusions: although the illusions of opacity and transparency generate different kinds of space, they are mutually interdependent in that “each illusion embodies and nourishes the other” (Lefebvre 30). And just as MacLennan’s invocation of a bicultural, French/English context of Canadian nationalism obscures our recognition of an inevitably more complex, multicultural nation-space, so the two solitudes of Canadian literary regionalism have acted in tandem to obscure our recognition of a third, more multi-faceted kind of regional space.

Eli Mandel’s “Images of Prairie Man” (1973) provides an excellent means of exemplifying the articulated character of Lefebvre’s two illusions because Mandel sets out in this article to distinguish his functionalism from that of his formalist predecessor, Henry Kreisel. It was Mandel’s identification of a seeming contradiction within Kreisel’s representation of the prairie that first alerted me to how literary regionalists can come to rely *simultaneously* on the illusions of transparency and opacity. The interdependent relation that Lefebvre theorizes between these illusions suddenly came to life when I read Mandel’s statement that

Henry Kreisel in his very fine study “The Prairie: A State of Mind” seems quite unaware of any contradiction between his title and his remark, “All discussion of the literature produced in the Canadian west must of necessity begin with the impact of the landscape upon the mind.” (203)

Though Mandel *seems* correct to characterize Kreisel's two representations of the prairie as contradictory, a closer inspection of the premises that nurture these statements reveals that they share considerable philosophical ground. And the philosophical ground they share explains the tendency of the illusions of opacity and transparency to produce, in tandem, "a flickering or oscillatory effect," an effect which Lefebvre argues is "as important as either of the illusions considered in isolation" (Lefebvre 30).

Because each side of the double illusion Lefebvre articulates "refers back to the other, reinforces the other, and hides behind the other," there is less of a contradiction than Mandel suggests between Kreisel's two representations of the prairie (Lefebvre 27). Lefebvre explains that what *appears* as a contradiction is actually closer to a bipolarity. The symbiotic interdependence of these two illusions derives from the fact that, at their extreme limits, idealism and materialism are nourished by common philosophical roots. While a simplistic materialism posits that reality inheres in the objects that shape a subject's perceptions, idealism posits that reality inheres in the individuated *cogito*, a *cogito* that determines the objects of a subject's perceptions. Since both positions negate the role social relations play in shaping our perceptions, it is surprisingly easy to shift from one position to the other. Such is the case with the seeming contradiction Mandel points to in Kreisel's article: because the role social relations play in producing regional spatial divisions is neglected, whether he names "the vast land itself" or a unitary "state of mind" as the agent of production, Kreisel can oscillate between these positions with no sense of internal contradiction.

Both the tenaciousness of the hold these two illusions have on our capacity to conceptualize space and the slipperiness of the ground that separates them are revealed in

Mandel's refinement of Kreisel's work. "For Kreisel," he begins, "the unifying theme [of a region] is that of the impact of a particular environment. All that I could add is that I would go further and find that unifying theme and images in the mind itself, projecting *onto* the land its image . . ." (207). In conceiving of his refinement to Kreisel's work as a supplement rather than an alternative, it is Mandel himself who "seems quite unaware of any contradiction" between his own position and Kreisel's (Mandel 47). Mandel's reinscription of the very contradiction he noted earlier in Kreisel's work demonstrates the success with which the illusions of transparency and opacity have operated to convince us that there are only two ways of conceptualizing regional space.

Though Lefebvre's illusions of opacity and transparency are highly articulated, they are not equatable. For one, each illusion tends to engender a different kind of space. The illusion of opacity produces a space that is "liable to take on the physical qualities and properties of the earth" while the illusion of transparency tends to produce a space that is seemingly without content altogether (Lefebvre 30). Mandel paints just such a picture of empty regional space when he argues that the prairie is best understood as a "conceptual framework" ("Images" 203). Mandel posits further that the regional artist "chooses images that help to fill in that conceptual framework" (208), and in so doing, corroborates Lefebvre's contention that space appears as "a void packed like a parcel with various contents" within the illusion of transparency (Lefebvre 27).

I have explained how Lefebvre's double illusion provides a means of expressing and explaining the interdependence of first- and second-solitude literary regionalism, while Westfall's methodology cannot. I also suggest that Lefebvre's methodology describes the historical tradition of Canadian literary regionalism more accurately than

Westfall's. While Lefebvre insists that the illusions of opacity and transparency work in tandem to prevent our recognition of social space, Westfall contends that the time of formalist thought has come and gone. According to Westfall, formalism has been ushered out of Canadian literary regionalism by the functionalism he calls "the new regionalism" (6).<sup>8</sup>

The historical progression from a formal to a functional mode of literary regionalism that Westfall posits seems at least intuitively correct. One would perhaps expect, for example, that the vision of intra-regional social harmony produced by the land-based essentialism of formalist or first-solitude literary regionalism would have gone the way of the horse and buggy by now. Yet this is not the case. First-solitude contentions of land-based social cohesion continue to appear in contemporary discourses of Canadian literary regionalism. In his introduction to the edited collection *Regionalism Reconsidered*, for example, David Jordan invokes such a utopian vision of regional society when he argues that "Regionalism . . . is born of a sense of identity and belonging that is shared by a region's inhabitants" (xv). And like McCourt and Kreisel before him, Jordan locates the origin of social cohesion in a seemingly asocial nature when he stipulates that "this sense of community springs from an intimate relation to the natural environment" (xv-xvi).

A somewhat more subtle means by which first-solitude thought continues to influence contemporary literary regionalism can be traced to the popular construction of regions as smaller spatial divisions within the Canadian nation-space. Although this aggregative mode of regional definition does not necessarily bespeak an indebtedness to first-solitude thought, an assumption about regional space that often accrues from this

definition does reveal such an indebtedness. Indeed, it seems that the widespread tendency to define regional space in opposition to national space has helped to legitimize the more troubling belief that the difference between regional and national *subjects* is equally oppositional. For while assumptions about the existence of an overarching national identity or culture are thought to reveal a blatantly nationalistic ideology at work, positing the existence of such homogenizing entities on behalf of regions meets with far less suspicion.

I relate the prevalence of the assumption of regional social cohesion to another popular assumption: that national diversity inheres in regional difference. There are, of course, many kinds of social differences at play across both regions and nations that do not relate explicitly to geographic difference. Yet the hegemonic tendency to equate national social diversity with regional difference has encouraged a systematic de-prioritization of these (seemingly) non-spatial social differences within regionalism because, when the critical focus is on regions *as opposed to nations*, critics (falsely) presume that their analyses have always already taken account of social difference. And the connection between this belief and first-solitude thought is easily established. As my analysis of McCourt and Kreisel's work has demonstrated, first-solitude regionalists utilize this very logic when they equate regional social uniformity with geographic uniformity. According to McCourt and Kreisel, regional environments *are* the origin of regional identities, and as a result, the "state of mind" produced by the "land itself" is thought to be the only significant kind of difference that regionalists need consider or account for (Kreisel 254; 266).

I find it a great irony that while the contemporary insurgence of post-colonial theory has enabled myriad critiques of the notion of national social unity, these valuable critiques have at times reinforced the construction of regions as the nation's less ideological and more socially unified spatial sub-divisions. Herb Wyile exhibits this ironic reinforcement when he argues in "Writing, Regionalism and Globalism in a Post-Nationalist Canada" that, "with the concept of the monolithic nation-state on the wane, and with artists and academics becoming increasingly anti-centric and sensitive to the importance of difference and particularity, the way is being paved for a revival of sorts for regionalism" (10). The unstated assumption that Wyile perpetuates here is that national difference is articulated through regional particularity, and that regions somehow *embody* (and I invoke the term deliberately to suggest a kind of organic unity) such difference and particularity.

The corrective necessitated by the trends exhibited by Jordan and Wyile is refreshingly simple: in order to avoid some of the more overt effacements of intra-regional social diversity that first-solitude thought encourages, claims of regional social cohesion must be held to the same critical standards as are claims of national social cohesion. Though national spatial divisions are admittedly produced through more formal, institutional means, we should not allow the relative informality of regional spatial production to encourage a belief in the organicism of regional spatial divisions.<sup>9</sup> Both national and regional spaces are socially produced, and both are equally capable of repressing the recognition of social difference within their borders.

#### Section Four: Dick Harrison's *Unnamed Country*

No single critical study of Canadian literary regionalism demonstrates the extent to which first- and second-solitude regionalism represent two sides of a singular problematic more forcefully than Dick Harrison's *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (1977). This study also reveals the extent to which Westfall is incorrect when he claims that functionalism "avoids many of the problems that stem from the reductionist assumptions of physical environmentalism" (10). In a sense, Harrison marries the worst aspects of both first- and second-solitude thought in this study, and in so doing, perpetrates acts of social exclusion that I find morally troubling. As will become apparent when I turn my attention from Harrison's study to some of the work on Canadian literary regionalism produced by W. H. New and Eli Mandel, Harrison's reliance upon an essentialized, asocial nature distinguishes his work from that of his second-solitude affiliates. It also imbues Harrison's study with a different trajectory and a different focus than New or Mandel's literary regionalism—namely, the quest for an *indigenous* body of regional literature. It is both because of these differences, and because of Harrison's unique melding of first- and second-solitude thought that I critique this study independently.

In *Unnamed Country* Harrison relies on first-solitude thought in a more overt and sustained way than Westfall's other functionalists. This reliance is manifested most clearly in the two regional spaces that inform his argument. The first of these two regional spaces, which Harrison defines explicitly in his preface as "the settled areas of three prairie provinces," bears considerable resemblance to those deployed by Kreisel and

McCourt (xiv). Although the prerequisites of provincial status and human settlement *should* be a clear indication that this region is a socially produced and temporally delimited spatial division, Harrison misrecognizes it as an asocial and atemporal space of nature. In a statement that resonates with the influence of Kreisel and McCourt's thought, Harrison claims that "the austere face of the prairie has not changed that much since Henry Kelsey first saw it. There were no forests to cut down, and man's structures have done little to interrupt the basic lines of the landscape" (28).<sup>10</sup> And like Kreisel and McCourt before him, Harrison imbues this region with an agency of sorts in contending that there is an essential message that "the land has been trying to tell us from the beginning" (199).

The second region that operates in *Unnamed Country* bears considerable resemblance to those of Harrison's second-solitude affiliates and explains why Westfall groups Harrison in with New, and Eli and Ann Mandel. This is a dematerialized region of fictional representations. What is interesting is that Harrison never explicitly addresses the presence of this second "phantom" region. He does, however, allude to its existence when he contends that, during the first stages of European settlement, "like all unsettled territory," the prairie "lacked the fictions which make a place entirely real" (ix).

Harrison does not replicate Robert Kroetsch's famous statement to Margaret Laurence that Westerners "haven't got an identity until somebody tells our story. The fiction makes us real" (*Creation* 63). Rather, Harrison's more qualified statement, that fictions are necessary to "make a place entirely real," suggests that the prairie region, with or without these fictions, partakes of some level of reality (ix). But when bereft of fictions, it is only a partial reality experienced by the inhabitants of Harrison's first-

solitude region of settled provincial territory. An *entire* reality is achieved only when prairie authors construct fictional representations of the prairie that express “what the land has been trying to tell [them] from the beginning” (199). It is these representations that constitute Harrison’s second-solitude region of shared fictions. In effect, then, regional identity is achieved only when these first- and second-solitude regions come together in a kind of transcendent unification, a unification that is achieved when regional authors perceive, express and transmit the land’s message to the inhabitants of Harrison’s first-solitude region.

Harrison’s juxtaposition of a first- and second-solitude region instills his study with a different set of preoccupations, and a different set of problems, than those of his second-solitude affiliates. The most obvious of these problems is that Harrison’s two regional spaces are temporally disjunctive. Because Harrison’s first-solitude region requires the two prerequisites of human settlement and prairie provinces, its origin would logically be assumed to coincide with the granting of provincial status to Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905. Yet the inception of Harrison’s second-solitude region of shared fictions pre-dates his first-solitude region by some three decades: according to Harrison, “prairie fiction began in 1871” (45). Why 1871? Though Harrison does not make the connection for us, cross-referencing establishes that this date coincides with the publication of an account of “the true prairie” by Sir William F. Butler, “the first eloquent prairie traveller” (5). While Harrison’s second-solitude region begins in 1871, the inception of his first-solitude prairie lags behind by some thirty-four years.<sup>11</sup>

And it is because Harrison’s first- and second-solitude regions interact and alter each other that Harrison’s study is pre-occupied by a concern that sets it apart from the

other second-solitude regionalists. As will become apparent when I shift from Harrison's study to some of the work New and Mandel have contributed to the discourse of Canadian literary regionalism, while typical second-solitude regions float freely between geographic and mental space, Harrison's does not: its sphere of influence is delimited by the margins of his first-solitude region of settled provincial territory. Although the territory that delimits the range of influence of Harrison's second-solitude region does, admittedly, fluctuate between 1871 and 1913, its consistent presence in *some* form prevents Harrison's second-solitude region from exhibiting the generic flexibility that allows New's "East" and "West," for instance, to stand in for all spaces demarcated by their inhabitants' sense of distinctness.

Because Harrison's second-solitude region is grounded in geographic space, he envisions a different trajectory for regional fiction than do New, Eli Mandel or Ann Mandel. As Harrison reports in his preface, *Unnamed Country* "is in one sense about [prairie authors'] struggle for an indigenous prairie fiction" (xii).

Despite Harrison's unique focus on achieving an indigenous regional fiction, he provides no definition of the term. As a result I am left to assume that his understanding of indigenous is amongst the canonical definitions. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (8th ed) stipulates that "indigenous" refers, especially in regard to flora and fauna, to those things "originating naturally in a region," while in reference to people "indigenous" signifies the simpler condition of being "born in a region." Clearly the latter definition cannot be what Harrison has in mind: to "struggle" for an "indigenous prairie fiction" is both unnecessary and futile if indigenousness is understood as an unalterable condition of birth (xii). The third and final definition offered describes the more ambiguous condition

of “belonging naturally to a place.” In the absence of a definition for “indigenous” provided by Harrison himself, this third alternative of “belonging naturally to a place” seems the most accurate of the possibilities available.

It could be argued that to “struggle” for a regional fiction that belongs naturally to a place is as futile an endeavour as to struggle for the condition of being born in a region (Harrison xii). And indeed, I would agree with this position were I grounding the condition of belonging naturally to a place within metaphysical parameters: any human collective or the fiction it produces is forever alienated from a natural relation to place. But I am interpreting Harrison’s quest for an indigenous fiction within social parameters. Given this context, the *perception* that a literature belongs naturally to a place *can* be struggled for, that struggle being constituted by efforts to establish hegemonically a widespread belief in such a natural relation between a body of fiction and a place.<sup>12</sup> When Harrison asserts that his study is about “the struggle for an indigenous prairie fiction[,]” he is performing ideological work toward naturalizing the relation between a body of fiction and the first-solitude region of settled provincial territory he defines in his preface (xii).

Since no culture or human collective is without its hegemonic beliefs, it strikes me as necessary to specify what is wrong with Harrison’s efforts to hegemonize a “representative” body of prairie fiction. Are these efforts not an understandable and even a productive means of compensating through textual analysis for the sense of political disenfranchisement many prairie residents feel within the Canadian Federation, a feeling captured succinctly (if approximately) in the concept of Western alienation? In responding to such a query I must concur that it is precisely the prevalence—or at least

the perception of prevalence—amongst Western Canadians of such feelings of disenfranchisement from, and disempowerment within, the Canadian Federation that lends social legitimacy to Harrison's championing, and anticipation, of an indigenous body of regional fiction. And the desires for a greater degree of political autonomy and recognition are related to the call for an indigenous fiction. The satisfaction of both aims is furthered by arguments that justify recognizing—among Western and other Canadians—the prairie region's distinctiveness.

But I must add that when such arguments for regional distinctiveness are put into practice, they are rarely without an ironic aspect: for the very feelings of disenfranchisement that lead the alienated to mitigate their feelings of alienation by arguing for regional distinctiveness tend to desensitize them to the degree to which such compensatory arguments tend to rely on the disenfranchisement of other groups within their region. Working to establish hegemonically a belief in a distinct prairie culture, for instance, encourages people to misrecognize the prairie as an atemporal and unicultural region. And such cumulative acts of misrecognition contribute to the alienation of those intra-regional groups whose cultural practices and beliefs do not accord with such a seemingly unitary prairie culture. While a prairie culture ostensibly represents *all* prairie dwellers, it tends in practice to express the beliefs and practices of the region's dominant cultural sub-group. Raymond Williams corroborates this point when he stipulates that hegemony is “in the strongest sense a ‘culture,’ but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes” (*Marxism and Literature*, 110). In what follows I will demonstrate how it is that the struggle for an indigenous

prairie fiction that Harrison champions in *Unnamed Country* comes to entail “the dominance and subordination of particular classes” within his region (*ibid*).

Harrison views *Unnamed Country* as a study that carries on where Henry Kreisel’s “The Prairie: A State of Mind” left off. In his introduction Harrison invokes and integrates into his argument Kreisel’s claim that “All discussion of the literature produced in the Canadian West must of necessity begin with the impact of the landscape upon the mind” (xii). Yet Harrison insists that “at the same time, the effect of that impact cannot be fruitfully discussed in isolation from the inherited culture which provides the other, unseen environment of that mind” (xii-xiii). In *Unnamed Country*, then, Harrison introduces a “third basic element” into Kreisel’s formulation of the relationship between the Canadian prairie and its inhabitants—“the influence of culture on man’s reaction to the landscape” (xiii).

It is the fact that subjects bring an “inherited culture” to their encounter with the prairie landscape that renders the quest for “an indigenous prairie fiction” a “struggle” (xiii; xii). What prairie authors must *struggle* to overcome is a conceptual shortcoming within themselves, a shortcoming that I concretize in the metaphor of a perceptually distorting cultural lens.<sup>13</sup> This distorting lens derives from the cultural “condition[ing]” prairie settlers have undergone at the hands of their “inherited culture” (1; xiii). The presence of this distorting lens establishes a disjunctive relationship between “the new land” prairie settlers arrive(d) at and the “old culture” that mediates their perception of this new land (ix). Though Harrison argues that this lens of inherited culture afflicts prairie settlers to this day, he contends that its effects were most extreme during early settlement times when settlers’ “perceptions were so conditioned that in the most prosaic

and literal sense, they could not see clearly what was around them" (1). And since Harrison claims that the quest for an indigenous prairie fiction is "continual and unfinished[,]” he believes that this cultural lens is still (or was, as of 1977) distorting authors' abilities to perceive the prairie “accurately” (7).

My investigation into the social inequities enacted by Harrison's argument began when I questioned why he refers to a singular “inherited culture” in explaining what alienates prairie dwellers from perceptual access to their landscape. Specifically, I began to wonder which of the many cultural groups who settled in, or currently inhabit, his first-solitude region are recognized by Harrison as informing the “inherited culture” he invokes (xii). For although *I* contend that the diversity of peoples who inhabit Harrison's first-solitude region dictates that *Unnamed Country* is situated within a multicultural context, Harrison's references to such homogenizing master-categories as “the prairie mind” and “the prairie imagination” suggests that he does not share this belief (99).

At points throughout *Unnamed Country* Harrison addresses differences that I would identify as cultural, and in so doing, seems to suggest that there is no singular culture from which prairie migrants have inherited a second “unseen environment of [the] mind” (xiii). Harrison notes and incorporates into this unitary “prairie mind” (what I understand to be) cultural differences that distinguished English-speaking prairie migrants who formed “the dominant minority” on the prairie from other groups (99; xiv). For example, Harrison contends that the “cultural baggage” of these English-speakers included an “individualism” that “was better adapted to a market economy than to a subsistence economy” while “the Metis” and “some East-European groups such as the Mennonites” brought with them “strategies of adaptation which encouraged community

and cooperation” (18). Yet Harrison does not identify those prairie dwellers whose identities are informed by a Mennonite, Metis or Eastern European heritage as culturally distinct.

Indeed, the only peoples living within his first-solitude region that Harrison identifies as *culturally* distinct are “the Indian[s]” whose usefulness to prairie authors he stresses in his concluding chapter (199). Harrison groups the various cultures of First Nations peoples into a singular “Indian culture” and contrasts this group with a unified collective of “Canadians” when he contends that “we have felt free to forget the Indian entirely” (199). Thus “Indian culture” constitutes the second component of the context Harrison envisions as bicultural (199).

Although Harrison effaces the cultural diversity of First Nations peoples and of all other “Canadians” inhabiting his first-solitude region with equal vigor, he does so to very different ends (199). While effacing the cultural diversity of “Canadians” allows for their collective inclusion within the “prairie mind” and “the prairie imagination,” homogenizing native peoples within a singular “Indian culture” allows for their collective exclusion from these master-categories (199; ix; 99; 199).

Though I do not want to lose sight of the fact that there are substantial cultural differences that distinguish First Nations peoples from other cultural groups inhabiting Harrison’s first-solitude region, I do wish to emphasize that Harrison recognizes these cultural differences *selectively*. And it is the selectivity of this recognition that legitimates disturbing acts of historical forgetting. Given Harrison’s claim that “Canadian prairie fiction is about a basically European society spreading itself across a very un-European landscape” and given his references to a “White imagination” (5) and a

“White world” (198), I am left to speculate about the extent to which the stability of Harrison’s master-categories of the “prairie mind” and “prairie imagination” depends upon forgetting the presence of non-European peoples within his first-solitude prairie (99).

Harrison’s decision to recognize only First Nations peoples as culturally distinct legitimates an act of historical forgetting that I need not speculate about. This hard and fast cultural distinction allows Harrison to forget the degree to which the line that sharply differentiated native from non-native peoples before European contact has been *forcibly* blurred through more than a century of not just co-habitation, but of colonization. Given that First Nations peoples had little choice but to partake of the linguistic, religious, economic and spatial practices of the dominant cultural fragment (through forced participation in a capitalist economy, through forced enrollment in residential schools and through forced settlement on residential land), Harrison’s construction of a clear opposition between “the inherited culture” of the “basically European society” and the “Indian culture” of “the native peoples” allows him to perform a rather grandiose act of historical forgetting (99; ix; 199).

And indeed, this act of historical forgetting is not the only ideological work that is enabled by Harrison’s construction of “Indian culture” as anomalously immiscible with the “prairie mind” (199; 99). This immiscibility legitimates another act of forgetting on Harrison’s part, and one that relates directly back to Harrison’s hybridization of first- and second-solitude thought.

Harrison melds elements of first- and second-solitude literary regionalism in a way that foregrounds the most exclusionary elements of both modes of thought.

Although first-solitude thought tends to discourage the recognition of social differences, it is socially inclusive in the strict sense that the immutable essence it projects onto regionalized space is held to effect *all* inhabitants of a first-solitude region uniformly.

Although first-solitude thought is repressive in its reliance on a false universality, it does at least enforce a recognition of the material existence of all subjects who have inhabited the region in question. The immutable essences that found first-solitude regions are, by definition, timeless entities.

Though Harrison's argument partakes of first-solitude thought to the extent that it posits the existence of an atemporal regional essence, he does not bestow this minimal degree of universal recognition on all those subjects who have inhabited his first-solitude region. This inconsistency is evinced in Harrison's claim that "like all unsettled territory it [the Canadian prairie] had no human associations, no ghosts, none of the significance imagination gives to the expressionless face of the earth after men have lived and died there" (ix). And even when speaking of contemporary times, while contrasting the literature of Canada's maritime provinces with that of the prairies, Harrison re-asserts the notion that the prairie region is a place with a short human history (in contrast to a short cultural memory). He claims that "Until recently not enough generations had yet been buried on the prairie to give time its full human dimensions, so its [prairie history's] emergence in contemporary fiction is a very natural result of the writers having a human past to reflect upon" (191).<sup>14</sup>

The only means by which Harrison can legitimate this staggering act of "spatial amnesia" is by juxtaposing elements of second-solitude thought onto his first-solitude region (Yaeger 8). Just as Harrison utilizes his first-solitude region to delimit the

geographic range of his second-solitude region, so he utilizes his second-solitude region to delimit the temporal range of his first-solitude region. Since “prairie fiction began in 1871[,]” Harrison can adopt this date as the temporal origin of his first-solitude region (45). Doing so gives him a logical justification for forgetting the history of the peoples who inhabited his first-solitude region before this date.

Yet Harrison’s spectacular variety of “spatial amnesia” relies upon more than just the temporalization of his first-solitude region by means of his second-solitude region (Yaeger 8). It also relies on Harrison’s investment in another facet of second-solitude thought—the tendency to recognize only published fictional representations as cultural products. By projecting this aspect of second-solitude thought onto his first-solitude region Harrison legitimates his misrecognition of the prairie’s short *literary* history as a short *cultural* history. In this way the absence of first-nations narratives published (as opposed to orally transmitted) before European contact lends legitimacy to Harrison’s contention that his first-solitude region was not just “unnamed country” before 1871, but was an empty cultural space.<sup>15</sup>

I foresee two possible means by which Harrison’s “spatial amnesia” could be justified, and two arguments by which these justifications can be invalidated. The first potential justification relates to spatial usage and relies on the argument that Harrison is only being consistent in refusing to recognize the basic human presence of “Indian culture” within his first-solitude region because this (seemingly singular) culture practiced a nomadic mode of spatial usage while Harrison’s first-solitude region includes only “settled areas” (xiv). I counter this justification by pointing out that Harrison does not respect such niceties of spatial usage in other contexts. Since the “struggle for an

indigenous prairie fiction” Harrison champions in *Unnamed Country* requires the unification of his first-solitude region (“the settled areas of three prairie provinces”) and his second-solitude region of fictional representations, the marriage of these two regions should dictate that Harrison’s second-solitude region include only those fictional representations produced by settlers (xiv). Yet this is not the case. Harrison’s second-solitude prairie was born of the narrative offspring of Sir William Butler’s “tour of the West” (5). Butler was no settler; rather, he was a British Imperial agent sent overseas “ostensibly to report upon conditions prevailing among native tribes in the North West Territories” (Harrison 6).

The second potential means by which Harrison’s “spatial amnesia” could be justified relates to the kinds of spaces he works with (Yaeger 8). This justification would contend that because Harrison’s first-solitude region is composed of settled provincial territory, he is only being consistent in ignoring the First Nations peoples’ cultural presence before provincial status was conferred upon Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta because native peoples occupied a different cultural space. This rationale would be relevant were Harrison to have acknowledged the fact that “each new form of political power partitions space in its own way,” and that, as a result, his first-solitude region is a temporally delimited and socially produced space (Yaeger 8). Yet Harrison ventures no such acknowledgment. His denial of the social origins of his geographic region is evinced in his belief that “the prairie remains essentially unchanged by settlement,” as it is by his contention that his first-solitude region is unified by an atemporal essence he figures as an “inviolate mystery” (12; 213). It is this “mystery” that constitutes the message “the land has been trying to tell [prairie authors] from the beginning” (213; 199).

That this “beginning” does not correspond to 1871 is demonstrated by Harrison’s conviction that the “Indian culture” which pre-dates colonial contact has a special role to play in revealing the land’s message to “the prairie mind” (199; 99).

It is a painful irony that the very cultural presence that is erased from Harrison’s first-solitude region is not only recognized within his second-solitude region, but accredited an *elevated* status as a muse-like fetish capable of indigenizing prairie fiction. It is “Indian culture” that Harrison extols prairie authors such as Rudy Wiebe, Margaret Laurence and Robert Kroetsch for turning to in “their struggle for an indigenous prairie fiction” (xii). What makes “Indian culture” so useful to this struggle is its capacity to provide “a link with the land they have been alienated from” (199; 200). Because Harrison constructs “the Indian” as “the one potential ‘ancestor’ who is close to the soil, organically and elementally connected with it,” he feels that the recent surge of interest in “Indian culture” is one of the most hopeful signs for the indigenization of prairie fiction (199). For it is this “culture,” he contends, that “may reveal what the land has been trying to tell us all along” (199).

In *Unnamed Country* Harrison goes beyond narrating prairie authors’ “struggle for an indigenous prairie fiction” and actively engages in this struggle by fulfilling three of the most important steps necessary to achieving this goal (xii). The first of these steps is the dissemination of a belief that an indigenous prairie fiction is possible and distinct from a condition of cultural hegemony. The very status of *Unnamed Country* as a published document attests to Harrison’s successful dissemination of the belief that an indigenous prairie fiction is possible. And it is his investment of the prairie with an atemporal essence (figured as an “inviolate mystery”) that transfers the struggle for an

indigenous prairie fiction from the social realm (where battles for cultural hegemony are waged) to the transcendental realm (where conditions of indigenousness can be achieved) (213).

The second goal necessary to the struggle for an indigenous prairie fiction is the identification of the cultural group whose fictions are to be indigenized. Harrison accomplishes this second step by establishing a bicultural context for his study: while all first-nations peoples are consolidated within a homogenized “Indian culture[,]” all other recognized cultural groups are represented by a unitary “prairie mind” that reflects the seemingly unitary “inherited culture” of all peoples who have come to the prairie since colonial contact (199; 99; xiii).

Harrison’s third and most substantive contribution to “the struggle for an indigenous prairie fiction” is to purge his region of all those cultural presences that could potentially challenge this “inherited culture[’s]” bid for indigenization (xii). Harrison achieves this end chiefly through his mode of regional definition. While he explicitly defines his region as “the settled areas of three prairie provinces” (which I have identified as a first-solitude region), Harrison also relies upon a second, unacknowledged region of fictional representations (which I have identified as a second-solitude region). By projecting the properties of this second-solitude region onto his first-solitude region Harrison supplements its geographic borders with temporal and cultural borders of a more discriminating character. This second-solitude region is culturally discriminating because it is composed solely of fictional representations and, as such, recognizes only published literary works as evidence of cultural presence. Similarly, Harrison’s unacknowledged

second-solitude region provides a point of temporal origin for his first-solitude region because Harrison contends that “prairie literature began in 1871” (45).

It is these cultural and temporal borders that justify Harrison’s refusal to admit the cultural presence of native oral narratives within his region—thus legitimating his claim that colonizers greeted an “unnamed country” (xii). And similarly, it is these cultural and temporal borders that legitimate Harrison’s refusal to acknowledge the very physical presence of First Nations societies within this regional space before 1871, and which explain how Harrison can contend that colonizers arrived to an “unsettled territory [that] had no human associations, no ghosts, none of the significance imagination gives to the expressionless face of the earth after men have lived and died there” (ix). It is through this mode of regional definition that Harrison’s “struggle for an indigenous prairie fiction” comes to entail the exclusion of those intra-regional groups whose practices do not accord with those of the dominant cultural group, and significantly, of those intra-regional groups whose presence—if acknowledged—would represent the greatest challenge to Harrison’s quest for “an indigenous prairie fiction” (xii).

## Section Five:

### The Second Solitude and Beyond: Critiques and Meta-Critiques

It is somewhat surprising that Westfall characterizes the functionalists as a group whose members focus upon the tension that results from “trying to pour” a regional literary content that is “indigenous to an area” into “imported literary genres” (Westfall 11). Though this group does concern itself with the tension between form and content, there are good reasons why the majority of the second-solitude Canadian literary regionalists Westfall and I address avoid the concept of indigenousness. As my analysis of Harrison’s *Unnamed Country* reveals, the concept of indigenousness describes a specific relation between subjects, objects and a designated geographic area. Because New and Eli and Ann Mandel do not intend for their regions to articulate identities grounded in geographic space alone, the concept of indigenousness is too specific to express their more multifaceted concerns.

New’s work on Canadian literary regionalism exhibits a greater interest in the concepts of distinctiveness and authenticity than indigenousness. In *Articulating West* (1972), for example, New encourages “Westerners” not to “pander to ‘Eastern’ stasis” because such an act constitutes a denial of their region’s “real distinctiveness and its mythic potential” (xiv). And when New claims in *Land Sliding* (1997) that “the truly regional voice is one that declares an internal political alternative” (152), the possession of a “political voice” capable of articulating such alternatives is indicative of, amongst other things, a “local authenticity” (152; 151).

Eli Mandel argues in “Romance and Realism in Western Canadian Fiction” (1973) that the notion of a literary work in which form derives from outside a region or nation and content from inside is untenable. In the context of literary nationalism, Mandel states that “Contemporary Canadian writers turn to legends, mythology, and folklore that carry few of our supposed historical and social values or experiences” (Mandel “Romance,” 55). “It seems,” Mandel concludes, “that we are to find our folklore outside of our own boundaries and that we must discover once more that literary and physical frontiers do not coincide” (“Romance” 57).

And the analysis Ann Mandel performs on Wallace Stegner’s *Wolf Willow* in “The Frontiers of Memory” suggests that she, too, rejects the notion that the content of regional literature must be indigenous to a geographic area. Although Mandel holds up *Wolf Willow* as a model of regional writing that “seems to [her] in every way to respond to McCourt’s call” for “an investigation of the prairie’s ‘root sources,’” such root sources are, for Mandel, sources not indigenous to place but authentic to the self (93). She explains, for example, that in *Wolf Willow* Stegner “goes beyond geography and history to myth, legend, and story” to narrate the relation between himself and his prairie past (94). And this going beyond includes allusions to Whitman and Proust. Though not *indigenous* to the Canadian prairie, such literary sources are legitimate to Ann Mandel’s regionalism because for her “the root sources of regional writing” are those that assist the writer in his “search for a lost home and for a self” (100).

I certainly applaud the shift New and the Mandels have instigated in moving second-solitude regionalism from a concern with indigenousness to a concern with authenticity and distinctiveness. This shift has helped to move regional literary studies in

Canada farther away from the issues of race and place, blood and soil that accompany Harrison's desire for an indigenous body of regional literature (and that are never far from hand when regionalism takes an essentialized nature as its founding principle). Despite these differences in aim and emphasis, there are good reasons why Westfall groups Harrison, New, and Eli and Ann Mandel together as functionalists: there are features—such as the understandings of identity and culture they work with—which draw their approaches together.

But before I move on to address the issues that unite the functionalists (and the work of Harrison, New and Eli Mandel in particular), I want to focus attention upon the kinds of regional spaces that New and Mandel work with. There are several reasons why I think these spaces deserve a closer look. First, New's and Mandel's way of imagining regional space is perhaps the chief means by which they have made a unique contribution to the field of Canadian literary regionalism. The character of these regional spaces also reveals the impact the illusion of transparency has had on these imaginings. Though the evidence of this impact is what justifies my classification of New and Mandel as second-solitude Canadian literary regionalists, and although this classification *should* constitute a simultaneous critique of these spaces, the effects of this impact are more ambiguous than the two solitudes methodology would lead us to believe. In fact, the process of examining New's and Mandel's conceptualizations of regional space will reveal a blind spot that inheres in the two solitudes methodology itself.

Mandel's and New's way of imagining regional space is not entirely new to us. We encountered a similar spatial imaginary at work in Harrison's *Unnamed Country*. In my critique of this study, I demonstrated Harrison's dependence upon an

unacknowledged second-solitude region of literary representations, a phantom region whose qualities Harrison relies upon to supplement the borders of the first-solitude region of settled provincial territory he does acknowledge (xiv). Both New and Mandel are more forthright about their reliance upon two kinds of regional space and about their slippage between them; unlike Harrison, they consciously theorize regional space as a hybrid composite produced by effacing the distinction (which Harrison ostensibly maintains) between geographic and mental space. New and Mandel do not suppress the fact that the literary regions they imagine are entities that are at once discursive and geographic—at once regions of the mind and of the Canadian nation-space. And it is just such an easy slippage between socially produced geographic spaces and mental spaces that Soja identifies as characteristic of a mind under the sway of the illusion of transparency. As Soja explains, within the illusion of transparency, “social space folds into mental space, into diaphanous concepts of spatiality which all too often take us away from materialized social realities” (*Postmodern* 125).

Though I acknowledge that Mandel’s writings on literary regionalism are diverse, they do exhibit within their diversity a consistent proclivity for either dematerializing literary regions or for effacing the distinction between geographic and mental space. It will be recalled that in “Images of Prairie Man” Mandel works with an utterly dematerialized conception of regions when he defines the prairie as “a sort of complex conceptual framework . . . a mental construct, a region of the human mind” (202-3). In “The Regional Novel: Borderline Art,” Mandel refines his earlier thought when he argues that “a region is defined by its boundaries, regionalism consisting in the mapping of boundaries . . . ” (112). The kinds of regions Mandel envisions for future study are those

defined by the boundaries that delimit “colony as opposed to republic, order as opposed to anarchy, [and] energy as opposed to sloth” (115). According to Mandel, regions are those spaces that demarcate conceptual distinctions, regardless of whether these regions demarcate distinctions that register in geographic space (such as the spaces of colony and republic) or in mental space (such as those of energy and sloth, anarchy and order).

New’s introduction to *Articulating West* exhibits this same tendency to efface the distinction between regions of the mind and regions of the Canadian nation-space. It should be borne in mind, however, that New’s understanding of regional space in *Articulating West* is contained within a larger theory that endeavours to explain the production of a national cultural identity. New begins his theory with the bold claim that “Canada’s regional identities have always fairly readily reduced to two: ‘East’ and ‘West’ . . .” (xi). The regions that ground these identities are, however, “only loosely tied to geography and hence alter their meaning from place to place” (xi). Beyond signifying a plethora of geographic referents, “East” and “West” also signify something akin to cultural identity; New explains that the meaning of the terms is “of a less palpable sort that [sic] underlies their simple directional geography and somehow enunciates the inchoate basic assumptions of a way of life” (xi). Despite the semantic breadth of “East” and “West,” New insists on retaining these terms because their wide usage “suggests that they do have meaning” (xi).

New sees the geographic and cultural levels of meaning imparted by the terms “East” and “West” as not only intimately related, but as roughly equivalent. This equivalency derives from his premise that “Canadian writers have attempted to identify their culture by solving what Northrop Frye has called the problem of locating ‘where

*here is”* (xi). Within this Frygian schema, the distinction that is maintained typically between cultural identity and geographic locality is eliminated altogether. Following this schema, New jettisons the geographic basis of regional identity from the fuller picture of cultural identity (which ideally includes both geographic and psychological dimensions) in the interests of locating within mental space a national cultural identity that cannot be located within geographic space. Locating this identity geographically is problematic not only because no one place can capture “the inchoate basic assumptions of a [national] way of life,” but also because the geographic basis of cultural identity is seemingly too fluid to be fixed upon: “The physical realities represented by ‘East’ and ‘West’ alter as the *ideas* of ‘East’ and ‘West’ alter . . .” (xi).

While Frye locates the Canadian cultural identity within “the garrison mentality,” New posits a different location for this identity, and one that better incorporates Frye’s further contention that “the question of Canadian identity . . . is . . . a regional question” (*The Bush Garden* 225; i-ii). New attempts to integrate the tension between regional and national affiliations into the Canadian cultural identity by locating this identity *in the between* of “East” and “West.”<sup>16</sup>

Yet in order to render this location meaningful New must eliminate the semantic indeterminacy of his key terms, “East” and “West.” This he does by sublimating these terms into spatially free-floating signifiers, the relative geographic content of which is replaced by a more stable conceptual content of New’s own devising. “Implicit here[,]” he tells us, “is an equation of ‘East’ with a settled order which may be imaginatively static” (xiv). “West” takes its meaning in opposition to the eastern state of mind and

represents a mental “frontier” marked by the characteristics of chaos and imaginative activity (xiv).

“East” and “West” do represent regions within New’s theory of Canadian cultural identity, then, but according to his own “implicit” definition, they are conceptual regions of the Canadian mind (xiv). It is the tension between these two conceptual regions that demarcates the Canadian cultural identity, an identity that comes into view fleetingly when writers *articulate west*. For “to speak the language of ‘West’ is not to be merely regional in bias,” New explains, “but to articulate the tension between order and disorder, myth and reality, that underlies Canadian writing” (xi).

Yet New’s use of the terms “East” and “West” does not comply consistently with the dematerialized understanding of regional space he invokes to explain the articulation of a national cultural identity. At times New uses the terms “East” and “West” to signify regions grounded in geographic space. It is hard to imagine, for example, that New does not intend “West” to signify a region of the Canadian nation-space when he implores “Westerners” to resist the “imaginative stasis” of the “East” because “by pandering to such stasis . . . the ‘West’ denies both its real distinctiveness and its mythic potential” (xiv). It is logically impossible for “West” to signify a frontier of the Canadian mind here—no mental space can pander to or deny anything, these actions being meaningfully attributable only to social agents, agents necessarily located within geographic space. Yet the “West” New invokes here need not refer exclusively to “the Canadian West” as found in McCourt, Kreisel or the metropolitan-hinterland thesis, either. For New claims at another turn that “in many ways the Arctic is now seen as a new Canadian ‘West’” (xxiv).

The degree of semantic elasticity New intends to imbue the terms “East” and “West” with becomes clearer when he explains why the circumstances of some Canadians lends them an enhanced capacity to understand the distinction between “East” and “West.” According to New, “No one knows these distinctions better than the inhabitants of a new frontier, for their realities and the imaginative designs of outsiders are constantly at variance” (xiv). With this explanation in place, the meaning New intends for us to invest his regions of “East” and “West” with becomes clearer. In order to invest these terms with a hermeneutic coherence that addresses their diverse deployment, we must formulate an understanding of “West” as a metaphoric signifier of all those sites in geographic and conceptual space whose inhabitants have had their identities dictated by “outsiders” (xiv). By contrast, “East” signifies all of those sites in geographic and conceptual space whose inhabitants have the power of self-definition or the means of authentic self-expression. Though I will go on to query the possibility of self-definition and authentic self-expression, for now I want to concentrate on the question of whether it is possible, within the terms of reference New establishes in his vision of regionalism, to write “West” from within the “East.”

New’s tendency to collapse the distinction between geographic and mental space finds clearer expression in his recent work on regionalism in *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing*. So, too, do the problems of logical coherence that can, potentially, accompany this tendency. Here New displays his reliance upon a dematerialized conception of regional space when he explains that he is trying, with the concept of region, “to differentiate between the metaphors *insider* and *outsider*, or between two kinds of relationship with centralized authority” (116). New contends

that “‘Region’ is a shorthand way of conceptualizing this distinction” (116). It follows from this metaphoric understanding of region that “the truly regional voice is one that declares an internal political alternative” (152). Since New contends that

it is perhaps not surprising that it should be Coast-dwellers, Westerners, Quebecers, Maritimers, Northerners, Newfoundlanders, Women, Native writers, and Ethnic Minorities—writers on the political margins of so-called ‘Central’ Canada (the industrialized St Lawrence basin)—who should be among the most forceful challengers to the normative presumptions of anglophone Ontario male history[,]

I infer that the writing produced by such groups composes New’s canon of regional literature (*Land Sliding* 152).

The gaps in logical coherence that arise when geographic and mental space are enfolded are evinced in the above excerpt in which New characterizes the canon of regional authors. These problems derive from New’s equation of “the political margins of so-called ‘Central’ Canada” with distance from “the industrialized St Lawrence basin” (152). In equating ideological distance from centralized power with geographic distance from the industrialized St Lawrence basin, New inadvertently excludes groups from his corpus of regional authors who should, in part, constitute his canon of regional authors. This elision occurs because New’s geographic and mental regions intersect to exclude those “Women” writers, “Native writers,” and “Ethnic Minority” writers who, while “being among the most forceful challengers to the normative presumptions of anglophone, Ontario male history,” and while being “on the political margins of so-called ‘Central’ Canada,” happen to be located within “the industrialized St Lawrence basin”

(152). While political and geographic marginality often do intersect, they need not, and in several instances in this context, they do not. In equating political and geographic centrality, New excludes from his regional canon those authors writing from the political margins *and* the geographic centre.<sup>17</sup>

While I have endeavoured to demonstrate some of the ways that the tendency to efface the distinction between geographic and mental space can invite problems of precision, clarity and coherence, I stop short of arguing that such an effacement is wrong in and of itself. In fact New and Mandel appear to have been ahead of their time in undertaking this analytic move in the 1970s. It is only in recent years that a group of feminist human geographers working from a poststructural perspective have begun to interrogate the legitimacy of maintaining a hard and fast distinction between material and mental spaces.

Gillian Rose provides the most direct and concise of these interrogations in her article, “As If the Mirrors Had Bled.”<sup>18</sup> Here Rose argues that, despite the persistent and varied attempts of geographers to distinguish between what she terms, generically, “real and non-real space,” no such stable distinction exists (58).<sup>19</sup> Drawing on Judith Butler’s work on the materializing effects of discursivity and power, Rose argues that the attempt to maintain a distinction between the real and the non-real is “a performance of power . . .” (58).<sup>20</sup> She goes on to explain that, “For Butler, discursive power performs its productive effect through its reiteration of naturalizing norms; it enacts what it names” (58). To defend her case, Rose points to the proliferation of terms with which geographers have attempted to maintain a distinction between what she generalizes as real and non-real spaces:

The reiteration of the real by geographers can be seen in the multiplication of terms used to describe that space: real, material, experienced, concrete, social, actual, geographical. The non-real proliferates too among geographers: imagined, symbolic, metaphorical, imaged, cultural. These are the reiterations which for Butler constitute the performance of normative power. (58)

Rose argues that the very excessiveness of geographers' various efforts to articulate a distinction between these kinds of space "suggests that the distinction between real and non-real space is not a self-evident one. Indeed, the distinction cannot be maintained with either clarity or firmness in these accounts" (59).<sup>21</sup>

My various efforts to trace how the Canadian prairie has been constructed and deployed in the writings of McCourt, Kreisel, Harrison and Mandel has demonstrated just how blurry the distinction between material and mental space can be, and, moreover, how informative a role power and desire play in the prairie's on-going production. When these various constructions are considered together, the prairie seems most accurately described as a complex entity that has come to *matter*—in both senses of the term—because its materiality has helped to legitimate a series of desires for enhanced power—the power to differentiate between different facets of Canada's topography, for example, but also the power to articulate economic concerns about the movement of staples within the Canadian nation-space, to legitimate political concerns about the division of powers between the provinces and the federal government, and to distinguish between different forms of Canadian cultural production. Rather than being a stable material thing that pre-exists these desires, the prairie emerges as a spatialized phenomenon that has been

produced—and attained the status of a *real* space, a seemingly natural *thing*—through these multi-faceted social relations.

The act of tracing the Canadian prairie's construction underlines how important it is to recognize the role social relations play in the production of both material and mental spaces—and to recognize that both so-called material and mental spaces are always already social spaces in that they are constituted by social relations. Yet I argue that it is equally important to retain some means of signifying that not all social spaces are identical. In other words, although I see the impetus for Rose's critique, I query the usefulness of deconstructing the distinction between what I call material and mental space because such a move leaves us with nothing but the generic category of social space to name and interrogate phenomena as diverse as a condition of social marginality and the Rocky Mountains. And ironically, it is Rose herself who provides an impetus for retaining a distinction between material and mental space when she foregrounds the materializing effects of discursivity and power. Surely the differing degrees to which various social spaces are naturalized as material points to the fact that they have been shaped by differing “performance[s] of power” and, thus, produced as different kinds of space (Rose, “As If” 58). To lose all means of distinguishing between material and mental spaces is to lose a crucial means of tracing the machinations of power. Moreover, it is only within a utopian framework—a framework from which power itself has been banished—that these distinctions cease to be relevant. It is for these reasons that I choose to retain a provisional distinction between material and mental space, while also acknowledging that both so-called material and mental spaces are always also social

spaces. This I do by distinguishing between what I call socio-material and socio-conceptual spaces.<sup>22</sup>

These insights do not so much discredit the two solitudes methodology I have developed from the work of Lefebvre and Soja as they clarify its limitations. Though the two solitudes methodology provides an excellent means of demonstrating how and why critical studies of Canadian literary regionalism produce conceptions of space that efface the social character of spatial production, it draws rather too fast and hard a distinction between material and mental space in the interests of foregrounding space's social production. Though an excellent heuristic device, the two solitudes methodology must be utilized with an awareness of its limitations and with the knowledge that no one methodology can fully capture the highly nuanced and interpenetrating qualities of human spatiality. In the end the two solitudes methodology, like Lefebvre's two illusions, is a useful metaphor—but an imperfect one. As Gregory notes in his discussion of the metaphor of mapping in *Geographic Imaginations*, “all metaphors are problematic . . . [in that they] get us a certain distance *and* fall apart” (7, emphasis in original).

What the two solitudes methodology does helpfully foreground is the passive character of the regional spaces that second-solitude Canadian literary regionalists imagine. As I pointed out while introducing the two solitudes methodology, regional space emerges from second-solitude approaches as “a void packed like a parcel with various contents” or, in Mandel’s words, a “conceptual framework” that regional authors “fill in” with cultural material to produce regional identities (Lefebvre 27; “Images” 208). I will now turn my attention to the character of these contents and products because it is the understandings of both culture and identity that second-solitude regionalists rely upon

that explains why they ascribe so active a role to regional authors, and so passive a role to space, when they envision the production of regional identities.

Eli Mandel expresses the second-solitude vision of the author's singularly active role in producing regional identities most clearly in "Romance and Realism in Western Canadian Fiction." Despite the fact that the writer "lives imaginatively," he tells us, "his work acquires social dimensions. He is only himself, largely ignorant of society and history, and yet there is in his writing a sort of metaphysical or ontological force that enables him to identify a people" (56). New expresses a similar vision of the author's role in producing regional identities in *Articulating West*. According to New, when a writer plies his craft he "expresses his awareness that an idea at once *is* and *transcends* its form. . . . The end of this awareness . . . lies in the stimulation of an unrealized imaginative identity, which will give the writer's society both life and self-respect" (xxi, emphasis in original). Though he avoids the discourse of identity in *Land Sliding*, New continues to argue that regional authors can identify a people in so far as it is they who articulate a region's *vox populi*. Because regional authors are "in possession of the immediate and local," New explains, these voices can summon "a quite remarkable political force, which any 'dominant culture' would be foolish to ignore" by "representing the voice of the *polis*, the people" through their access to "the vernacular" and "the local attitude" (152). We have also seen that Dick Harrison attributes regional authors with an instrumental role in producing the prairie region's cultural identity, an identity that he argues is realized only when prairie authors can naturalize prairie inhabitants' relation to place by developing an indigenous regional fiction. Prairie authors are crucial to this process because it is only they whom Harrison attributes with

the capacity to perceive, represent and transmit to the populace “what the land has been trying to tell [them] from the beginning” (199).

The chief means by which the agency to produce regional identities has been displaced onto regional authors is through the (now fading) hegemony achieved by an elite understanding of culture. Edward Said explains in his introduction to *Culture and Imperialism* that this kind of culture “includes a refining and elevating element, [and, thus, comprises] each society’s reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Matthew Arnold put it in the 1860s” (xiii). Literature has always enjoyed pride of place within this Arnoldian conception of culture, and a pride of place Northrop Frye endeavored to maintain within Canadian literary criticism. Second-solitude Canadian literary regionalists perpetuate this understanding of culture in so far as they embrace the notion that writers can identify a people while existing in an enclosed cultural sphere from which the people identified are themselves excluded. As Said explains, “the trouble with this idea of culture is that it entails . . . thinking of it as somehow divorced from, because transcending, the everyday world” (*Culture and Imperialism* xiii). And the myth of authorial transcendence, of the artist’s quasi-mystical powers, has served for centuries to explain how it is that writers can identify a people from whom they are necessarily alienated.

An alternate understanding that is now gaining ground posits culture as series of shared social practices and beliefs, literary production constituting but one of many such cultural practices.<sup>23</sup> It is towards tracing the machinations of these kinds of regional cultures that I suggest the practice of Canadian literary regionalism should now turn. Yet a turn towards a broader, more sociological understanding of culture requires a parallel

shift in the conceptualization of identity. The elite conception of culture goes hand-in-hand with a quasi-mystical understanding of identity, one that imagines it as a stable entity that cultural elites can bestow upon their societies and in so doing, unify them.

This quasi-mystical conception of identity is not unique to second-solitude regionalists; it is perpetuated by both the first- and second-solitude schools, but by different means. In first-solitude approaches it is a land-based regional essence that is thought to identify regional societies because it creates a uniform “state of mind” or “unity of spirit” which consolidates its members (Kreisel 254; McCourt n. pag.). Neither New nor Mandel look to *the land* to locate the quasi-mystical quality that consolidates a people within a regional identity. Rather, they shift the source of this identity-producing power from regional environments to regional authors. Thus Mandel characterizes identity as “one of the magical words in literary criticism” and speaks of the author’s possession of a “metaphysical or ontological force that enables him to identify a people” (“Romance” 55, 56). Though New’s writing assumes a more materialist tone in *Land Sliding*, he evokes this quasi-mystical quality of authorship in *Articulating West* when he speaks of a writer’s ability to stimulate “an unrealized imaginative identity, which will give the writer’s society both life and self-respect” (*Articulating West* xxi). Authors *realize* the Canadian cultural identity, New suggests, by ushering it from the realm of the imaginary to the realm of the real. What New implies in this vision of regional writing is that the Canadian cultural identity pre-exists the writing process, but in a dormant condition that prevents it from bestowing “life and self-respect” upon “the writer’s society” (*Articulating West* xxi). When writers *articulate west* they activate this dormant cultural essence by expressing it within a form that renders it recognizable to readers,

who seemingly awaken, through the process of reading, to the knowledge of a national cultural identity that was always already there.

The conceptualization of identity Dick Harrison relies upon in *Unnamed Country* sits somewhere between the first-solitude approaches of McCourt and Kreisel and those of his second-solitude affiliates. Although Harrison follows the first-solitude school in so far as he posits the existence of a land-based regional essence (the “message the land has been trying to tell [prairie dwellers] from the beginning”), this identity is not naturally transmitted to the region’s inhabitants (Harrison 199). Like Mandel and New, Harrison ascribes an elevated status to the regional author, whom regional subjects rely upon to perceive and transmit the land’s message.

I want to contemporarize the study of Canadian literary regionalism by moving it towards an understanding of identity that imagines this phenomenon as a social process and a performance. There are several reasons why I think this shift is called for. To begin, such an understanding of identity formation successfully demystifies both meaning and identity because it locates the capacity to produce meaning and to articulate identities in the social realm, and in particular, in the social relations that conjoin subjects within continually shifting relations of sameness and difference. This re-location and re-configuration of identity also helpfully interrupts the tendency shared by first- and second-solitude regionalists to take the existence of a regional or national identity on faith and to work backwards to locate its origin (either in regional environments or in the process of artistic production).

Moreover, this alternate conception of identity allows space to assume what I see as its rightful place at the fore of regional literary analysis. These processes are linked

because a focus on the processual, performative character of identity enables a different perspective on spatiality, one that foregrounds space's social productivity in a way that neither the first- nor second-solitude approaches have been able to. Space's social efficacy inheres in its capacity to articulate identities, encode social meanings and materialize the effects of power. This productivity derives neither from nature nor from regional authors, but from the meanings we collectively and idiosyncratically invest space with; it is our social interactions and practices that produce space as a phenomenon that is "full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and co-operation" (Massey, "Politics and Space/Time" 81). It is the potential a regional mode of literary analysis has to explore these humanely-produced spatialities and their capacities to produce social meanings, regularize social practices, and, through these practices, articulate identities, that imbues Canadian literary regionalism with a unique and valuable role to fulfill within Canadian literary studies.

In order to re-cast the role literary regionalism plays in Canadian literary studies, it is necessary to specify what the process of regional literary analysis entails. First and foremost, this process entails the production of literary regions themselves. In other words, the most crucial step that must be taken in order to re-cast the role literary regionalism plays in Canadian literary studies in a way that foregrounds space's social efficacy is to disrupt the tradition of viewing regions as entities that pre-exist the process of regional literary analysis. Second-solitude regionalists' departure from an understanding of regions as natural divisions of the Canadian nation-space has complicated, but has not fundamentally altered, what the process of regional literary analysis entails. It is not difficult to discern a common thread that links second-solitude

literary analyses to those that follow from McCourt's assertion that "true" regional literature must "illustrate the influence of a limited and peculiar [regional] environment" (56). The advance second-solitude regionalists have made over the first-solitude school is to have recognized that the regional environments they analyze are not descriptions, but representations. Yet the regions that (seemingly) *contain* these representations are not recognized as analytic constructions. While second-solitude regionalists recognize regional environments as discursive constructions, then, they do not appear to have recognized that regions are themselves the products of analytic processes.

Mandel contends, for example, that "a region is defined by its boundaries, regionalism consisting in the mapping of boundaries—the line between here and there, its distinctiveness" ("The Regional Novel" 112). As Mandel represents them, literary regionalists do not produce regions, but instead, map the borders of pre-designated regional spaces—such as those of "the Canadian West" Mandel includes as his example ("The Regional Novel" 113). Though he (quite rightly) acknowledges that these borders are "not only geographical but cultural and more," he casts the literary regionalist in too passive a role, I contend, in limiting her role to that of regional cartographer (112). This approach does not so much interrogate regional space as it naturalizes the existence of pre-designated regions.

This reification of the process of regionalism is also discernible in New's work in *Land Sliding*. In the chapter "Landed: Literature and Region," New's literary analyses display a consistent preoccupation with how literary representations construct landscapes within pre-designated regional spaces such as "Rural Southern Ontario," "Lake Huron Country," "Labrador," "Annapolis Valley," "Prairie," and "West Coast" (122-128).

Under the heading of “Labrador,” for instance, New traces how Harold Horwood “epitomiz[es] the Subarctic through an indirect mimicry of the palatal sounds of Inuktituk” (124), and under the heading “Annapolis Valley,” how Ernest Buckler “conjures up the local landscape in a prose ripe with adjectival and adverbial modification. . . .” (123). While he contends that “a sensitivity to region . . . make[s] critics aware of place and landscape,” what I argue is that a sensitivity to region should make critics aware of their own role not in explaining how writers produce landscape, but in exemplifying how they themselves produce regions (152).

In short, I argue that the focus of regional literary analysis should be placed upon the social relations that produce literary regions as socio-material spaces that articulate particular kinds of identities. What we lose by adopting the approach I advance is any but an inferential connection between regional literature and people living within the Canadian nation-space. Though the mode of regional literary analysis I advance can, potentially, reveal a great deal about how identities are performed and contingently constituted both within and without literary representations, such revelations are only inferential; this mode of literary analyses does not consolidate any portion of the Canadian populace within what I see as problematically homogenizing regional or national identities. The kinds of regional identities I suggest we turn our attention to do not describe a relationship between Canadian literature and Canadians; rather, they describe relationships between literary representations of socio-material space and literary representations of processes of identity formation.

In many ways, I trace a middle path between the two solitudes of Canadian literary regionalism I have identified and explored here. My vision of literary

regionalism retains McCourt's and Kreisel's focus on so-called material spaces and their capacity to articulate identities, but discards their belief that regional spaces are natural *givens*, and that regional subjects are identified by a land-based regional essence. It retains New's and Mandel's focus on the relationship between literary representations and processes of identity formation and incorporates, through its focus on socio-material space, their insight into the interpenetrating character of material and mental space. Given that I direct attention to *literary representations* of socio-material space, the hybrid character of the spaces I work with cannot be overemphasized. What this approach leaves behind is the second-solitude school's conceptualization of regional spaces as passive, pre-existent frameworks and their belief that regional authors are the primary source of regional identities.

I also trace a middle path between these two schools in the manner in which I attribute the power to produce literary regions. While the first-solitude school attributes nature with the agency to produce literary regions, and the second-solitude school posits regional authors as their agents, I suggest that it is literary critics who produce literary regions when they examine groups of literary works from a particular interpretive perspective. As I understand the term, a regional approach to literary criticism is one that focuses critical attention upon how literary representations of socio-material space come to resonate with the kinds of social meanings that enable the performance of particular kinds of identities—how socio-material spaces can become encoded with social meanings that enable the production of subjects as raced, classed or gendered, for example. When a literary critic demonstrates a pattern in the way a group of texts deploy representations of

socio-material space to articulate processes of identity formation, she constructs a literary region.

Though the authors who provide the texts, which literary regionalists examine, obviously play a key role in enabling a regional mode of literary analysis, it is the literary critic who produces literary regions when she demonstrates linkages in the way a group of texts spatialize the production of meaning and the performance of identity. It follows from my attribution of the literary critic with the agency to produce literary regions that, within my mode of regional literary analysis, regional texts do not pre-exist the process of regional analysis. In other words, texts and authors are produced as regional through the interpretive process, but the meaning of such labels does not extend beyond this process.

The varieties of geographic space this kind of literary regionalism proffers for analysis are virtually limitless. A literary region could be produced by examining how representations of particular kinds of socio-material spaces—rivers, houses, coastlines, kitchens, urban centres, prairie fields, asylums, closets, attics, hospitals, mountains or churches, for example—are utilized to connote meanings or articulate specific kinds of identities within a collection of texts. Alternately, regional literary studies could focus upon how certain depictions of the process of identity production rely upon the division of geographic space into regions that are at once conceptual and material in character. For instance, in part three I will demonstrate how literary representations of nature can enable the production of identity as an autonomous act of self-creation.

Though literary regionalism is an approach that requires the literary critic to artificially isolate areas of (represented) socio-material space in order to focus attention upon the kinds of social relations that occur there, the literary regions I envision are

bounded by the most porous of borders. This porosity is an inevitable feature of literary regions because the shared nexus of social relations that draw literary regions together and separate them from other regions do not form a closed system. The meaning of any one area of (represented) socio-material space is always contingent upon the meanings social agents invest in other kinds of spaces, spaces that are, formally, on the *outside* of a regional boundary. I will demonstrate in part two of this study, for example, that the meaning of a region of *outdoor space* is contingent upon its difference from indoor space. Though the regions of indoor and outdoor space are distinct in that they draw together very different social relations and enable the production of different identities, these two regions depend upon each other for their meaning.

As my examples suggest, the approach to literary regionalism I recommend here considerably expands the horizon of identities that a regional mode of literary analysis can investigate. No longer need this mode of criticism dedicate itself to the articulation of conventional regional identities—to isolating what is distinctive about prairie or maritime writing, for instance. This mode of regional analysis could, of course, include studies that investigate how textual representations of the prairie or the Atlantic coast are utilized to collectivize subjects within traditional regional identities, for instance. Or it could take these studies in a direction that problematizes the discursive construction of traditional regional identities. I can foresee a study that traces literary images of a vertical man upon a horizontal world (which Laurence Ricou has rightly identified as a recurrent image in realist prairie fiction) to demonstrate how representations of an explicitly male, agrarian identity have been hypostatized as a seemingly universal prairie identity.

Though the mode of regional literary analysis I recommend remains open to investigating how representations of socio-material space enable the production of more or less conventional regional identities, it is not limited to such analytic terrain. It could be utilized to trace a geography of racialized identity in Canadian literature by examining, for instance, the extent to which the production of racial difference relies upon the production of spatial difference (I think here of the diverse representations of Chinatown in such texts as Hilda Glynn-Ward's *The Writing on the Wall*, Wilson's *Swamp Angel*, Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* and Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*).<sup>24</sup> I can also imagine studies that usefully disrupt the tendency to configure regions as smaller divisions of national space by demonstrating the existence of regions of national collectivity. Such a study could investigate what kinds of geographic spaces are most frequently invoked to discursively collectivize subjects within a national identity.

And finally, the mode of regional analysis I recommend we adopt could also include representations of socio-material space that exist outside of the Canadian nation-space. There is no reason why Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey*, Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, or Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, for instance, could not constitute the material from which regional analyses arise. Though set outside of Canada, these texts are, of course, equally capable of establishing recognizable relationships between particular kinds of socio-material space and particular kinds of identities, and, as such, are as open to a regional mode of analysis as any other.

## Conclusions

In part one I have taken my readers on an exploratory journey through the fields of human geography and spatial theory in search of a methodology that allows me to systematize the field of Canadian literary regionalism according to assumptions about space. While I began by discussing the reasons why I thought that such an interdisciplinary journey was required, I can now speak of what we have gained by undertaking it. This journey has allowed me to re-present the field of Canadian literary regionalism from several new perspectives, perspectives consciously intended to disturb any pre-conceived ideas my readers may have brought with them about what a literary region is and how it is produced. It has also provided a thought-provoking means of enriching Canadian literary critics' understanding of the concept of space. Though this concept has always been an integral facet of Canadian literary regionalism, it has also been an insufficiently theorized component of this field. This study was inspired in part by my sense that space has long constituted the weakest link in the chain of regional literary analysis, and that strengthening this field of study was contingent upon clarifying and broadening our understanding of human spatiality.

The process of systematization was itself a necessary step in fulfilling my larger goal of re-casting the role Canadian literary regionalism plays in Canadian literary studies. In order to both explain and justify the direction I think this field should turn towards at this stage in its evolution, I have drawn attention to the perspectives on regional space, identity and literary criticism that have been available to us from the conceptual sites it has occupied thus far.

In order to elucidate these facets of Canadian regionalism's history, I have introduced, addressed and ultimately problematized two different methodologies for explaining the production of regional space. The first derived from William Westfall's "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature," where he introduces the distinction between formal and functional regions. Westfall's piece provided an excellent starting point for my investigation of regional space not only because Westfall systematizes this field of study according to assumptions about space, but also because he applies this methodology directly to the work of six Canadian literary regionalists. Westfall's methodology also allowed me to begin to defamiliarize the space of the Canadian literary region because it re-presents these spaces through alternate disciplinary lenses. Despite its usefulness as a pedagogical tool, however, this methodology has been shown to have some significant limitations. I have concluded, for instance, that the distinction between formalism and functionalism Westfall relies upon is more accurately understood as a continuum.

In particular, in my analysis of Henry Kreisel's "The Prairie: A State of Mind" and Edward McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction* I demonstrated that Westfall's classification of Kreisel and McCourt as formalists takes these mens' claims that the prairie is a natural, static spatial division at face value. By drawing attention to the social commentary Kreisel and McCourt provide about the social and economic tumult their region was undergoing as they wrote, another vision of regional production became discernible. This alternate perspective contradicted Kreisel's and McCourt's depiction of a prairie whose social unity derives from a land-based regional essence and proffered in its stead a vision of the prairie as an entity that changes in response to social, economic,

and cultural circumstances. This alternate perspective highlighted a key shortcoming in Westfall's methodology—namely, that the distinction between formalism and functionalism remains stable only as long as we ignore the ineluctable roles time and social relations play in the production of all spatial divisions. In particular, I concluded that Kreisel and McCourt can be accurately classified as formalists only if we join them (as Westfall does) in effacing the evidence of regional flux they implicitly acknowledge in their social commentary, but explicitly deny by claiming that the prairie is a natural, atemporal spatial division.

My analyses of Kreisel's and McCourt's work provided a particular context in which to explain why the methodology Westfall deploys in "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature" lacks critical vigour. Though the formalist/functionalist distinction usefully describes the field of Canadian literary regionalism *as it is*, it is unable to either critique the social and spatial implications of formalism and functionalism, or to offer up alternate ways of conceptualizing regional space. Thus I moved on in search of a more promising means of classifying the field of Canadian literary regionalism according to assumptions about space.

This I found in a more ideologically self-conscious methodology I derived from the work of marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre and spatial theorist Edward Soja. This methodology enabled a very different perspective on the field of Canadian literary regionalism and allowed me to articulate the points of intersection that conjoin formalist and functionalist thought within a single problematic. It was these points of intersection that could not be articulated within Westfall's methodology because it is based on a hard and fast *distinction* between formal and functional thought.

The two solitudes methodology was enabled largely by two interrelated illusions, which Lefebvre introduces in *The Production of Space*, and Soja refines in *Postmodern Geographies*. Lefebvre and Soja argue that it is the hegemony achieved by these two illusions that has impaired our capacity to envision space as a social product. The illusion of opacity impairs our ability to view space as a social product because it fosters a belief that space is not produced at all, but is instead *found* in an asocial nature. This illusion, which I re-cast as the first solitude of Canadian literary regionalism, provided an excellent means of characterizing and critiquing the work of Kreisel and McCourt, both of whom deny the role of the social in the production of literary regions by imagining regions as the natural products of regional environments.

Lefebvre and Soja argue that, in contrast to the illusion of opacity, the illusion of transparency has impaired our ability to see the social origins of spatial production because it has imbued us with the belief that space is an immaterial, invisible and unproblematic phenomenon that issues from individuated human *cogitos*. This illusion, which I re-named the second solitude of Canadian literary regionalism, characterizes the work of Westfall's functionalists, and particularly that of New, and Eli and Ann Mandel, each of whom has been shown to imagine regional space as a dematerialized region of artistic representations.

The two solitudes methodology also allowed me to see and to explain how Canadian literary regionalists can simultaneously imagine literary regions as atemporal spaces of nature *and* as immaterial regions of cultural representation. It is just such a simultaneous reliance on first- and second-solitude thought that I demonstrated in Dick Harrison's *Unnamed Country*. And it is precisely Harrison's slippage between, and

hybridization of, these two understandings of regional space that ostensibly legitimates his claim that the prairie region is *unnamed country*.

Yet, as we have seen, the two solitudes methodology has its own critical blind spots in that its analytic power relies in part upon drawing rather too tidy a distinction between the categories of material, mental and social space. This methodology quite accurately predicted that New's and Eli Mandel's dependence upon the illusion of transparency would imbue their spatial imaginations with a tendency to disregard the distinction between geographic and conceptual space. While this tendency to efface spatial distinctions has been shown to instill such theories with logical inconsistencies about who regional authors are and what the exercise of regional literary analysis entails, such distinctions are considerably less precise than Lefebvre and Soja lead us to believe.

The fact that the two solitudes methodology derives from a spatial imaginary that views material, social and mental space as distinct categories makes it a somewhat overzealous analytic tool, but it does not altogether eliminate its use-value as a critical and descriptive aid. Indeed, these critical and descriptive functions have usefully foregrounded what I see as one of the most problematic facets of first- and second-solitude Canadian literary regionalism: both schools of thought tend to imagine regional space in a way that effaces space's social efficacy, its capacity to produce social difference. While first-solitude thinkers efface the social origins of space's productivity by projecting the power to produce literary regions onto essentialized regional environments, second-solitude thinkers efface space's social efficacy when they imagine literary regions as spaces that do not produce social differences, but merely contain them.

The modes of regional analysis practiced by first- and second-solitude scholars have tended to efface regional space's social efficacy because these schools of thought look to sources other than human spatiality to explain the origins of regional identities. Though I argue that space's social productivity should be placed at the fore of regional literary analysis, this is a choice, not an inevitability. What makes this a *good* choice in my opinion is that such a focalization turns Canadian literary regionalism towards a more contemporary, and less mystified, understanding of regional identity. Both first- and second-solitude literary regionalists depend upon an essentialized principle to explain the origin of regional identities, but they locate these essences differently. First-solitude Canadian literary regionalists invest regional environments with such an identity-producing essence; regional subjects are naturally collectivized, they argue, by virtue of inhabiting regional space. The second-solitude school invests regional authors with this identity-producing essence, an investment that I have linked to this school's reliance upon an elite conception of culture and a mystified understanding of literary production.

I suggest that the time has come to re-cast the role Canadian literary regionalism plays in Canadian literary studies not only to disrupt the tradition of relying upon a mystified conception of regional identity, and to enrich our understanding of space's social productivity, but also to highlight regionalism's status as a social process, one that we can shape and re-shape to address our own changing needs and preferences. I have re-cast the role regional literary analysis plays most fundamentally in severing the connection it formerly maintained between regional literature and Canadian citizens. I have re-scripted regional literary analysis as the process of constructing literary regions; within my mode of regionalism, literary critics produce texts as regional by investigating

them from a regional perspective. Such a perspective is one that focuses critical attention upon how particular representations of socio-material space enable the performance of certain kinds of identities. When a literary critic demonstrates a consistent pattern in the way a group of literary texts deploys representations of space to articulate identities, a literary region is produced.

I would like to end by emphasizing that the understanding of regional literary analysis I offer here is not radically new, despite the rather fundamental changes I advise we implement in the practice of regional literary analysis. What I present here is a hybrid creation I have developed by endeavouring to learn from those Canadian literary regionalists who have come before me, and by enlisting the help of human geographers and spatial theorists who have offered some exciting new ways of imagining human spatiality. This project is but one contribution to an on-going social process, one about which I have not had the first word, and will certainly not have the last.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> It is not just *spatial* critiques that are lacking in the field of Canadian literary regionalism; in fact, there are few critical assessments of the field of any variety. It should be noted, however, that Francesco Loriggio's "Regionalism and Theory" (1994) stands out as a thought-provoking exception to this rule of critical neglect. Though Loriggio and I share common ground in arguing that the social and cultural plurality of regional space must be recognized, he looks to narratology and possible worlds theory to argue this point, while I look to the work of spatial theorists and human geographers.

<sup>2</sup> Although this point will be corroborated through the analyses that follow, three examples will clarify my meaning at present. In "The Prairie: A State of Mind," Henry Kreisel provides no definition for the literary region of the prairies he attempts to characterize. In *Vertical Man/Horizontal World*, Laurence Ricou invokes a "geographer's" definition of the "prairies of Western Canada," but provides no definition for the *literary* region he argues is unified by the image of a vertical man on a horizontal landscape (4). This elision is problematic, for while geographers stress that "the prairies are very rarely level," Ricou's study traces the mythic construction of this region as a level plane. And in *Unnamed Country* Dick Harrison defines his "region" as "the settled areas of three prairie provinces" while contending that "prairie fiction began in 1871" (xiv; 45). Harrison's two regions are logically incompatible since Alberta and Saskatchewan were not granted provincial status until 1905.

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the preface to McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction* is not paginated. Thus, when no page references are given to a McCourt quote, it can be assumed to be from this preface.

<sup>4</sup> It was perhaps Northrop Frye who, in his conclusion to *Literary History of Canada* (1965), finally laid the national form of this question—"why has there been no Canadian writer of classic proportions?"—to rest (822-3).

<sup>5</sup> The relatively homogenous class composition across the prairie provinces in the first half of the 20th century is confirmed both in C.B. Macpherson's *Democracy in Alberta* (p. 21) and in Richards's and Pratt's *Prairie Capitalism* (p. 315). Richards and Pratt also verify the disruption of this relative homogeneity during the latter half of this century. Although they speak explicitly of Alberta, many of the demographic changes also impacted Saskatchewan and Manitoba. They report, for instance, that "dramatic population growth commenced in the late 1940s and continued through the 1950s, much of it caused by the in-migration of workers and their families from provinces such as Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Ontario. . . . Between 1946 and 1971 Alberta doubled its population, from roughly 800,000 to 1.6 million, and an overwhelming proportion of the growth was concentrated in the two major urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton. . . . Between 1911 and 1941 Alberta's rural-urban population distribution changed little (urban population grew from 29 to 32 per cent of the province's total) but in the next three decades, from 1941 to 1971, the demographic balance tilted decisively in favour of the cities (the urban percentage of the population escalated from 32 to 73 per cent). In 1941 approximately half of Alberta's population still lived on census farms and less than a quarter in Calgary and Edmonton; three decades later when Peter Lougheed's Conservatives swept to power, less than 20 per cent of the population was still on the farms while better than half of Alberta's citizens were concentrated in the big urban centres" (162).

<sup>6</sup> It was Michel Foucault who first introduced the idea that space has a history of being "treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile" while time has been associated with "richness, fecundity, life, dialectic" ("Questions" 70). I have chosen to introduce the idea through Massey's "Politics and Space Time" because she explores the social ramifications of this tendency in greater detail than does Foucault.

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<sup>7</sup> Westfall includes Ann Mandel amongst the “key figures” of the functional school and references her article (“The Frontiers of Memory: Wallace Stegner’s *Wolf Willow*, A Neglected History”) in his footnotes, but he makes no subsequent mention of her name or work (10). This is not the case with any of the other “key” functionalists: Westfall integrates the thought of W.H. New, Eli Mandel and Dick Harrison within his explanation of functionalism. Westfall’s relative neglect of Ann Mandel’s work, which I replicate here, likely reflects the fact that she writes with the intention of bringing Stegner’s *Wolf Willow* to the attention of literary regionalists rather than to assert her understanding of what such regions are. Though her views on literary regions can be inferred, and though I endeavour to do so in my occasional references to this article, Mandel’s prioritization of *Wolf Willow* over general theorizing makes her article less pertinent to my discussion than the works of the other functionalists.

<sup>8</sup> Though he stresses the simultaneity of their operation, Lefebvre does not specifically delimit the historical period during which the illusions of opacity and transparency have been in effect. Lefebvre seems to infer from his claim that “every mode of production . . . produces a space, its own space” that the emergence of the double-illusion he names is linked to the emergence of a capitalist mode of production (31). This statement provides little help in delimiting the historical relevance of the two illusions, however; as Gibson-Graham’s study points out again and again, it is only the hegemony achieved by a capitalist mode of production that prevents us from seeing that social relations include a multiplicity of “productive relations—cooperative, self-employed, enslaved, communal as well as capitalist” (90-1). The stress Lefebvre places on his double-illusion suggests that he was envisioned society as unified within a capitalist mode of social relations. Soja provides little help in pin-pointing the origin of Lefebvre’s double-illusion, and the range of its applicability. He comments, rather evasively, that “it is not surprising that the development and persistence of [the] illusion

of opaqueness . . . has been interpreted . . . as an integral part of the evolution of capitalism," while claiming that the "philosophical origins" or the illusion of transparency "are probably Platonic" (124-5).

<sup>9</sup> George Woodcock distinguishes between provinces as "merely political" spatial divisions and regions as "more organic and less formalized" ones in "The Meeting of Time and Space: Regionalism in Canadian Literature" (24).

<sup>10</sup> In *The Temptations of Big Bear* Rudy Wiebe presents a perspective that contradicts Harrison's, Kreisel's and McCourt's contentions that there has been little change in the prairie landscape. By assuming Big Bear's voice, Wiebe presents the Cree Chief's impressions of this landscape after having been incarcerated in Manitoba's Stony Mountain Penitentiary from 1885 to 1888. "As far as he could see," he tells us, "wherever he looked the world was slit open with unending lines, squares, rectangles, of bone and between the strange trees gleamed straight lines of, he comprehended it suddenly, white buildings. Square inedible mushrooms burst up under poplars overnight; but square. He could not comprehend where he was. He suddenly recognized nothing where he knew he had ridden since he was tied in the cradleboard on his mother's back, where he had run buffalo since he could fork a horse. He was seeing; the apprehension which the settler-clustered land of Manitoba and Winnipeg's square walls and gutted streets had begun drove like nails into the sockets of himself and his place was gone . . ." (409).

<sup>11</sup> Exactly what terrain Harrison refers to in defining his prairie region as "the settled areas of three prairie provinces" (xiv) becomes more complicated yet when we encounter the gradual development of Manitoba's current geographic configuration. Although the Red River Colony was granted provincial status (and given the name Manitoba) in 1870, it did not assume its current shape until 1913, when the provinces of Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba all annexed portions of the Territories.

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<sup>12</sup> I am utilizing Raymond Williams' understanding of the concept of hegemony, as articulated in *Marxism and Literature*. Williams takes several pages to flesh out his (primarily Gramscian) understanding of the term. However, those aspects of the concept most relevant to my purposes are captured in his assertion that hegemony "is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move, in most areas of their lives. It is, that is to say, in the strongest sense a 'culture,' but a culture which has also to be seen as the lived dominance and subordination of particular classes" (110).

<sup>13</sup> I choose to figure this distorting effect as a lens because of the accuracy with which this metaphor captures what Harrison sees as the effects of inherited culture, and because Harrison himself invokes a similar metaphor to capture this effect. This he does while speaking of Ross's narrator in *As For Me and My House*. Harrison argues that this narrator's "problem of seeing the prairie darkly through the glass of an alien culture is one of Ross's conscious themes, but we can tell by the general tone of the novel that it is also something Ross himself struggles with, as do other prairie writers down to the present day" (xii). I replace Harrison's metaphor of a dark glass with that of the distorting lens because Harrison suggests that there is something more than a mere discoloration that results from this "alien culture" (xii). He claims that early settlers "looked out on the prairies with essentially 'Eastern' eyes," for example, eyes that did not merely discolour the prairie, but conditioned their perceptions to the extent that "they could not see clearly what was around them" (1).

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<sup>14</sup> Though perhaps fictions that pre-dated the European presence on the Canadian prairie were not readily available to these settlers, it seems unquestionable that both mortal and ghostly reminders (not to mention human remains) of a former cultural presence must have been evident. Indeed, both Eli Mandel and Robert Kroetsch comment on the presence of such cultural traces. In “On Being an Alberta Writer” Kroetsch tells us that “there was, half a mile south from our farm, a ring of stones in the prairie grass. My dad and the hired men, strangely, plowed around it” (218). Eventually, he tells us, “a gang of dam-builders from a Battle River site came by and picked up the stones, and my father broke the sod. If history betrayed us, we too betrayed it. I remember my father one night at supper, saying out of nowhere, he’d made a mistake, letting those men pick up those stones. For reasons he couldn’t understand, he felt guilty. . . .There is always something left behind” (219). In “Writing West: On the Road To Wood Mountain” Eli Mandel recalls that “on the road to Wood Mountain [in Saskatchewan], we saw petroglyphs, signs carved into the rock. Long ago men [sic] wrote pictures and words into the land. It seemed to me then when I saw those . . . the lost language of the petroglyphs were definitions of the prairie . . .” (77).

<sup>15</sup> That the First Nations peoples had already named many of the places contained within Harrison’s prairie region is perhaps an obvious point. To cite one example, Loriggio tells us in “Regionalism and Theory” that “because they are there, the indigenous names of cities and provinces—the various Saskatchewans, Mississaugas, Temiskamings, Hosannas, Ottawas, etc—become endowed with their own particular saliency (they stand for pre-European history). Cultural hybridism is more and more the normal condition of communities, individuals, and literatures” (16).

<sup>16</sup> In contrast to New’s decision to locate the Canadian cultural identity between “East” and “West,” Robert Kroetsch tells us in “The Canadian Writer and the American

Literary Tradition” that “the Canadian writer, in my experience, is a person caught between *north* and *south*” (46).

<sup>17</sup> New himself addresses the fact that “some writers write of marginality and regionalism from *within* the cultural or institutional ‘centre’” (152). Yet, oddly, he addresses this incoherence in his understanding of “regional” authors by pointing to the fact that four classically Western-Canadian authors (Margaret Laurence, W.O. Mitchell, Earle Birney and Eli Mandel) “have all for substantial periods of their life made ‘Central Canada’ their home” (152). In so doing New leaves me to wonder if he does not propose geographic distance from Central Canada as the distinguishing feature of the regional author.

<sup>18</sup> For those interested in these contemporary critiques, see also J.K. Gibson-Graham’s chapter entitled “How Do We Get Out of This Capitalist Place?” from *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*.

<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the most cogent and widely known piece that critiques the use of spatial metaphors in social theory by distinguishing between metaphoric and material space is Neil Smith and Cindy Katz’s “Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialized Politics.” Rose relies heavily upon this piece to introduce her problematic in “As If the Mirrors Had Bled,” and characterizes it as “the most detailed critique so far” (57).

<sup>20</sup> Rose in fact argues that the distinction between real and non-real space is “a performance of power, and of masculinist power in particular” and that the real tends to be gendered masculine while the non-real is gendered feminine (“As If” 58). For reasons of brevity and simplicity, however, I have chosen to focus exclusive attention upon Rose’s deconstruction of the distinction between real and non-real space.

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<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that, in his later study, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Edward Soja has moved towards a vision of human spatiality that acknowledges the interrelated character of social, material and mental spaces (as his title suggests).

<sup>22</sup> I credit Geraldine Pratt for alerting me to the possibility of constructing the hybrid category socio-material space; the productivity of such a category was first brought to my attention by Pratt's use of the related term, "social-material" in "Geographies of Identity and Difference: Marking Boundaries" (164).

<sup>23</sup> In "New Cultures for Old" Stuart Hall provides a definition of culture that serves two functions. First, it represents, in an expanded form, my own understanding of the term culture. Second, it usefully demonstrates the trend towards a more practice-oriented, non-elitist understanding of culture. "By *culture*[,] Hall reports, "we mean the systems of shared meanings which people who belong to the same community, group or nation use to help them interpret and make sense of the world. These meanings are not free-floating ideas. They are embodied in the material and social world. The term 'culture' includes the social practices which produce meaning as well as the practices which are regulated and organized by those shared meanings" (176, emphasis in original).

<sup>24</sup> Anyone interested in pursuing such an analysis would find Kay Anderson's *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* an invaluable source to look to. In fact it was Anderson's demonstration of the constitutive link between spatialization and racialization that brought such a potential study to the fore of my imagination.

## Part Two

### **The Incipient Region: Place and Identity Formation in Twentieth-Century Canadian Realist Novels**

#### **Section One: The What and Why of Place**

The transition from part one to part two of this dissertation marks several shifts in focus. Most obviously, part two signifies a turn from the concept of region to that of place, and a turn from a focus on critical studies of Canadian literary regionalism towards a focus on a selection of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels. Yet the transition from part one to part two does not signal any radical break in theoretical orientation or thematic continuity. Part two builds upon the foundation constructed in part one as it explains through discussion and exemplifies through literary analyses how place studies can, according to the scheme advanced in this dissertation, come to constitute the basic building blocks from which studies of Canadian literary regionalism are constructed.

The transition from part one to part two also signals a turn from what might be termed a reactive mode of analysis to a more overtly constructive one. In drawing this distinction I do not want to suggest that studies which critique an existing tradition of thought are not constructive; my re-conceptualization of the practice of Canadian literary regionalism in part one certainly required my active participation in this field's on-going social construction. Neither do I mean to suggest that my present effort to position place-studies within the field of Canadian literary criticism is an act of pure invention: I am not the first literary critic to utilize the term place as an organizing principle for literary analyses.<sup>1</sup> What I mean to suggest is that part two is more overtly constructive than part

one in that I do not respond to a sedimented tradition of place studies within Canadian literary criticism here, but instead work to disclose a location in which such a tradition could, potentially, take hold and flourish.

This process of disclosure takes the form of two distinct sections. In the first of these sections I differentiate the term place from those of region and social space and provide a brief sketch of place's history within geography and the social sciences. I then move on to explore the question of whether or not places are bounded entities and explain why I choose to bring an understanding of places as contingently bounded to the analysis of literary places. This I do by comparing and contrasting the goals and perspectives Doreen Massey uses to argue the merits of "A Global Sense of Place" in *Place, Space and Gender* with those I bring to the investigation of place and identity in twentieth-century Canadian realist novels. I conclude section one by introducing some of the terms I have found both useful and necessary to the analysis of literary places.

In section two I exemplify the approach to place studies I advance in section one by investigating the relationship between place and identity (with a particular emphasis on gender identity) in Charles Bruce's *The Channel Shore*. I conclude section two by looking to some of the other twentieth-century Canadian realist novels examined here for parallels in the way these texts articulate socio-material space and gender identity. As will become increasingly apparent over the course of my discussion in this first section, my turn in section two to a more expansive and comparative approach to this topic instigates a shift from a place study to a regional mode of analysis. It is through this extension of my focus that I return my readers, via the channel of literary analysis, to our point of conceptual departure—how do we distinguish place from region?

In contemporary discourses of human geography, there is a substantial overlap between the way in which the concepts of region and place are utilized. In his influential article, “Place as Historically Contingent Process: Structuration and the Time-Geography of Becoming Places,” for example, Allan Pred uses the terms region and place interchangeably. In *Space, Place and Gender*, Doreen Massey names “a street, or a region or even a continent” as possible places (Massey 154). Yet in “Representing Space: Space, Scale and Culture in Social Science,” John Agnew suggests that places occupy a different scale than regions when he claims that, under certain conditions, there can arise a “‘region’ of places” (263). Jim Duncan also invokes scale to distinguish place from region when he refers to “places and their unique histories within larger regions” in his discussion of place in *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (583).

When I turn from a consideration of semantic usage to a survey of the way region and place are conceptualized, the overlap between the terms remains substantial. Many of the arguments human geographers are currently advancing about place show marked similarities to those I advanced about region in part one, where I argued that regional spaces must be recognized as socially produced. In *In Place/Out of Place* Tim Cresswell makes much the same argument about places when he asserts that they “are neither totally material nor completely mental; they are combinations of the material and mental and cannot be reduced to either” (13). Not surprisingly, Cresswell captures this ambiguity by emphasizing place’s status as a “social space” (3). And just as I argued that regional spatial divisions are also inevitably temporal divisions, so Massey, Cresswell, Pred and Nigel Thrift all work to integrate an understanding of the articulated character of time and space into their conceptions of place (Massey 155; Cresswell 13; Pred 279; Thrift 310).

Through this articulation, place, like region, emerges as something that “can never be completed”; it is not a thing but “a process,” and an “historically contingent” one at that (Thrift 317; Massey 155; Pred 279).

In a sense, these similarities tell us as much about the field of human geography as they do about the concepts of region and place. As Derek Gregory notes in his entry on human geography and space in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, there has been considerable agreement amongst human geographers since the 1970s that, in order to overcome the “objectivism that characterized spatial science,” a general “socialization of spatial analysis” was required (769). Gregory also notes that there has been a more recent effort in human geography to overcome dualisms, one of which is “*the dualism of ‘time’ and ‘space’*” (771, emphasis in original). Given that region and place are key concepts in human geography (according to Pred their study constitutes “the essence of human geographic inquiry”), it is understandable that their current theorization displays parallel preoccupations (279).

Yet there are differences between these two concepts, some of which relate to their divergent histories. As we saw in part one, the extensive, cross-disciplinary tradition of regional studies has imbued this concept with a high degree of legitimacy. By contrast, place is a concept whose legitimacy is less likely to be taken for granted. In other words, the concept of place tends to attract attention in a way that the concept of region does not. Place’s relative lack of legitimacy most likely relates to its history. Place has had an interesting history within geography and the social sciences, one marked by a rhythm of waxing and waning perceptions of its use-value. Agnew delineates some

of this concept's earlier history in "Representing Space: Space, Scale and Culture in Social Science" when he explains that

the concept of place became fatefully identified with that of community in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century social science. As community was viewed to be in eclipse under the onslaught of industrialization and urbanization, place was eclipsed too. (267)

Yet during the 1970s, place experienced something of a renaissance within the field of human geography, and in a sense foreshadowed the movement towards the more socialized mode of spatial analysis that Gregory refers to. During this resurgence, place tended to be deployed as space's emotive counterpart; it constituted a kind of repressed other to positivist geographers' conceptualizations of space. As Duncan explains, "Place, sense of place, and placelessness were some of the key concepts used in humanistic geography during the 1970s to distinguish its approach from positivist geography" (582). To express the distinction rather crudely, while place was about feeling, space was about knowing: while "place was seen as more subjectively defined, existential and particular," Duncan explains more fully, "space was thought to be a universal, more abstract phenomenon, subject to scientific law" (*The Dictionary of Human Geography* 582).<sup>2</sup>

As many geographers came to re-think the positivist premises that informed their conceptualizations of space and, through this process, became increasingly conscious of the degree to which space is itself mired in (and indeed forged from) the murky phenomena of subjectivity, sociality and power, place's legitimacy was called into question once again. If space is always already about subjectivity, sociality and power, its critics argue, then what impetus remains for retaining the concept of place? The

theorizations of place currently being advanced by geographers such as Massey, Agnew, Pred and Thrift constitute attempts to again resuscitate place from the condition of near extinction brought about by this latest evolution in geographical thought. Place's troubled past and its open-ended future are writ large in Thrift's article, "Steps to an Ecology of Place." Though he comes to argue that "place *is* alive and well and that understanding place should be a crucial concern of the social sciences and humanities," Thrift begins this piece with the confession: "I have avoided writing much about place . . . because I have found real difficulties in knowing what to do with the idea. The more you think about place, the less it seems to offer" (296, emphasis in original; 295).

What does the concept of place offer to my analysis of the relationship between space and identity formation in twentieth-century Canadian realist novels? As my opening comments about the relationship between parts one and two suggest, place offers nothing *essentially* different from the more generic concept of social space, nor from the understanding of region I advanced in part one of this dissertation. Yet, as I will demonstrate through a discussion of the relationships between the concepts of place, region and social space, place does have a unique role to play in this study.

Social space is the most generic of the three terms region, place and social space; it contains and describes the concepts of region, place, and, as will become increasingly apparent in part three, that of nature as well. Yet social space describes and contains much more besides; indeed, if we account for the role social relations play in constituting both subjectivity and language, it is difficult to imagine a space that is not in some sense socially produced. And it is social space's very omnipresence that both explains and limits its use-value. As I suggested in part one, though social space is a powerful tool for

critiquing the myriad ways in which thinkers can come to efface the social character of spatial production, it is a less precise term with which to name divisions of human spatiality that already take account of space's social production: though it characterizes them accurately, it cannot distinguish between them.

As for the distinction between region and place, there is again nothing essential that differentiates these concepts. According to my understanding of place and region, both terms signify approximate sectors of socio-material space (or, in literary analyses, representations of such spaces). The value of both region and place derives from their shared capacity to demarcate what Massey calls "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (*Space, Place and Gender* 154).

Place's particular value to my project derives from its capacity to signal a shift in analytic focus and emphasis rather than any sea change in approach or understanding. Like both Agnew and Duncan, I invoke a logic of scale to distinguish place from region. Literary places are the collection of represented socio-material sites that unify, and are in turn unified by, the network of social relations narrated within single literary works (and here I restrict myself to particular examples of the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel). Although literary analyses of place *need not* constitute the building blocks with which studies of literary regionalism are constructed, they certainly fulfill this function admirably. Literary regions are produced when critics demonstrate common patterns in the way literary places articulate identities. Agnew invokes the distinction between place and region to an analogous end (though I doubt he had realist novels in mind while doing so) when he specifies that place "refers to discrete if 'elastic' areas in which settings for

the constitution of social relations are located” (263). As he goes on to explain, “to the extent that places are similar . . . one can refer to a ‘region’ of places” (263).

Literary texts, and twentieth-century Canadian realist novels in particular, conform quite nicely to Agnew’s characterization of places as “discrete if ‘elastic’ settings for the constitution of social relations” (Agnew 263). While such novels are “discrete” in the sense that they encode a limited array of social relations and locate these relations within a finite number of socio-material sites, they are “elastic” in at least two senses (Agnew 263). For one, realist novels are (like all narratives) interpretively elastic in their capacity to elicit a seemingly infinite variety of readings. They are also elastic in the sense that, if every realist novel constructs a place, it is a place that can be broken down, opened up, and re-constituted, *ad infinitum*, into different constellations of places. Implied in this understanding of the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel as a seemingly endless repository of places, themselves reconfigurable into other places, is the assumption that the literary critic does not just read for place, but plays an active role in producing literary places through the interpretive process. I play an instrumental role in producing the places I will present in this study because it is I who gather together, through my prioritization of processes of identity-formation, my close attention to the role spatial practices play in articulating identities, and my own unique process of selection, the nexus of social relations and socio-material spaces that constitute these literary places (Agnew 263). Other critics would inevitably bring other priorities and criteria of selection to the analysis of a given text, and in so doing, produce quite a different series of places from the same narrative materials.

Yet I am conscious of how my claim that literary texts are “discrete,” in so far as they encode a limited array of social relations, side-steps the question of whether places are bounded entities (Agnew 263). There is no one correct answer to this question, but rather a series of contextual responses, and responses that say as much about the agenda of the critic working with place as they do about the concept itself. Because contemporary human geographers are aware of place’s historical and on-going association with enclosed communities, scholars currently addressing the concept tend to produce theories of place explicitly designed to reject a bounded, territorial sense of place.

To my mind, Doreen Massey provides one of the most thorough and cogent conceptualizations of place as unbounded in the chapter entitled “A Global Sense of Place” from *Space, Place and Gender*. Here Massey argues that places are articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself . . . (154).

Although Massey’s reference here to “the place itself” may suggest an unspoken reliance on a more bounded understanding of place than she explicitly argues for, she stands firm in her belief that places need not be bounded entities at all. Though she concedes that “‘Boundaries’ may of course be necessary” for “certain types of studies,” she maintains that “they are not necessary for the conceptualization of a place itself” (*Space, Place and Gender* 155).

In the discussion that follows I will elucidate the ways in which Massey's "global" (or, as I prefer, porous)<sup>3</sup> sense of place provides a useful means of expanding the literary critic's geographical imagination. Yet, as I will go on to explain, there are reasons why Massey's understanding of place is not the most helpful one to bring to my project of investigating the relationship between place and identity in realist novels.

One of the positive attributes of Massey's understanding of place is that it "allows a sense of place which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world . . ." (155). I can hardly study the social relations of a literary place without addressing the multifarious senses of place expressed by narrators and characters, for example, and sense of place cannot be studied without accommodating these voices' imagined geographies. These imagined geographies typically extend well beyond the place in which a character may be situated, and they provide standards that allow characters to constitute their sense of a given place in relation to that of other places (held in mind or memory).

The actions of Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese* (1925), for example, take place almost exclusively within the place called Oeland, but the social relations that inform Ostenso's plot extend beyond Oeland's borders. The sense of social superiority that Mrs. Sandbo enjoys over the Gare family relates directly to her feelings about Oeland, and Mrs Sandbo's sense of this place derives from contrasting Oeland with other places that are, for her, *necessarily* beyond Oeland's borders. Before coming to Oeland, we are told, the Sandbos "had lived in a small village where a locomotive and passenger coaches were seen three times a week and where a freight train was a daily sight and nothing to be marvelled at" (28). In contrast, "The Gare children, never having been beyond a radius of

ten miles from home[,] . . . had never seen one of these wonders of modern times . . .”

(28). It is Mrs Sandbo’s experience of a world outside of Oeland, then, which informs her sense of it as a place of little social consequence. This sense of place is manifested in Mrs Sandbo’s relations with the Gares, the longest standing and wealthiest farmers in Oeland (Lawrence 108). It is precisely this difference in mobility that Osteno’s narrator invokes to explain why Mrs Sandbo believes that “there was a gulf between the two families that could not be spanned” (28).

The situation of Lee Mui Lan, the fierce matriarch of Sky Lee’s *Disappearing Moon Cafe* (1991), suggests that places seem virtually unknowable without reference to other places, or, more generally, that one’s sense of a place is always relational. For Mui Lan, who arrived from a village in China to Vancouver’s Chinatown in the early 1900s, her new and (relatively) urban place of residence does not seem urban at all; indeed, Mui Lan believes herself to be living “on the frontier with barbarians” (61) and figures this place by turns as a “wilderness” (27, 61), a “strange outpost community” (28), and a “backwood bush” (30).

Mui Lan’s sense of her new place in the world has virtually nothing to do with landscape or the relative infrastructural development of Vancouver and her village in China. Much more significant to Mui Lan’s understanding of place is the *cultural distance* between the way social relations (particularly those pertaining to the reproduction of patrilineal power) were handled in her former village and how they are handled in Vancouver’s Chinatown. In “her old home in the village, made up almost entirely of women except for the children and a few old men,” Mui Lan had command over virtually all aspects of her life (except the time when she would come to Canada to

join her husband) (25). Mui Lan arrives in Vancouver's Chinatown to find that the matriarchal social order of her village is no longer operational. Here she must locate herself within a profoundly patriarchal social order she finds hard to comprehend. As the narrator explains it, Mui Lan "arrived and found only silence. . . .Gold Mountain men were like stone. She looked around for women to tell her what was happening, but there were none. By herself, she lacked the means to know what to do next" (26).

Just as the absence of recognizable discourse is figured as "silence," so Mui Lan's relative lack of control over her world, and her inability to decipher the behavioural codes that govern its social relations, cause Mui Lan to interpret Vancouver as (amongst other things) a "wilderness" (26; 61). Here, Lee's narrator relies on a standard trope of the eighteenth century to figure Mui Lan's understanding of place.<sup>4</sup> For Mui Lan, wilderness signifies absence, and in particular, the absence of an appropriate culture (or so-called civilization). Since the cultural milieu into which Mui Lan's husband inserts her is so alien to her (as First Nations culture was to so many colonists), she is either unable to recognize it, or, more likely, stubbornly refuses to demonstrate even a partial recognition of this alternate, patriarchal culture as a means of resisting her subjugated status within it.<sup>5</sup>

As the examples of Mrs. Sandbo from *Wild Geese* and Mui Lan from *Disappearing Moon Cafe* demonstrate, one's sense of a given place is intimately related to (if not inextricable from) the place one occupies (or feels oneself to occupy) within multifarious networks of social relations. Mrs Sandbo's feelings of social superiority over the Gares relates to her self-placement on the (relatively) metropolitan end of a metropole/hinterland polarity that structures our understanding of place in *Wild Geese*. In

contrast, Mui Lan's sense of Vancouver as a wilderness or frontier is informed by her situation on the lower rungs of the patriarchal social hierarchy that Lee represents as structuring the social relations of Vancouver's Chinatown (this hierarchy itself being informed by the Canadian government's willingness to tailor immigration policy to capital's demand for cheap male labour).<sup>6</sup>

It was my growing awareness of the role social placement plays in informing one's sense of a place that brought my attention to certain assumptions operating within Massey's theory that limit its applicability to my project of studying the relationship between place and identity in twentieth-century Canadian realist novels. This limitation came into particularly stark relief when I began to apply the insights I gained from analyzing place in literature to the theory they arose from. Surely, I thought, the intimate relationship between social placement and sense of place must be relevant not just to fictional narratives, but to narratives such as Massey's as well: neither a novelist nor a theorist writes from within a social, cultural or political vacuum, after all. Yet the most powerful rhetorical device Massey deploys to persuade us to adopt a global sense of place requires that we, as readers, instigate a radical (if temporary and imaginary) break from our placement within the myriad webs of social relations that delimit the particularity of our circumstances. At two instances in her argument Massey asks her reader to

Imagine for a moment that you are on a satellite, further out and beyond all actual satellites; you can see 'planet earth' from a distance and . . . you are equipped with the kind of technology which allows you to see the colours of people's eyes and the numbers of their numberplates. (148)

I suggest that such an imaginary repositioning of her readers is necessary to Massey's argument because it is only from such an unrealistic vantage point that places *seem* unbounded to the vast majority of us. As Massey fully admits, "It is from this perspective that it is possible to envisage an alternative interpretation of place" (154).

And it is not just Massey's imaginative re-positioning of her readers upon a satellite that plays a crucial role in justifying her argument for "a global sense of place" (*Space, Place and Gender* 146). Of equal importance is Massey's strategy (whether conscious or unconscious) of individuating her readership. We are asked to situate ourselves upon Massey's fictive satellite alone: "imagine that you are on a satellite . . . you can see . . . you are equipped . . ." she reiterates (148). Solitude plays a crucial role in sustaining the illusion of social disembeddedness that Massey uses to persuade us to adopt a global sense of place. The presence of others upon that satellite would make this illusion harder to sustain; with others comes an awareness of our *relative* position, of our situation within networks of social relations of an economic, political and cultural character. And it is precisely these social relations that impose *different* limitations both upon our physical mobility—thus producing us as subjects with different perceptions about the boundedness of place—as well as upon our powers of perception—thus producing us as individuals with inevitably incomplete perspectives, and inevitably differing senses of place.

I argue that it is only when these contested and constraining limitations to our social placement and mobility are removed that we can conjure a sufficient sense of security about our place in the world to allow us to temporarily overlook economic, political and cultural boundaries, and in so doing, to partake of a global sense of place. It

is not only that such a position diminishes insecurity. It also enhances one's sense of power over others. Because "seeing and knowing are often conflated" within Western culture, our placement upon Massey's satellite temporarily enhances our sense of power (Rose, *Feminism and Geography* 86). And such an empowerment tends to diminish one's awareness of the power relations that play so intimate a role in the production of spatial divisions. As Nancy Hartsock tells us, "power relations are less visible to those who are in a position to dominate others . . ." (165). In short, it is only from such an impossible place as Massey situates us, in such an impossible moment as she asks us to imagine, that many of the world's citizens can *feel* a global sense of place.

The position Massey asks us to occupy imaginatively in order to partake of a global sense of place displays striking affinities with the spatiality that articulates the relationship between what Gillian Rose terms "'the master subject'—that is, white, heterosexual, middle-class masculinity"—and his world ("Making Space" 335). Rose argues that there is a "mutually constitutive link" between the subject-position of the master-subject "and the view of everywhere from nowhere which hopes to construct a transparent space in which the whole world is visible and knowable" ("Making Space" 335). Of course Massey does not simply *assume* this position, nor is our view of "everywhere" enabled by her narrative location of us "nowhere"; she lays bare the device by specifying the place from which her readers can access such a view (however unrealistic it is). Massey also undercuts the social privilege (and the social critique) that inheres in Rose's identification of *only* the "master subject" with such a scopic power: she entreats all of her readers, regardless of ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or age, to partake of this perspective through the act of imagining (though, again, we partake of this

view as atomized individuals). Having taken note of these qualifications, the similarities between Massey's rhetorical move and Rose's characterization of the master subject's spatiality are nonetheless thought provoking.

In the more "traditional" of the realist novels I address it is the disembodied narrative voice that typically occupies a position analogous to that of Massey's individuated reader or Rose's master subject.<sup>7</sup> There are interesting parallels between Massey's argument for a global sense of place and the function of an omniscient narrator. Though the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel's tendency to intermingle the subjectivities of multiple characters virtually dictates that this sub-genre provides readers with multiple and contradictory senses of the same place, narrators play a crucial role in shaping the reader's perception of the relevance of these various senses of place. It is in this managerial capacity that narrators exercise what I call "narrative power" (a concept I will return to). Although the question of narrative voice becomes more complicated in the more contemporary novels I address here, in the more traditional of these novels, the narrator's power to influence a reader's understanding is frequently deployed in order to manage the multiplicity of such senses of place by providing an overarching, quasi-objective sense of place.

The parallels between the techniques by which Massey persuades her readers to adopt "a global sense of place" and those by which omniscient narrators manage the various senses of place represented within traditional realist novels are best illustrated through example (Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* 146). For example, in the opening pages of Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*, the narrator contrasts his(?) sense of Montreal as a place with that of the people who live on the island of Montreal. To the

narrator, who implicitly represents himself as a being situated above the action, this “island about which two rivers join” conjures a national sense of place because it represents the “heart” of “this sprawling half-continent” (10). Yet this narrative voice also tells us that “down in the angle at Montreal, on the island about which the two rivers join, there is little of this sense of new and endless space” (10).

There is, of course, an arrogance to MacLennan’s narrator that is made manifest by a kind of spatial poetics. Because his sense of the island of Montreal relies on an Archimedean vantage point which enables a vista that ranges from the St. Lawrence River to the Arctic ocean, there is an unstated implication that his sense of place is more objective than that of the people on the ground (9-10). And from this position the narrator speaks for the (collectivized) inhabitants of Montreal in presuming that they do not share his perspective, nor, therefore, his sense of Montreal as the “heart” of “this sprawling half-continent” (10). As the events of the novel come to reveal, those on the ground are too mired within processes of political, religious, cultural and interpersonal contestation to view their place with any so-called objectivity. Only the narrator, positioned above this place and the conflicts occurring there, has the intellectual power (which is again conflated with scopic power) to see “the [national] unity” within “opposition,” and (in a new twist) the aural power to discern “the point and counterpoint of a harmony so subtle” that the people enacting this musical performance of national identity “never guessed its existence” (150).

Massey exercises much the same function as MacLennan’s narrator in her chapter, “A Global Sense of Place.” Like MacLennan’s narrator, Massey does not deny that places are governed by multiple senses of place; indeed, she draws our attention both to

the multiplicity, and the perspectival character, of one's sense of place. She contends, for example, that even in those rare instances when place and community are coincident, "this in no way implies a single sense of place. For people occupy different positions within any community" (153). She continues:

To take the most obvious example, I'm sure a woman's sense of place in a mining village—the spaces through which she normally moves, the meeting places, the connections outside—are different from a man's.

Their 'senses of the place' will be different. (154)

Yet, just as MacLennan's narrator suggests that his all-encompassing view of Montreal gives rise to the truer, and, for its time and place, the more forward-looking, *national* sense of this place, so Massey asks her readers to situate themselves above such identity-inflected, perspectival knowledges of place and to overlook these differences in constituting what is, for her time and from her place, a more forward-looking, *global* sense of place. Like MacLennan's narrator, then, but through a much more overt rhetorical strategy, Massey overrides (or at least de-prioritizes) these multiple senses of place in claiming that "what we need . . . is a global sense of the local, a global sense of place" (156).

I agree with Massey's point that a porous or "global sense of place" is a "progressive sense of place" in that it foregrounds the degree to which human beings are related to each other through ever-expanding networks of social relations (*Space, Place and Gender* 146; 151). The point I want to stress is that a "global sense of place" is, first and foremost, a *feeling* about place, and a feeling that is more readily experienced by some than others (Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* 147). Though I think Massey raises

a valuable point in suggesting that the distinctness of all places inheres in their unique linkages to other places, I detect a touch of epistemic violence in her claim that “a progressive sense of place would recognize that, without being threatened by it” (156). Though I do not think it helpful to pander to such feelings, I do think it necessary to recognize that many people are deeply insecure about their place within an increasingly porous, and an increasingly competitive network of social relations, and that, however negative the repercussions of these feelings are, they exist, and are not entirely without justification. As the literary texts I will be investigating in section two bear out, it is often those who feel most “threatened” by, or insecure about, their sense of selfhood who exhibit the strongest ties to place, and the strongest need to draw boundaries around (what they view as) *their* place as a means of assuaging such insecurities (*Massey, Space, Place and Gender* 156). However much many of us (myself included) would like to think ourselves “progressive,” Massey’s perspective on place is one that is far more easily adopted by those who feel secure about their social, economic, and geographic place in the world, and who enjoy a high degree of mobility upon the earth, than by those who are neither mobile nor secure (*Massey, Space, Place and Gender* 151).

What makes Massey’s conceptualization of place a less than ideal one to bring to the study of place and identity formation in twentieth-century Canadian realist novels is the trajectory of its normative thrust. Massey’s theory of place arises from her drive to prescribe “a global sense of place” in order to ameliorate social relations (*Space, Place and Gender* 147). As Massey acknowledges, much of her impetus for theorizing “an adequately progressive sense of place” derives from her observation that there is “at the moment a recrudescence of some very problematical senses of place, from reactionary

nationalisms, to competing localisms, to introverted obsessions with ‘heritage’” (*Space, Place and Gender* 151). In contrast to Massey, I seek a theory of place that enables me to elucidate the reasons for the inevitably differing senses of place that characters feel, and to delineate not how place *should* function, but how it tends to function and be experienced by the characters who inhabit my group of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels.

Though I could choose to focus attention upon those moments when literary narratives display a porous, or in Massey’s terms, a “global sense of place,” I think that doing so would be tantamount to putting the cart before the horse (*Space, Place and Gender* 146). To fail to show the ways in which twentieth-century Canadian realist novels can at times display a closed sense of place is to forego an excellent opportunity to learn something about the very particular mechanisms through which place-difference can come to articulate and enact social power, and to enable, enforce or frustrate the performance of certain kinds of identities. In short, Massey’s “global sense of place” is considerably more “progressive” (if not utopian) than the senses of place articulated in many of the realist novels I address. And most problematic of all, her conception of place as unbounded fails to capture the degree to which the process of identity formation often relies upon processes of border production (though, as will be seen, these borders tend to be porous in character) (151). As she explains, one of the benefits of adopting a “global sense of place” is that it discourages the tendency to use boundaries as “yet another way of constructing a counterposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* 151; 152). Though boundary production can, and has, enabled deeply problematic processes of radical othering (the example of Kosovo comes quickly to

mind), I am not yet convinced that the capacity for boundary production to both produce and express social difference is in all cases a problematic one.

In a sense what Massey is calling for in theorizing “an adequately progressive sense of place” is a shift in the epistemology through which people come to know place (*Space, Place and Gender* 151). I am not so much arguing that Massey’s theory of place fails to address the fact that places *must* be exclusive and enclosed. What I suggest is that places often tend to become recognizable *as* places through related processes of social exclusion and geographic differentiation. This means of constituting place often has as much (if not more) to do with the drive for self-understanding as it does with a drive to delimit or bound place. As Edward Said suggests in his discussion of imaginative geography in *Orientalism*,

To a certain extent modern and primitive societies seem . . . to derive a sense of their identities negatively. A fifth-century Athenian was very likely to feel himself to be nonbarbarian as much as he positively felt himself to be Athenian. The geographic boundaries accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways. (54)

What Said is suggesting about place here, and what is borne out in many of the novels I am examining, is that place only becomes knowable or *placed* through the identification and the location of others who do not belong.

Depending on the degree of their othering, others may be placed on the margins of one’s own place, or in *another* place entirely. Given Said’s focus in *Orientalism* on the extent to which the West’s identity has relied upon the construction and reification of an East, it is not surprising that his discussion of “imaginative geography” stresses those

instances in which place-difference follows from (or coincides with) instances of radical othering (such as racialization) (49).

In his study, *In Place/Out of Place*, human geographer Tim Cresswell focuses on those instances in which social agents engaged in “transgressive” (or counter-hegemonic) behaviours share the same (ostensible) place as non-transgressive social agents (10). Cresswell puts a different spin on the idea that place is governed by a negative epistemology (that it only becomes knowable through the recognition and placement of others outside the borders of one’s place). He argues that contestation and awareness of place go hand-in-hand: “our consciousness of place all but disappears when it appears to be working well,” he explains (10). While “there is not, in everyday life, a direct correlation between place and appropriate behavior,” those instances in which so-called inappropriate behaviors are made manifest can suddenly reveal “the always already existing normative geography” of a place (Cresswell 10).

In other words, transgressive acts prompt reactions that reveal that which was previously considered natural and commonplace. The moment of transgression marks the shift from the unspoken unquestioned power of place over taken-for-granted behavior to an official orthodoxy concerning what is proper as opposed to what is not proper—that which is in place to that which is out of place. (Cresswell 10)

According to Cresswell, we gain a consciousness of place through processes of social contestation; it is the emergence of conflict that effectively denaturalizes a place’s already-existing normative geography. “It is when different spatial ideologies come into

conflict that [normative geographies] are taken out of the role of ‘common sense’ and are stated as ‘the right way’—the ‘orthodoxy’” (10).

Cresswell’s concept of the normative geography provides a very useful means of approaching the relationship between place and identity, particularly in those of my realist novels that deploy a third person, omniscient mode of narration. Yet I want to be clear that I do not use the term to suggest that literary places articulate singular spatial ideologies—that they are governed by only one understanding of the kinds of behaviours appropriate to a particular kind of place. As Thrift tells us, place “is a means by which space is produced as a *plenitude of different relations*” (310, emphasis in original). By this I understand place to be a process that cannot help but articulate a multitude of (typically, if not inevitably) conflicting spatial ideologies. In so far as all such spatial ideologies represent interested perspectives on spatial usage, every spatial ideology has a normative aspect. What I use the concept of a normative geography to capture is the fact that, within many of the literary places I address here, as within many so-called real-world places, these diverse spatial ideologies are accorded differing degrees of recognition and legitimacy. Normative geographies do not reflect the existence of a social consensus, then, but of a social hierarchy. As Cresswell puts it, “normative geographies are defined by those with the power to do so” (10).

The question of how normative geographies are established—or in some instances resisted or contested—is somewhat different for literary places than it is for so-called real world places. In order to address these differences, I have devised a series of terms with which I can foreground the particular means by which social relations are articulated within the group of realist novels I examine here. Within the literary places I focus

attention upon, it is the extent to which any one spatial ideology attains a condition of orthodoxy—and to this degree becomes a normative geography—that a relatively stable power-structure can be said to govern its social relations. And it is the characters placed at the top of this power-structure who tend to possess, perform, and sometimes lose what I term “place-based authority.”

Place-based authority can be shared by a social group, but can also be exercised by particular characters. It can be shared by a group in the sense that a realist novel can be shown to articulate a normative geography that displays a structural tendency to give preferential treatment to certain social groups. As I will demonstrate in section two, for example, in many of the realist novels I examine here we can discern the machinations of a normative geography that tends to delimit the agency and mobility of female characters more than their male counterparts.

Place-based authority can be exhibited or exercised by a particular character in the sense that she or he is imbued with the power both to control the permeability of the social borders that delimit a particular place and, relatedly, to effect change within a formerly stable normative geography. It is place-based authority at its simplest which informs the patriarchal cliché, “a man’s home is his castle.” Not only does this saying suggest the patriarch’s king-like dominance within the home; it also suggests the power he has to exercise authority over who leaves and enters this sphere of dominance—to control the drawbridge, as it were.

There is no better example within my group of novels of a character who attempts to exercise place-based authority than that of Caleb Gare from Ostensø’s *Wild Geese*. Yet in a sense the heyday of Caleb’s place-based authority exists in the narrative past. It

is the very orthodoxy of the normative geography Caleb has successfully imposed upon his family that is disturbed by the arrival of Lind Archer. Oeland's new teacher brings an alternate spatial ideology to bear upon the Gare family, one that enables her to exercise an authority which derives from a place Caleb has little knowledge of, and no authority within—the metropole. Thus *Wild Geese* does not so much delineate a stable normative geography as it narrates the process of social contestation by which one very eccentric normative geography comes to be displaced by another, more hegemonic one.

At times the place-based authority authors bestow upon individual characters is sanctioned by the most god-like figure in the realist novel—the narrative voice. It is, of course, important to recognize the degree to which a narrator's omniscience is often denied, ironized and even parodied in the more contemporary of the twentieth-century Canadian realist novels I examine here. Yet it is equally important to recognize that even the most (ostensibly) mortal, identifiable and locatable of narrative voices exercises considerable power in shaping how we interpret both the characters and the events it represents for us. However delimited it may be, every such voice possesses a degree of what I term “narrative power.”

It is not necessary that place-based authority be supported by narrative power, but the durability of any one character's place-based authority tends to depend upon receiving such narrative sanction. To return to the example of Osteno's *Wild Geese*, it is no coincidence that we witness the waning of Caleb's place-based authority over the course of the text because it does not receive narrative sanction. In fact, the narrator continually undermines Caleb's authority not only by displaying the psychological manipulation he relies upon to fulfill his desires, but also by revealing the demeaning surveillance tactics

he deploys to maintain his authority against the threat posed by Lind's arrival (see for example 23, 27, 43, 156, 164, 181, 185). That the novel begins with Lind Archer's arrival in Oeland and ends with her exit from this place is one indication of whose side the narrator takes in the battle over place-based authority this novel narrates. The narrative voice, in effect, arrives and leaves with Lind; by contrast, this voice precedes Caleb's entry onto the narrative scene, and outlasts his exit from it. The point to be retained is that while only some of those characters that possess place-based authority enjoy narrative sanction, those without narrative sanction often come to lose this authority over the course of a novel.

One of the chief means by which I investigate the relationship between place and processes of identity formation in Bruce's *The Channel Shore* is by delineating the behavioural rules that compose this text's normative geography. As one might expect from the explicit connection Cresswell forges between consciousness of place and the emergence of "out of place" behaviours, the process of tracing a literary place's normative geography requires that the critic pay particularly close attention to the kinds of practices that are interpreted by characters and/or narrators as transgressing a place's normative geography (Cresswell 10). Cresswell explains that "by concentrating on the marginal and the 'low,' the 'other,' we achieve a novel perspective upon [a place's] central workings" (149).

In many of the novels I work with, transgressive acts are most easily recognized by the social consequences that follow from them. It is by paying attention to those behaviours that result in a character's departure from a given place, in his or her exile to the social margins of a place, or in characters' deaths (and thus their exile to the narrative

past) that a text's normative geography comes into focus. The rules that constitute normative geographies can also come into view by looking for relationships between certain kinds of identities and certain senses characters have of a given place. For example, I could begin by asking myself if all female characters exhibit the same feelings about a given place. By endeavouring to understand the reasons that explain the presence or absence of such patterns, some of the implicit assumptions that govern the relationship between place, social relations and identity begin to emerge. This technique's effectiveness relies on my assumption that there are usually rational reasons for the differing feelings characters exhibit about their social and geographic place in a network of social relations. By deciphering the logic of these feelings, we can gain important information about a text's normative geography.

Yet it is important to bear in mind that normative geographies rarely govern a text's social relations with perfect consistency. While behaviours that transgress the rules that compose normative geographies are almost always recognized as transgressive (by characters and narrators alike), the punitive measures which should, in principle, issue consistently from these acts sometimes do not. While some characters suffer harsh and predictable consequences for transgressing the rules that compose a literary place's normative geography, others transgress them with near or complete impunity. Those valorized characters, who constitute the exceptions to otherwise stable rules, exhibit what I term "narrative privilege."

It is no accident that I choose to exemplify the means by which critics can examine the relationship between place and identity by focusing particular attention upon Bruce's *The Channel Shore*; the realist novels that are most amenable to this form of

analysis are those whose social worlds are governed by the most stable and enduring normative geographies. And, at least within the discrete group of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels I examine here, the kinds of novels that generally exhibit the most stable normative geographies are the traditional variety—those that utilize a third-person omniscient mode of narration. Amongst my selection of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels, there is none that presents a more detailed and established normative geography than *The Channel Shore*.

It is not that Bruce's text does not offer up multiple and mutually conflicting spatial ideologies; rather, it is that Bruce's text does a particularly thorough job of delegitimizing or silencing those characters (such as Vangie Murphy, Anse Gordon and Hazel McKee) whose spatial ideologies call the orthodoxy of its normative geography into question. It is to the degree that *The Channel Shore* succeeds in convincing its readers that such processes of delegitimation are appropriate that the text succeeds in perpetuating the legitimacy of its normative geography.

If the stability of the normative geography Bruce delineates in *The Channel Shore* makes it a convenient text with which to demonstrate the power of place studies, this stability also makes Bruce's novel a useful point from which to shift from a study of place to a more regional mode of analysis. Because a regional mode of analysis maps continuities in the way texts deploy particular kinds of socio-material space to articulate identities, a realist novel such as Bruce's, which organizes its social relations with remarkable thoroughness and consistency, provides a helpful standard I can apply to other, more contemporary realist novels, many of which do not suppress the heterodoxic character of place so overtly as *The Channel Shore*.

Beginning a regional mode of analysis with Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*, for example, a novel which repeatedly stresses the multiplicity of the spatial ideologies places draw together, would certainly provide more information about how places inevitably conjoin a multitude of social differences. But it would also provide less information about how particular spatial ideologies succeed in attaining a condition of orthodoxy and, by so doing, come to enable the repression of social difference. By beginning with an example of the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel that establishes and polices a remarkably stable normative geography, I can accumulate knowledge about the techniques through which realist novels encode behaviours as appropriate and inappropriate to place. And it is this knowledge that I can bring to bear upon texts which are less overtly conservative than Bruce's, but texts which nonetheless exhibit a reliance upon facets of the very normative geography Bruce delineates (though often by more subtle means).

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What I have presented in section one is a considerably more orderly and largely depersonalized narrative of the process I underwent in selecting the best understanding of place to bring to the analysis of place and identity formation in twentieth-century Canadian realist novels. As I hope I have managed to convey in section one's discussion, this process proved to be very thought-provoking. In my efforts to hybridize place theory from human geography with the sociologically inflected mode of literary criticism I utilize here, I have come to realize that there is no *best* understanding of place, but only a

series of critical contexts that make some conceptualizations of place appear better than others. I began (perhaps naively) by looking for the most just or socially ameliorative understanding of place I could find to bring to the analysis of literary places. My motivations altered, however, as I gradually came to see that the best critical approach to the analysis of literary places and a most normative approach to the conceptualization of place are not necessarily coincident. While this could have been a disillusioning discovery, it turned out to be an empowering one because it was the skills I had acquired as a literary critic that disclosed shortcomings in what I thought was the best normative theory of place. Moreover, I did not recognize these shortcomings until I endeavoured to apply the theory to the practice of literary analysis. What I lost in idealism, then, I gained in confidence about my methodology.

In the particular instance of place theory, the tension between my desire for a socially efficacious theory of place and my desire for one that could accommodate my own understanding of identity formation was brought into sharpest focus by the issue of place-boundedness. Because I bring a particular interest in questions of social equity to the study of space and identity, the advantages of the “global” or porous sense of place Doreen Massey advances in *Space, Place and Gender* were readily apparent to me (146). Yet, as I have argued, it is also important to recognize that sense of place is, first and foremost, a *feeling* about place. Though I think that the world would be much improved if we were all able to feel the sense of place Massey argues for, there are good reasons that many people do not. Furthermore, adopting such a position intellectually does little to alleviate the injustices and sufferings that prevent many people from identifying emotionally with such a sense of place.

And literary narratives reflect this situation: for many literary characters, places remain intransigently bounded by socially produced normative geographies. Though these geographies do not necessarily dictate behaviours, they certainly play a key role in encouraging or discouraging them and in determining which will be socially recognized, and which will not. It is the capacity of a discursively produced normative geography to enable and disable the performance of certain kinds of identities that is particularly relevant to my project. Moreover, it is because of the instrumental role socially produced borders often play in processes of identity formation that I have found it necessary to supplement Massey's theory of place with alternate understandings of this concept, some of which are expressed by Said, Thrift and Cresswell. Though Massey's conceptualization of place captures the sense in which places constitute "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings," it is Said and particularly Cresswell who provide insights into how a more bounded and conflictual sense of place functions (*Space, Place and Gender* 154).

Now that I have outlined what I mean by place and introduced some of the terms I have found helpful in applying place theory to twentieth-century Canadian realist novels, I will conduct a literary analysis that focuses particular attention on place and gender identity in Charles Bruce's *The Channel Shore*. In this more involved analysis I will map the relationship between place and identity in this novel by tracing consistencies between particular place-based practices and certain kinds of identity. Through this process I will disclose some of the rules that constitute *The Channel Shore*'s normative geography. My reading of Bruce's text will offer a useful standard with which I can begin to gauge the

extent to which the normative geography of gender identity Bruce delineates in *The Channel Shore* informs the other realist novels I examine here.

## Section Two:

### Place and Social Difference in the Twentieth-Century Canadian Realist Novel: Towards A Study of Place and Gender

In section two I endeavour to fulfill several interrelated goals. First, I want to demonstrate the capacity place studies have to reveal information about how social relations are organized in twentieth-century Canadian realist novels. This I will do by applying the understanding of place I developed in section one to Charles Bruce's *The Channel Shore*, a process that will find me delineating key facets of this text's normative geography. Second, I want to elucidate the relationship between place and gender identity in my group of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels. I will begin to realize this goal as I focus attention upon those aspects of *The Channel Shore*'s normative geography that relate specifically to gender difference. Yet this goal is only fully realized towards the end of section two as I bring those norms of place-based female gender propriety to bear upon some of the other realist novels I examine here. In so doing, I utilize Bruce's normative geography as a point of reference, one that directs my attention to the existence of patterns in the way twentieth-century Canadian realist novels deploy particular places to enable the performance of female gender identity. It is in shifting from a close focus on Bruce's text to a more comparative mode of analysis that I fulfill the last of my goals for this section—to exemplify the mode of regional literary analysis I introduced in part one.

Though considerations of place and gender constitute one of section two's major foci, gender difference does not constitute my exclusive focus here largely because I do not believe that critics can gain an adequate understanding of the effects of gender

difference by studying it in isolation from other kinds of social difference with which it is inevitably articulated. For the most part, the identity of a character, like that of a person, is always a dynamic interplay of group affiliations, some of which we choose to perform our identification with and some of which we are conscripted into performing through our dependence on a limited repertoire of socially recognizable roles. As a result of this conviction, this study both encompasses and eclipses considerations of gender.

My approach to the relationship between place and identity in this section reflects my conviction that identity is a multifaceted social phenomenon, and that no facet of personal identity can be understood in isolation from the social realm in which it is produced, and thus from other kinds of identities. Yet I am also aware that an overly dogmatic approach could hamper my ability to add anything meaningful to our knowledge of place and gender in the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel: if I were to attempt to encounter every kind of social difference novels invoke and articulate through place, general trends would no longer be decipherable through the mass of detail. I opt, therefore, for a compromise between an overly broad, and an overly narrow focus by assuming a series of analytic perspectives, each of which allows me to draw some meaningful conclusions about place and social difference in general, and place and gender difference in particular.

I will begin by examining Bruce's *The Channel Shore* from a far-reaching perspective, one from which the place called the Channel Shore appears to be bounded by the most porous of borders. From this perspective, I will be able to discern the range of places Bruce relies upon to delineate his primary place—the Channel Shore—and to examine the role these other, ostensibly external places play in the production of textual

meaning. After this I will begin to hone in on the various places that together compose the Channel Shore. I will decipher the normative geography that both organizes and governs the social relations of this place through several of the means I outlined in section one. I will focus on differing facets of the Channel Shore's normative geography by imagining it as an enclosed place; this perspective allows me to locate the borders that delimit places and to discern what meaning I can garner from studying who exits and enters this artificially delimited nexus of social relations, and under what conditions. Gendered facets of this normative geography will begin to come into view as I look for relationships between characters' mobility and sense of place, as they will when I focus on how the novel manages those acts which transgress the norms that govern place-behaviour.

After having sketched the role various places play in structuring the social relations of the world Bruce represents, I will apply a lateral perspective on the text by focusing attention explicitly on the relationship between place and gender in *The Channel Shore*. It is at this point that I will instigate a break from Bruce's text and begin to widen my critical lens by looking to the other twentieth-century Canadian realist novels at play here in order to isolate trends and tendencies that operate across time, authorial gender and narrative strategy.

As I suggested towards the end of section one, I focus particular attention on *The Channel Shore* because of the success with which it depicts a relatively stable normative geography. This stability itself derives, at least in part, from the fact that *The Channel Shore* provides a remarkably detailed account of how social relations function in a relatively self-enclosed and insular social world. To say *relatively self-enclosed* is not to

say that the Channel Shore is the only significant place Bruce represents in this text. The cities of Toronto, Halifax, Boston and London, England, also inform its plot in important ways. Yet rather than being the sites of actions, which are themselves the focus of substantive narrative attention, these other places perform alternate narrative functions; although *The Channel Shore* is dominated by one primary place (which can be broken down and reconfigured into a multitude of other places), it presses secondary places into important narrative service. By way of contrast, I would argue that in Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* there are two primary places at play—Vancouver and Three Loon Lake. Neither of these places dominates the text, and Wilson's readers gain an enhanced understanding of both places through the social relations that link them.

In Bruce's novel, the movement of knowledge is almost exclusively in one direction—from metropole to hinterland. Our enhanced knowledge of the Channel Shore does nothing to increase our understanding of London or Toronto, for example, except in a cursory and negative sense. The cities of London, Toronto, Boston and Halifax serve largely homologous functions in that the actions that occur there exemplify the alienating and de-centering effect metropoles have on people from the Shore, effects that highlight, through contrast, the seeming authenticity and meaningfulness of life in this place.

These secondary places serve two additional functions in Bruce's text. First, by anchoring a framing figure within a metropole, Bruce encourages the engagement of an urban readership in a story whose overarching focus is on his titular hinterland. It is the figure of Bill Graham—a character whose father grew up along the Channel Shore, and who visited the Shore as a child, but who is himself from Toronto—who frames Bruce's narrative. Second, because the resolution of an identity crisis within Bill's life requires

that he revisit the Channel Shore, it is this metropolitan figure that provides a (rather transparent) narrative rationale for Bruce's intense focus on this rural place.

*The Channel Shore* begins by situating us in London, England, where Bill Graham is working as a war correspondent covering "a royal garden party for Commonwealth prisoners" in late May of 1945 (1). It is there that he encounters Anse Gordon in the crowd; this meeting sparks Bill's memories of his first visit to the Shore, during which he gained a child's understanding of "the story with which Anse Gordon's name was forever linked" (3). This chance encounter with Anse re-awakens Bill's interest in the people of the Shore, in the story that remains incomplete and in the place which, through memory, comes to seem "lively, vibrant, [and] increasingly distinct," while Bill's present life is marked by "private apprehension" and "impatient boredom" (176; 1). It is the need to explain (through historical contextualization and renewed contact) how Bill's encounter with Anse comes to "end, eventually, [Bill's] private frustration and sharpen again the colour of his life" that necessitates Bruce's focus on the Channel Shore (2). As if Bruce felt impelled to justify his nearly exclusive focus upon the Channel Shore, he utilizes the relatively minor figure of Bill Graham to provide an urban point of entry into his novel, and an urban narrative frame. Just as Bill's meeting with Anse legitimates a shift in narrative attention from London to the Channel Shore, so Bill's exit from the Shore back to his wife and child in Toronto provides a way to conclude the story of a place where "nothing is ever finished" (397).

As a relatively minor and metropolitan figure who twice visits the Shore but is not *of the Shore*, Bill Graham functions as an ambassador of sorts, a figure who affords Bruce's readers a point of sympathetic (but not overly sympathetic) entry into his very

particular and at times claustrophobic world. Bruce's readers can identify with Bill Graham; like him, we are visitors to the Shore who can garner meaning from our encounter with this place without becoming lost in it; through identification with Bill, we can maintain a firm grasp on the Channel Shore's cultural and geographic distance from places with which the majority of readers are more familiar. Bruce's text is not unique in deploying a metropolitan figure to this end; Martha Osteno utilizes Lind Archer for much the same purpose in *Wild Geese*. The strategic usefulness of such a figure becomes clear if we remember the kind of effect achieved by Sheila Watson, who provides no such suturing figure to minimize readerly anxiety in *The Double Hook* (1959). In Watson's text readers are catapulted directly into an insular and disorienting place without narrative landmarks or bridging figures to assure us of the normalcy of our defamiliarization.

For contemporary readers who are familiar with literary representations of Nova Scotia (in George Elliott Clarke's *Whylah Falls* or Ann Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees*, for example), one of the first things that becomes apparent about Bruce's text is that he does not represent the Channel Shore as a place within which racialized others are present. Given that African-Canadians had inhabited both urban *and* rural parts of Nova Scotia for approximately 150 years by the time Bruce's novel was published in 1954, this was a narrative decision on Bruce's part. Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* was published this same year, and does reflect the multi-ethnic demographics of both Vancouver and Kamloops at this time.

Yet, as if a certain number of social differences are required to narrate place, differences of religious affiliation (which often invoke ethnic differences indirectly) are the most overt means by which Bruce spatializes identity along the Channel Shore. This

place is divided roughly between down-shore Catholics and up-shore Protestants. As the narrator tells us, “at The Rocks began. . . Catholic country. From The Rocks to Forester’s Pond the Protestant families could be counted on one hand . . . just as, up the road, Catholics were few and far between” (34). And each of these religiously based areas is governed by its own set of cultural practices:

Down-shore [in “Catholic country”] there was dancing and card-playing and a church with a cross on a steeple at Forester’s Pond. Up-shore [in Protestant country] there were box socials and strawberry festivals and small white box-like churches at Currie Head and Leeds. (34)

Time also contributes to the performance of one’s identity as a Protestant or Catholic in Bruce’s world. For instance, Protestants are discouraged from engaging in work or even productive leisure activities (such as fishing and strawberry picking) on Sundays, while Catholics are not restrained by such rules (17; 11).

Although it is not the exclusive measure, being in one’s place, and being engaged in one’s prescribed activities has a lot to do with being a valorized social agent in *The Channel Shore*. As Cresswell notes, “When an expression such as ‘out of place’ is used it is impossible to clearly demarcate whether social or geographical place is denoted—place always means both” (11). Bruce’s placement of the Katen family provides an interesting example of Cresswell’s point. The Katens are not a socially valorized group in Bruce’s novel. The narrator suggests that “bad blood” flows throughout the Katen family when he stipulates that “in [the son] Lon particularly the bad blood was dark and obvious” (35). Grant Marshall, the central, valorized figure whom we follow for two generations in *The Channel Shore*, calls the Katens “violent people” (301). This lack of valorization has to

do, at least in part, with the Katen's status as Catholics, and with the subtle anti-Catholic prejudice that pervades Bruce's text. The narrator insists that in the view of Shore people, religious differences were not used to pre-judge character because they "were matters of inheritance, something a man [sic] couldn't help and which couldn't be held against him" (34). Yet the narrator belies this seeming lack of religious prejudice by adding that, "apart from this [issue of religious difference] there was the character of Felix Katen and his sons. . . . In the view of Currie Head the Katens were 'not even good Catholics'" (34-5).

It seems a striking example of Cresswell's point that the Katens' socially marginal status along the Channel Shore finds expression in Bruce's geographical placement of this group: the Katens live at the "beginning of down-shore," on the edge of Catholic country, and thus on the margin separating up-shore Protestant country from down-shore Catholic country (34). Their social marginality also finds expression in the narrator's tendency to associate the Katens with a somewhat more urban milieu than is typical of the agrarian and sea-going people of the Channel. For instance, their house is out of place in that "it looked more like a town place than a farm-house" (34). As well, the Katens are the owners and operators of the only store on the Channel Shore. The narrator describes this establishment as "a little piece of Town, set down by a patch of woods on the Channel Shore" (36).

The Katens' home and store are constructed as opposing places. Their home is strictly off-limits to the respectable people of the Channel Shore. We are told that, "except for Anse Gordon, hardly anyone from The Head climbed the knoll to Felix Katen's house" (35). But as the narrator tells us, "The store was another thing, a public

place" (35). It is perhaps the store's status as a site of economic exchange that imbues it with a cross-denominational and cross-gendered neutrality that no other place along the Channel Shore has. This neutrality is also reflected in its location: like the Katens' home, it sits at the mid-point between Protestant, up-shore country and Catholic, down-shore country. It serves as a meeting place, and as a public stage of sorts upon which the people of the Channel Shore perform their identities. It is the place where Grant Marshall fears to be seen riding in his uncle's buggy with Anna Gordon because the very status of the Katens' store as a "public place" ensures that knowledge of Grant and Anna's cross-denominational romance will get back to James Marshall, the strict Methodist uncle who has raised him (35; 96-8). It is also the place where Grant goes, after Anna's death, and after cutting ties with his Uncle, to perform his new, independent identity, "to see and be seen, to begin to face it out," as the narrator puts it (142). And it is the place where Alan (Marshall) Gordon refuses to go "in company with Anse Gordon," his biological father, while Alan struggles to retain the public perception that he is Grant Marshall's son (367).

The Katens' existence within a bilateral structure (moving between house and store, between Catholic and Protestant country, and between moral marginality and social centrality) seems a forceful demonstration of a point Peter Stallybrass and Allon White emphasize in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. They argue that while the socially valorized (or in their terminology, the "high") expend a great deal of energy in keeping the "low" in their place, the "low" are also symbolically central to the production of the identity of the "high" (Stallybrass and White 2-3). The low are as "symbolically central," then, as they are "socially peripheral" (Stallybrass and White 5, emphasis in original). We find in the case of the Katens a particularly clear spatial expression of this

ambiguity: while their house is shunned by all but those who embrace a “low” identity, their store is a public place which is central to the production and reproduction of public identity along the Channel Shore (Stallybrass and White 2).<sup>8</sup>

One of the most interesting aspects of Bruce’s text, and one that reveals a good deal about its normative geography, is the logic it deploys to explain the flow of characters in and out of the Channel Shore. Gender difference is crucial in explaining who does, and who does not leave the Shore, and for what reasons. In the case of male characters, the Shore’s economic viability plays an important role in explaining this flow. Bruce’s novel takes place between 1919 and 1946, a period during which the Shore’s formerly productive fishing industry has all but died, and during which the productivity of its mediocre forestry industry is waning. For the most part, farming remains the only viable source of income. And because farming is not so much a choice as it is a last resort for remaining on the Shore, this occupation is not, generally, held in great esteem.

This state of economic affairs plays a profound role in establishing a trend within Bruce’s novel. Unless a male character suffers from a discontinuity in familial identity, those with any gumption or ambition are virtually expected to leave the Shore. Male characters with untroubled senses of familial identity (such as Joe McKee, Anse Gordon and Hugh Currie) sense that the Channel Shore is a place in decline and give geographic expression to this sense of place by leaving to seek better opportunities elsewhere. As Joe McKee tells Grant Marshall, “That’s all a man can do around here—raise a stake to get somewhere else” (163).

In contrast, the two male characters who suffer deep-seated anxieties about their familial identities—Grant Marshall and Alan (Marshall) Gordon—display a profound

attachment to the Channel Shore. Their responses can be explained by the culture of male identity that pervades this place. Unlike cities, where people can access multifarious sources of identity (through friendships, hobbies, and affiliations with professional organizations and social movements, for example), the Channel Shore is a place in which a man's personal and patrilineal identity are virtually inextricable. Male characters tend to rely on a knowledge of who their fathers are to tell them who *they* are.

As an adopted nephew, Grant Marshall experiences deep anxieties about his identity. He has no memories of the father who died when he was a baby and has never met the American mother who abandoned him to her husband's brother, James Marshall. Though Grant displays little curiosity about his absent and living mother, his ignorance of his father's character creates a tremendous feeling of discontinuity within him, and this feeling anchors him in place. There is no great mystery behind Grant's intense attachment to the Channel Shore: his repressed uncle refuses to speak to Grant of his father and as a result, Grant's only connection to this absent source of patrilineal identity lies in the memories of the Shore's inhabitants. They represent Grant's only opportunity to suture his discontinuity in self-understanding through the transmission of memory.

When Grant attempts (with a rather remarkable lack of self-awareness) to compensate for his own sense of biological discontinuity by raising Alan, the product of an affair between Anse Gordon and Hazel McKee, as his own biological son, this cycle of dependence upon the Shore for identity and continuity replicates itself in Grant's "son," Alan (Marshall) Gordon. Because Grant hides Alan's patrilineal identity from him, despite a wide-spread knowledge amongst the people of the Shore that Alan is Anse's biological son, Alan must rely upon the people of the Shore for two ends: first, because

Grant's insecurities lead him to place an inordinate emphasis on maintaining the secrecy of Alan's paternity, the boy must look to relatives and neighbours to confirm the rumors and vague allusions he hears from childhood friends and the socially disenfranchised (192; 228).

Having gained reasonably certain knowledge of his paternity, Alan learns to live with a discontinuity between his private knowledge and the public perception he must maintain for Grant's sake. When, as a young man, Alan falls in love with the sister with whom he shares no genetic ties, keeping knowledge of his own paternity private is no longer a functional option for him. Once again as an adult, then, Alan comes to rely upon the people of the Shore to help him shift knowledge of his paternity from the private to the public stage—a stage upon which Grant Marshall will be forced to publicly recognize Alan's paternity. It is in this sense that both a discontinuity in self-understanding and a moral crisis hold Alan in place.

This context goes a long way towards explaining why Grant and Alan are such valorized characters in Bruce's text. They are represented as winners—because they display strong abilities as leaders, are sensitive, intelligent, attractive and ambitious. And, as will become evident, they are the two characters who exercise place-based authority in taking an active role in determining who belongs—and who does not belong—along the Channel Shore.

Were it not for the crises of identity which hold them in place, Grant and Alan would unquestionably have fallen into that class of characters who leave the Shore to seek opportunities elsewhere. Because problems of identity restrain their mobility, they form an elite social class along the Shore. Grant Marshall, whom we follow from

adolescence into middle age, has no problem in transcending the truism noted by Joe McKee—that “all a man can do here . . . [is] raise a stake to get somewhere else” (163). By the text’s conclusion, Grant has established a successful sawmill in which he employs virtually all of the third group of male characters along the Shore—those men who, despite functional identities, have not had the ambition or raised sufficient capital to leave the Shore. These men include Buff and Lon Katen, Dan Graham, Sam Freeman and Lee Wilmot (276; 278).

The one exception that overrides these rules pertains to the children of the most marginal female character in Bruce’s text—Vangie Murphy. Neither of Vangie’s two children, Tarsh and Etta, knows who their father is, though rumors and physical resemblance point to Lon Katen as Etta’s father (35). Vangie’s unique status along the Channel Shore, as the only woman who is known to be sexually available to men outside the institution of marriage, places Tarsh’s and Etta’s unresolved identities in a category all their own (38). When characters’ matrilineal *and* patrilineal identities are as socially irredeemable as Tarsh’s and Etta’s, an attachment to place becomes irrational, regardless of gender. Prolonging contact with the very people who maintain their mother’s social placement on the social margins of the Channel Shore can only irritate, rather than salve, their discontinuities in self-understanding: flight from place is their only viable strategy. As if such knowledge goes without saying, the narrator never explains when, why or how Tarsh and Etta leave the Shore. We only learn of it retrospectively, when mention is made of the financial support they send their mother via the mail (226).

When I turn from male to female characters, I discern a very different set of rules that explains their movement in and out of the Channel Shore (with the notable exception

of Vangie, whose situation I will return to, and her daughter Etta). For female characters, the norm is to remain on the Shore and to marry and raise a family there, unless a crisis of identity necessitates their *departure*. These crises of identity issue from problems that relate to female characters' transgression of those facets of the Shore's normative geography which govern marriage and reproduction.

Bruce's narrator takes care to stipulate that female characters have options for leaving the Shore that do not necessitate transgressive behaviours: a woman could "get away from" the Channel Shore by going into "household service" or by training to "do stenography or teach school," this voice tells us (10). But the fact of the matter is that the three female characters who do leave the Shore over the course of Bruce's novel do so for reasons that relate, either directly or indirectly, to their inability to conform to the rules which govern marriage and reproduction along the Shore. While only one female character is driven from the Shore as a direct result of her transgressive behaviour, the other two choose to temporarily leave in order to escape the cognitive dissonance they experience as a result of their desire to engage in transgressive behaviours.

The relative complexity of the logic that explains the movement of female characters to and from the Shore is partly explained by the fact that female characters in Bruce's text are governed by a different culture of identity than their male counterparts. Unlike male characters, female characters tend to ground their self-understanding in relation to their husbands (or love interests). And their mobility reflects this tendency. Female characters in *The Channel Shore* do not leave its titular place out of a spirit of adventure or a desire to pursue opportunities for themselves as individuals (as does Joe McKee). Rather, their departures are motivated by social concerns, and by the desire to

achieve indirect results—to alter the actions of a lover, to publicly signal their recognition of the Shore's normative geography, or to temporarily escape the psychological burden its rules impose upon them. These desires display the lesser degrees of autonomy and agency female characters exhibit in Bruce's text. Their happiness is not their own to seek because for them, the attainment of happiness is contingent upon the will of other, male characters.

Tracing the homologous geographic trajectories of Hazel McKee and Hugh Currie will elucidate the different cultures of identity Bruce applies to male and female characters. It will also demonstrate some of the ways in which these cultures generate different relationships between geographic mobility and sense of place. While male characters' movements in and out of place tend to follow from their feelings about place, personal feelings are a far less significant factor in explaining the movements of female characters to and from the Channel Shore.

As a restless young woman living within a place governed by conservative attitudes and patriarchal values, Hazel feels only impatience with the Channel Shore. The narrator reveals Hazel's limited horizons, and her impatience with these limitations, as she muses to herself while washing dishes:

She would have liked to be a singer. She could have put her whole self into a thing like that. But it wasn't practical. Music had no place on the Shore except in church concerts—if you could call that music . . .

No. You stayed on the Channel Shore to work and marry. Or you got away from it to go into household service—but that was beneath a McKee. Or to do stenography or teach school. Not to sing. (10)

Besides the above-mentioned class constraint that keeps her from household service, Hazel's horizons are limited by aspects of her character. According to the narrator, she "had neither the inclination, nor the ability to concentrate on what did not interest her to qualify as a teacher or a stenographer" (10). These communal and idiosyncratic forces combine to produce in Hazel a feeling of entrapment: she feels (quite rightly) stuck on the Channel Shore.

In a passage that reveals something about the poetics of identity-performance that Bruce utilizes in *The Channel Shore*, the narrator tells us that Hazel's sense of entrapment slowly modifies her character: "for years she had expressed her impatience with her surroundings in an outspokenness, a spasmodic irritation, an abruptness designed to impress on others an independence she had never been able to prove to herself" (10). Hazel's irritability and abruptness are, in and of themselves, futile gestures that do nothing to further her ambitions to leave the Channel Shore. These behavioural indicators do, however, incorporate Hazel's *desire* for departure into the social performance of her identity. And her need for authentic self-expression, her seeming inability to play a role, is one of the primary means by which Bruce's narrator utilizes (his?) power to construct Hazel as an honest character, a woman of integrity for whom we should have sympathy. This representation of Hazel as a guileless woman is a crucial means by which Bruce's narrator encourages us to view Hazel McKee as a character who is fundamentally different from Vangie Murphy (a difference that will become significant when I highlight similarities in these women's circumstances).

Hazel eventually gives more concrete expression to her feelings of entrapment and frustrated independence through a sexual liaison with Anse Gordon. Several things are

interesting about the narrative decision to bring these two characters together. Hazel is represented within the narrative as a morally upstanding young woman whose restlessness leads to one wrong decision—her affair with Anse—which determines the remainder of her life. In contrast, Anse is represented consistently as a calculating and callous man; according to the narrator, “Softness annoyed him. He couldn’t respond to it” (19).<sup>9</sup>

Even Anse wonders at his luck in engaging Hazel McKee as his sexual partner and ponders “the strangeness of the fact that it should have happened at all. It was really something, to possess . . . one of the holy ones, under the noses of the righteous people who shook their heads over Anse Gordon” (38). Why does the affair occur, then? Though there is rarely a single answer to such questions (in life or in fiction), I would suggest that a good deal of Hazel’s attraction to Anse stems from the fact that he shares her sense of place and embodies her desire for escape. Their relationship ensues immediately upon Anse’s return from Europe as a veteran of the first world war and, therefore, occurs at a time when Anse appears with an other-worldliness fresh upon him. Moreover, Anse expresses, with much more directness than Hazel, his impatience with, and contempt for, the predictability of life along the Channel Shore; he first approaches Hazel out of an “impulse to the unusual, sprouting in a mind already beginning to feel the nagging of the humdrum and the habitual” (19). Feeling that her own desire for departure and independence will remain forever dormant, Hazel utilizes what little freedom she feels she has to express her frustration with the social conventions that hold her in place. Her desire for Anse is simultaneously sexual and geographic: Hazel would like to possess Anse’s mobility and the disdain for public opinion that enables it. However, because this

goal exceeds Hazel's capacity for rebellion, she settles for temporary possession of his body.<sup>10</sup>

Though Hazel decides to put an end to the sexual relationship between herself and Anse because of a lack of feeling between them, their affair ends in the unwanted pregnancy that produces a son (Alan), whose existence is unknown to Anse for decades. If the McKee's social position on the Channel Shore makes it unthinkable for Hazel to enter into household service, it goes without saying that the awareness of her pregnancy forces Hazel to exchange her highly public place on the Channel Shore for the relative anonymity of Toronto. Once pregnant, Hazel McKee becomes an obscene presence on the Channel Shore: either she must vacate this place, or the McKee's position within the Channel Shore's social hierarchy will be altered dramatically.

Though Stan Currie enters the narrative present only in middle life, he reveals to Bill Graham the feelings that once drove him from the Shore. Stan suggests to Bill that, as a young man, he felt the same impatience with the limited possibilities for personal growth along the Shore as Hazel McKee exhibits. He recalls to Bill Graham how he "used to hate this country" (393). Yet unlike Hazel, the youthful Stan was free to wander from this place and test his own "sense of venture" without a structured plan or explicit career trajectory (395). Through his travels, Stan discovered that life in the city required him to endure a level of domination that for him outstripped any benefits he had gained from leaving the Shore. As he tells Bill Graham,

When you go to a city, Bill, unless you're good, in a profession or the arts, you put yourself under a boss. . . I looked at what I'd got by leaving.

Running water and central heat and something—oh, *cultivation* . . . Well,

they seemed to me to be cancelled out by the pulling and hauling, the pressure to say ‘Yes’ when you wanted to say ‘No’ . . . *There was venture in coming back . . .* (395, emphasis in original)

Stan exercises his own volition in returning to the Channel Shore; to his mind, life there had more “venture in it, and independence” than the city could offer him as a wage labourer working “under a boss” (395). He embraces the Channel Shore as his chosen place for the remainder of his days. And, far from admitting embarrassment about his retreat, Stan interprets his return as an act of rebellion that places him in line with the original Curries who have lived on the Shore (specifically Currie Head) since the 1800’s. Stan reads his return to the Channel Shore as a demonstration of the fact that he, like his rebellious ancestors, “*will not* take a pushing ‘round” (395, emphasis in original).

Hazel McKee also makes it back from the city to the Channel Shore, but by far less independent means than Stan Currie. She is embraced somewhat awkwardly back into the social fold through the eccentric charity of Grant Marshall. For reasons that have more to do with Grant’s need to forge a new, place-based identity than with any love he has for Hazel, Grant goes to Toronto, where he finds Hazel cloistered and ill. He hastily marries her, and returns to the Shore with the newly legitimized Hazel Marshall. But Hazel is lost to us as a character. It is worth noting that the narrator permits us no direct access to Hazel’s subjectivity after her act of sexual transgression becomes public knowledge. Though we learn through Grant’s recollections that it was a great relief for Hazel to have seen her parents again and to have “return[ed] in a kind of bitter honour to the country she had fled from,” Hazel, like so many female figures in literature who

conceive children out of wedlock, dies of vague causes shortly after giving birth to her son Alan (210).<sup>11</sup>

The contrast between Stan Currie and Hazel McKee reveals a great deal about the effect gender difference has on one's relation to the Channel Shore. All of Hazel's acts of volition are mediated through male figures: her desire for escape from the Shore is expressed through her sexual relations with Anse; her act of leaving the Shore is a direct result of this relationship; and her return to the Shore is enabled only by Grant Marshall's agency.

Examining Hazel's function within Bruce's novel as a whole highlights her role as a figure who does not herself undergo shifts in identity so much as she catalyzes such events in others (and specifically, in other male characters). Though Hazel's act of sleeping with Anse Gordon and producing a child are central to the 47 year period Bruce narrates in *The Channel Shore*, Hazel remains a relatively minor figure within Bruce's narrative. Hazel's shy return to the Shore makes little or no contribution to our understanding of her character or her struggle for self-knowledge; rather, she is the relatively passive medium through which Grant Marshall enacts his agency. Grant marries Hazel at a pivotal moment in his life; having recently broken ties with his paternal uncle, he is undergoing a transition from a blood-based to a place-based self-understanding when he travels to Toronto. As the narrator tells us, he had begun "to think of himself as one of many, to think of Grant Marshall in relation to all these people on the Shore, rather than in relation only to James Marshall and Anna Gordon" (121). In a very real sense, Grant takes advantage of Hazel's vulnerability to publicly enact his shift in self-understanding. Grant's re-insertion of Hazel into the Channel Shore

constitutes a grand performance of his new, place-based identity, as it does a demonstration of his place-based authority. It is such an authority that allows Grant to exercise propriety in determining who does, and who does not, belong along the Channel Shore. And according to Grant Marshall, Hazel belongs (though not as an unwed, pregnant woman).

When Stan Currie tells Bill Graham that “a lot of things come into it when a kid leaves home. His father’s ambition for him. His own—well—sense of venture,” it is more than coincidence that Stan chooses the male pronoun to express himself (394-5). Stan clearly has more choices, as well as a greater control over his comings, goings, and the interpretive spin that is placed on these departures and returns, than does Hazel. Hazel returns from Toronto with humility and is silenced within the narrative. After the birth of her child exhausts her function within Bruce’s story, she dies.<sup>12</sup> Stan Currie, who is also a marginal character within the narrative, leaves and returns to the shore without any social stigma. Rather than being silenced or killed off, Stan is given the narrative space to glorify his return through self-mythologization. Stan buttresses his own pride not only by placing himself within a long historical line of independent—male—rebels, but also by constructing the Channel Shore in his own mind as a far larger place than its geographic terrain would suggest. “He claimed that along the Shore you found all the differences that make up nationality. . . . The Channel Shore—a little nation” (290-1).

It takes no great act of imagination to see what Stan Currie’s construction of the Channel Shore accomplishes for him. By thinking of the Channel Shore as a little nation, Stan effectively subverts (at least within his own mind) the spatially based metropole/hinterland opposition within which he must be seen to have failed in the centre

and returned to the periphery. Stan replaces this spatial economy with an historically-based vision of nationhood within which he, as a Currie of Currie Head, and as a man who can “go down on the Head and see the ridges in the ground where Ed Currie made bricks about eighteen-ten,” is central (396).

Yet gender-difference does not explain exhaustively the difference between Stan and Hazel. As the narrator’s comment that household service was “beneath a McKee” suggests, Hazel’s position within a family of some social standing along the Shore affects her mobility as well (10). The contrast between the situations of Hazel McKee and Anna Gordon is instructive here. Unlike Hazel, Anna Gordon does entertain fantasies of escape by “doing housework” in Halifax (114).

Despite the fact that both families earn their living as farmers, for several reasons the Gordons do not enjoy the same social status along the Channel Shore as the McKees. For one, Anna’s father, Stewart Gordon, is very ill-suited to his occupation as a farmer. He is an avid reader of literature and philosophy and once entertained hopes of training for the priesthood (49).<sup>13</sup> Because he lacks both motivation and aptitude, “Stewart was a poor farmer,” and the Gordon homestead is somewhat ramshackle (48). Stewart’s wife Josie frequently fights “exasperation” when she surveys the farmyard and observes things *out of place*: “sheep that roamed the pasture unshorn into June, the wood-pile used up by mid-summer, the two-master built for deep-water fishing when deep-water fishing was a thing of the past” (49). In addition, Anse Gordon, the centre of moral (and narrative) disdain in *The Channel Shore*, is the family’s only son. Though Anse is represented as the only member of the Gordon family who is morally deficient, the combination of

Anse's reputation and Stewart's incompetence (and subtly, the family's status as Catholics) ensures that they rank beneath the McKees in social standing.

Yet, when Anna's situation is examined in greater detail, the importance of gender eclipses that of social class. Although her family's social standing informs the occupations Anna considers while entertaining fantasies of flight from the Shore, the issue of social class has little bearing on her final decision to leave. Anna decides to temporarily leave the Shore because of the effect she anticipates this move will have upon her indecisive young lover, Grant Marshall. Because Grant is unable to rebel against his uncle's explicit decree that he cannot marry a Catholic, he and Anna remain in a state of frustrated limbo. Anna is struck with "excitement and puzzlement" when her mother suggests a visit to Halifax (141). But these emotions arise from feelings about the impact of this change on Grant, and on herself only *via* Grant's reaction: "To go away," she muses to herself, "to let Grant see she could do without . . . To make him feel what it was like, her absence from the Shore . . ." (114). Like Hazel's *return* to the Shore, then, Anna's exit from this place serves as a means of aiding Grant's self-understanding. Within the Channel Shore that Bruce represents, "woman stands as choices for men; as their Other. Their function is to help some man find his identity" (*Massey, Space, Place and Gender* 227).

Though Anna does leave the Shore for Halifax, she fares even worse than Hazel McKee. In a narrative decision that suggests a fear both of urban places and of women wandering from their traditionally allotted place, Bruce has Anna run over by a streetcar in Halifax; only her physical remains make it back to the Shore. And it is Anna's death, not coincidentally, that catalyzes Grant's decision to sever ties with his strict Methodist

uncle, and to forge an alternate, place-based identity by retrieving Hazel McKee from Toronto and re-inserting her into the Channel Shore. Thus, both Anna and Hazel leave the Shore, both die, and both women's deaths serve the narrative function of catalyzing alterations in Grant Marshall's identity.

And, judging from the case of Margaret Marshall, the tendency for female characters to ground both their identities and their self-placement in relation to future husbands carries over to the second generation of women along the Shore. It is only after Margaret acknowledges her erotic longing for Alan, who is himself deeply attached to the Shore, that Margaret comes to invest her emotions in this place. Thus Margaret's sense of place undergoes a rather sudden transformation that coincides with the clarification of her feelings for the man raised as her brother. The narrator gives expression to Margaret's altered sense of place through her feelings about the Curry home. As Margaret passes the "Currie place," a house whose occupation, abandonment, and re-occupation had previously inspired little feeling in Margaret, the narrator tells us that

It was only now when Currie Head, home, had become vivid to her through Alan, that her heart stirred to events like Stan Currie's return.

This had little to do with Currie Head. She knew that. If Mexico or New South Wales had been Alan's choice it would have been hers also. (339)

It is only because Alan's "place was The Head" that Margaret, comes to commit herself emotionally to this place (339).

During WWII Margaret Marshall does leave the Shore temporarily when her father agrees "to let her study stenography and get a war-time job" in Halifax (287). Margaret's foray into life outside the Shore is markedly different from those of Joe

McKee, Anse Gordon or Stan Currie. As the narrator's reference to paternal permission demonstrates, Margaret does not possess freedom; rather, she is granted temporary licence to leave the Shore. Furthermore, Margaret shows no particular yearning to replace her licence with freedom: the only reason she wants to leave the Shore is because Alan is engaged in military service in Europe. In Halifax Margaret gains the temporary "freedom to admit what [she] felt" (287). There she can act out her identity as the future Mrs. Alan Gordon with relatively little guilt or cognitive dissonance. Margaret is safely re-ensconced at home by the time her brother returns from the war.

Like Hazel McKee and Anna Gordon, Margaret's feelings about the Shore influence her location only indirectly. None of these women leaves, like Stan Currie, to test their "sense of venture," or like Joe McKee, in hopes of self-advancement in the larger world, or, like Anse Gordon, to wander at will (395). Rather, Hazel, Anna and Margaret all leave as a result of their inability to conform to one of the three rules of the Shore's normative geography that govern marriage and reproduction: first, pregnancy should occur only within the institution of marriage; second, marriage should be uni-denominational; and third, marriage should occur *between* and not *within* families.

Of course all three of these mores are tampered with over the course of Bruce's novel. Though no cross-denominational marriages occur, it is likely that Grant Marshall would have eventually rebelled against his uncle's authority and married Anna Gordon. Grant certainly signals this intention through his very public act of severing ties with James Marshall and moving in with the Gordons after Anna's death. The dictum regarding reproduction outside the institution of marriage is particularly strong in Bruce's novel, this strength being demonstrated by the need for Hazel to leave the Shore once her

transgression is known to her parents. What is interesting about Bruce's novel is that the final, and to my mind, most logical of these mores—that marriages must occur between and not within families—is transgressed at the novel's conclusion, and indeed, transgressed with the rather confused blessing of the people of the Shore. Readers are left with full expectations that Alan (Marshall) Gordon and Margaret Marshall will marry after a respectable interval of time has passed for the people of the Shore to adjust to this unorthodox turn of events.

The narrator explains or justifies Alan and Margaret's bid to transgress the incest taboo (though, admittedly, this is social, and not biological incest) along seemingly progressive lines. To the narrator's mind, it is part and parcel of the fact that the Channel Shore is not a stable entity but a process. Margaret and Alan's changed relations to each other would be neither "a beginning" nor "an end," the narrator tells us (394). Rather, "it was past and present and future, eddying here in the flow of time" (394). There is no mention of the possibility that this event necessitates the departure of either Margaret or Alan from the Channel Shore; their continued location in this place is an unquestioned premise: as the narrator tells us, "in a hundred years the tale would be part of that long hearsay, a thread in dim forgotten fabric . . . linked through tenuous blood-lines to the moving Now" (394).

"The Shore's" acceptance of Alan and Margaret's impending union highlights a key feature of the normative geography of this place—namely, that it is unevenly applied to characters. Though they are seemingly judged by their actions, characters tend to be essentialized as either good or bad in *The Channel Shore*. While Anse Gordon, Lon Katen and Vangie Murphy are bad, Grant and Alan Marshall are good.<sup>14</sup> If you are a

good character, it is not so much necessary to obey the normative geography governing what is in and out of place along the Shore as it is to *recognize* it, and in so doing, to recognize the social hierarchy that produces and maintains it. If you are a “good” character, one who transgresses but nonetheless publicly recognizes this transgression, there is a great willingness to bend the rules in order to maintain your social and physical placement within the Channel Shore’s world. If you are a bad character, one who both engages in transgressive practices and refuses to acknowledge your transgression as such, these rules become inflexible; there is nothing a “bad” character can do to reverse his or her placement on the margins of the Channel Shore’s social world.

The contrast between Hazel McKee and Vangie Murphy demonstrates the importance of recognizing the Shore’s normative geography, if one is to occupy the centre and not the margin of Bruce’s social world. Although virtually everyone along the Channel Shore knows why Hazel leaves for Toronto, they maintain whatever fiction the family chooses to circulate in appreciation of the McKee’s recognition of, and compliance with, the rules governing what is in place, and what is out of place. And, as is by now clear, a pregnant, unwed woman is decidedly out of place along the Channel Shore. By removing their daughter from the Channel Shore, the McKees negate Hazel’s potential to cast the Shore’s so-called community in an unfavourable light and are rewarded by having their fiction upheld. By contrast, Vangie Murphy refuses to recognize the Shore’s normative geography by remaining there to carry and raise her two (so-called) illegitimate children; because she takes no measures to enact her membership within the Shore’s social world by sacrificing her place there for the maintenance of its normative geography, Vangie is *forever* cast to the social margins of this place. She must

live with the mark of social disdain upon her for as long as she remains there, regardless of her future behaviour.

Alan Marshall performs his recognition of the mores that *should*, if evenly applied, have forced him and Margaret to leave this place through a key spatial gesture designed to slowly re-work the pattern of life along the Shore. Alan respectfully signals his transformation from Alan Marshall to Alan Gordon by moving from the home of Grant, Rene and Margaret Marshall to the home of his paternal grandmother, Josie Gordon (394). Alan's physical distance from Margaret, and his geographic relocation along genetic rather than social lines signals wordlessly to the people of the Shore that, though his actions may be unorthodox, they only *seem* so because a fiction of family lineage, which has now been corrected—that Alan is Grant Marshall's son—was mistakenly woven into the Shore's history. The narrator tells us that this was the “best way to begin the new design, woven of the old. Best way to begin the change in the pattern” (394).

By contrast, Margaret's gesture is not so much designed to signal her recognition of the mores along the Shore as it is to signal her refusal to comply with the normative geography that dictates where women should and should not be within the Shore. Because she is loved by the two central, valorized figures within Bruce's world (being both Grant's daughter and Alan's future wife), Margaret is on safe enough ground to risk signalling to the people of the Shore that change in their normative geography is now paramount if they wish to maintain the same social hierarchy—that with the Marshalls at the top. Margaret is last seen “raking behind the rack” as Alan and Buff Katen work Josie Gordon's hayfield (393). Though this gesture seems laughably innocent, it actually

resonates with social meaning in Bruce's world. Decoding this meaning, however, requires a somewhat more detailed knowledge of the normative geography governing norms of gender propriety along the Shore, norms that are revealed most clearly in the first third of the novel, during the brief period in which Hazel McKee struggles with her gender identity.

The series of scenes during which Hazel McKee first resists, then accepts, then transmits the news of her pregnancy to her parents provides an excellent means of demonstrating both the ways in which places become gendered through social practice, and the ways in which these gendered places limit human behaviour and regularize the performance of identity. Three different places figure prominently in the process whereby Hazel comes to suspect, then to accept, then to communicate news of her pregnancy—the beach, the open fields of the family farm, and the McKees' house.

The beach operates as a gendered space within Bruce's narrative, and it is by and large gendered male. This engendering of the beach derives from its social and economic history. During the time of Bruce's narrative (1919 to 1946), the men of the Channel Shore are in the latter stages of a transition from fishing to farming and forestry; having exhausted the sea's wealth, they have now turned to the land for subsistence. Many of the men who have accepted the inevitability of farming still harbour a deep longing for the sea and continue to set out nets and traps. Though Hazel's father Richard accepts the need to farm for a living, he is still drawn to the sea. His more pragmatic wife, Eva, is said to be "exasperated" by her husband's romantic longing for what the narrator calls "the unreason of the beach"; as he farms his land Richard's eyes are still drawn seaward (61). Even as an older man in 1934, long after Hazel's death, Richard longs "to have a

boy in the boat again" (239). Although in the text's present the beach is more a place of recreation and romantic longing for a way of life now passed, it still retains its association with masculinity; in short, it retains traces of the engenderment signalled by the narrator's comment that, during Hazel's youth, "the beach was no place for a girl" (54).

Yet despite the beach's masculinization, Hazel recalls a time, before her brother Joe was born, when her father "had sometimes taken her to the beach. Never out to the nets, but sometimes hand-lining or picking net-rocks or just to play around the fish huts in the sun. In a sense he had treated her like a little boy" (54). With the birth of Hazel's brother Joe, things changed. As an adult, Hazel recalls that the closeness that existed between herself and her father began to wane about this time; with the arrival of a male heir to the household, Hazel changes hands and places; she moves from father to mother and from beach to house. As the narrator explains it,

After Joe came it [this time at the beach with her father] had ceased, or almost. Probably to Eva's relief or at her orders. The beach was no place for a girl. . . . What had there been between them, since then? She couldn't remember ever having talked seriously to Richard about anything. When a question had to be settled . . . Eva had settled it. If it were necessary to talk to Richard about it, Eva did the talking. (54)

It is as if gender-difference enters Hazel's life only after the arrival of her brother. After this, genders align themselves with a remarkable rigor—son with father, and daughter with mother. Nevertheless, the beach retains for Hazel an association with a time of intimacy between father and child, as well as with a time of gender-ambivalence, if not with a time of Hazel's self-identification as male.

There is a similar social history associated with the open fields of the Shore's farms, and a similar engenderment that ensues from this history. As the narrator explains, although haying was once a sufficiently demanding activity that all members of a household participated together, technology had simplified the task to the point where "it was becoming unusual to see a woman in the field" (55). As the possibility that she is pregnant comes to press with increasing intensity upon Hazel, she is overtaken with a desire to be out of doors. Hazel's desire to perform male-gendered tasks in a masculinized place at the precise time when her sexual identity is becoming impossible to ignore or hide is intriguing. As the narrator says, speaking for Hazel, "it was hard to explain, this restless wish to be active, in the open, away from the house, in sun and wind" (55). In fact, when Hazel asks her father if she can help with the haying, he resists, suggesting that Hazel's mother Eva would not approve; Hazel asks her father to tell Eva that she is necessary to the process (55).

Hazel's desire for the open fields is not just a desire to perform a male gender-role; it is also a desire to enter into a seemingly timeless space. Given the more overt temporalization of the female body through the onset of a lunar menstrual cycle, as well as through the gestation period of pregnancy, the desire to escape from temporality could itself be interpreted as a desire to escape from femaleness into maleness. According to the narrator's description of her feelings, Hazel interprets her longing for the outdoors as an urge to escape from the social and temporal to the spatial and atemporal. As the narrative voice explains on Hazel's behalf,

Outdoors in sun and wind with space around her it had been possible  
during these last few days to feel at times that nothing much had changed.

She did not know why this was so, or consider it very deeply. The sweep of the Channel, the banked clouds, the side hills quilted in varying shades of dun and green, the shape of the land and the colour of flashing water . . . They were unchanged, and in them she had found a kind of comfort. (61-2)

In contrast to the comfort Hazel garners from inhabiting this seemingly static and asocial outdoor place, “Indoors, with the earth and sky and sea shut out by walls, and life a thing of people, habit, talk, of guarded glances and idle chatter and sudden silence, there was no defence”—no defence against the knowledge that her sexed body would soon become a public record of her transgressive behaviour (62).

Given this context, it is hardly surprising (though to my mind none the less fascinating) that when Hazel is eating a late breakfast one morning in front of her mother and is forced hastily out of doors by a bout of morning sickness, she automatically takes strategic advantage of the place-based codes that govern gender-identity along the Shore. Rather than return to the house to face her stern mother, Hazel continues to move away from the building, eventually confessing her pregnancy to her father in the fishing hut—the site of her former masculinization (or perhaps more correctly, the site that symbolizes for Hazel a time when sexual difference and gender difference *both* seemed negotiable). Eva McKee’s response is a study in the effectiveness with which socially constructed spatial codes can govern behaviour. The narrator tells us that

As she [Hazel] crossed into the lower pasture she glanced back, once, and saw Eva standing in the porch door, and felt a sense of sorrow. She waved her hand in a gesture of attempted reassurance and went on. Eva would

not shout or follow. Hazel almost wished she would. Wished she would break down and forget appearances and come rushing after her, even though it were in anger . . . (65)

As if the barrier between porch and pasture were monitored by a public camera, Eva McKee cannot cross the line that divides inside from outside—and the proper site of the female to that of the male—even in such pressing emotional circumstances. Unlike her transgressing daughter, Eva McKee knows her place, and there she remains.

With this context in place, Margaret Marshall's final appearance working Josie Gordon's hayfield in the company of Alan and Buff gains a certain resonance. For one, this gesture signals the need for a functional social group to accept an understanding of place as process, and thus to accept change in its normative geography. Yet this need for change is only rendered legitimate, I argue, because it has the blessing of the two valorized subjects who have the narrative sanction to exercise place-based authority—Grant and Alan. As it was Grant Marshall who re-inserted Hazel McKee into the Shore, it is Alan Marshall who determines at the annual picnic that his father, Anse Gordon, is out of place along the Channel Shore. After Alan publicly humiliates Anse by simultaneously acknowledging genetic ties and rending social ties with him, Anse leaves the Shore and Bruce's narrative, under cover of darkness (391).

In the end, then, I do not believe that Margaret Marshall's final appearance in the Gordon's hayfield should be interpreted as a sign that the mores governing the proper place for *all* women along the Shore are undergoing a sudden alteration. This action is more accurately read as an indication of Margaret's location near the top of the Shore's social hierarchy, and thus of her narrative privilege; it is such privilege that places

Margaret, a character integral to the happiness of both Grant and Alan, *above or outside of* the mores. Margaret's public appearance behind Alan in the Gordon's hayfield functions as something of an allegory. While Alan's presence there symbolizes his new public identity as a Gordon, Margaret's presence by his side symbolizes her continued affiliation with the man who is no longer to be recognized as her brother, but, rather, as her lover. Moreover, her presence in the field, engaged in a male task, symbolizes the need for the people of the Shore to exercise tolerance in the case of Margaret and Alan. By contrast, because Hazel McKee does not enjoy the same narrative privilege as Margaret, her earlier appearance in the fields says nothing either to, or about, the need for the people of the Shore to accept the inevitability of change in their normative geography; Hazel's presence in the fields indicates only her own self-delusion, her futile attempt to resist the repercussions of her placement within an unwed, pregnant body by *acting like a man.*

The case of Margaret and Alan highlights the fact that, when critics look to realist novels to elucidate the relationship between place and identity, there are always exceptions to the rules that constitute the normative geographies such analyses disclose. I argue that these exceptions are far from idiosyncratic or random. Rather, they can reveal crucial information about the social hierarchy that governs a given literary place and about the lengths to which narrators will go to maintain the legitimacy of such hierarchies. Bruce deploys narrative power to naturalize Margaret and Alan's desire by instigating a sudden change in narrative tone and emphasis towards the end of his text. The narrator begins to delineate the Shore's social relations by highlighting a behavioural consistency—the first chapter begins, “except in households headed by stern men like

James Marshall, the women are usually the critics of family behaviour along the Channel Shore" (8). Yet, after Margaret's and Alan's desire for each other becomes public knowledge at the text's conclusion, this voice stresses the *unpredictability* of this place's social relations. "The essence of the Shore," the narrator reports on the penultimate page, "was that you couldn't foresee anything. All you could see were the following waves of time" (397). It is no coincidence, I suggest, that Bruce's narrator suddenly assumes a philosophical tone and focuses upon the random character of the Shore's social relations at that narrative moment when the consistent application of the Shore's normative geography would demand that punitive measures be taken against one of the text's most valorized characters.

My argument has, of course, been dedicated to demonstrating that we can indeed discern patterns of socio-spatial behaviour in *The Channel Shore* and that moral and spatial transgression are consistently linked in this text. Yet these rules of thumb, if you will, are at times identity-specific. In the case of female characters, for instance, there is a consistent association of good female characters with the domicile. It is not, of course, that female characters are always found within the home (or even indoors), while male characters are always located outdoors, though this kind of extreme division is at times evident. Josie Gordon and Eva McKee are rarely seen outdoors, for example. Josie is most typically described sitting at her kitchen table, looking out the window (223; 351; 355). Margaret Marshall, on the way to visit Josie, notes as she nears the house that "Josie as usual was sitting by the south windows of her kitchen, . . . the windows through which she had seen the life of the Shore pass and re-pass for a generation" (351). We

first encounter the upright Protestant Eva McKee sitting “by the north windows of her kitchen with hands folded in her lap” (8).

Such positionings seem emblematic in that they express through spatial means two elements of proper female behaviour along the Shore. We have already heard the narrator assert that, “Except in households headed by stern men like James Marshall, the women are usually the critics of family behaviour along the Channel Shore” (8). When we consider this proclivity in conjunction with the hegemonic tendency for good women to remain at home unless a particular task (going to Katen’s store, church or school, strawberry picking or visiting) or ritual (the annual picnic) takes them outside, it is easy to see how windows become an appropriate location for female characters. From this position, female characters can maintain a careful eye on the behaviour of others (or at least perform the identity of moral monitor), while simultaneously demonstrating their own righteousness in keeping to their prescribed place.

It is Vangie Murphy who demonstrates most forcibly the general rule that, for women, moral and geographic wandering are highly interrelated phenomena along the Channel Shore. As the single mother of two illegitimate children, and as the only Murphy on the Shore, we can easily infer that no man has rescued Vangie from social marginality as Grant Marshall rescued Hazel McKee. Unlike Hazel, Vangie must struggle with the full weight of moral disdain on her own, without even the thinnest veneer of patriarchal legitimacy to buoy her.

Vangie is the only female figure to consistently occupy the margins of the tight network of social relations Bruce represents. Though Anse Gordon and Lon Katen also occupy this social terrain, neither is a viable companion for Vangie; Anse is away from

the Shore for years at a time, and Lon has come to refuse all contact with her since her daughter Etta was born with “the Katen look” (35). Indeed, Vangie’s marginalization seems symbolized by the fact that neither she nor her children are allowed in the Katen’s store (35). Though Vangie harbours a great deal of anger regarding her social marginalization, she also longs for acceptance by the Shore’s more polite society. As Vangie’s ambivalence and loneliness demonstrate, the positive aspects of radical openness that bell hooks associates with marginality in *Yearning* lose a good deal of their luster when one occupies the margin alone (hooks 145-53).

The narrator describes Vangie’s fluctuation between two modes of behaviour, each of which corresponds to her attempt to perform a different identity. The first of these modes, which corresponds to her occasional bids for social recognition, conforms to the regularities governing the performance of a hegemonic female identity. The second of these conforms to a refusal of the regulatory norms of female behaviour. What is most pertinent to the argument at hand is that Vangie’s refusal to conform to what Judith Butler calls “regulatory practices of gender coherence” is associated consistently by the narrator with her extended and repeated appearances within public spaces, particularly roads (*Gender Trouble* 24). The narrator reports that

There were times when she [Vangie] felt her best chance at social acceptance was in the wearing of her newest dress, appearances at church, praise of her children’s generosity. When that failed, she went back to the baggy sweaters and work boots, and walked to The Bridge for flour and tea instead of having Adam Falt bring them down in the mail-car. (226)

Despite the narrator's suggestion that Vangie's bids for recognition are some sort of eccentric code she has invented herself ("she felt her best chance..."), Vangie's wearing of dresses, her public submission to (so-called) community standards of morality (going to Church), and her emphasis on her identity as both mother and financial dependent (displays of gratitude regarding her children's generosity) all conform to hegemonic patterns of correct female behaviour along the Shore. In contrast, the donning of loose clothing (which problematizes her identification as female), the wearing of functional footwear (symbolizing her lack of dependence upon a man to perform the hard tasks of subsistence), and most interestingly, the independent accomplishment of tasks that require extended time on the road (walking 10 miles to "the Bridge" for supplies), conform fairly consistently with Vangie's refusal to comply with the "regulatory practices of gender coherence" along the Channel Shore (Bruce 226; Butler 24).

But as the narrator tells us, regardless of which role Vangie performs, "recognition was something [she] didn't get" (226). From the women of the Shore she receives "a sort of withdrawn politeness" and from the men, "a word, kindly enough, without malice, but touched with unconscious mockery" (226). It seems that Vangie's identity as a loose woman (the term itself demonstrating succinctly the articulation of moral and spatial behaviours) in the eyes of the Shore people has been fixed by her earlier transgression of the Shore's normative geography. Regardless of Vangie's subsequent attempts to signal her compliance with this geography, her communally recognized identity remains static.

Though there is a rough (if unforgiving) logic to Vangie's marginalization, the parameters of this logic extend well beyond Vangie's person or her actions; the

reification of her identity as the Shore's token whore fulfills a need for the rest of the people living along the Shore. Freezing Vangie in this identity-position enables her to meet this place's need for a negative standard of female propriety, the presence of which serves two purposes. First, and most obviously, Vangie's example serves to terrify other women into compliance with the rules of gender propriety along the Shore. The narrator tells us that, for one, Margaret Marshall was "secretly . . . afraid of Vangie Murphy" and that Vangie "set up a current of revulsion in [Margaret's] flesh . . . whenever they met on the road or on the rare occasions when in the course of her rounds Vangie dropped in to sit in Renie's kitchen" (227). At the same, the very extremity of Vangie's reified identity conveniently enables the redemption of women such as Hazel McKee who, though they have transgressed the rules of female propriety, have nonetheless signaled their recognition of the Shore's normative geography by following the rules their actions dictate.

Yet the logic of Vangie's social and narrative function does little to lessen its cruelty. Vangie's original transgression of the rules governing reproduction along the Shore is, in any of the text's presents, long behind her. Her children are grown and gone by the conclusion of the novel's first section; the most sexually charged behaviour we actually see Vangie exhibit is to speak to Anse Gordon over her fence (37-8). Here place-based proprieties serve Bruce well. For in order to justify Vangie's perpetual marginalization, Bruce stresses Vangie's refusal to comply with norms of female propriety which, though explicitly irrelevant to sexual propriety, carry an implicit message of sexual impropriety. And a good number of these improprieties relate to Vangie's lack of desire for a tidy home, and her excess of desire for the open road. We

are told, for example, that Vangie "had never taken satisfaction in keeping a neat house and sitting by the fire when the work was done" (226). Rather, Vangie is a great walker; indeed, the non-conformist Vangie is said to perform "the role of road-walking sloven" (226). And, according to Bruce's narrator, there is something *sexual* about Vangie's wandering; "on the road," we are told, "there was a hint of carelessness, the freedom, that had coloured her younger days with a harsh excitement" (226). It is through such subtle yet powerful connections that Bruce's narrator establishes a direct link between a woman's desire to take to the road, to ramble miles from home, and her (assumed) desire for what this voice characterizes as the "harsh excitement" of sexual licentiousness (226).

It seems unquestionable to me that the articulation of sexual and geographic wanderlust exemplified in *The Channel Shore* has a great deal to do with seemingly primordial anxieties regarding paternal lineage. While a child's maternal identity is never in doubt, his or her paternal identity remains something of an act of faith. Barring the certitude provided by contemporary genetic testing, the pregnant body is as externally visible as it is internally mysterious. Patriarchal societies have taken great pains to compensate socially for the perceived disadvantage that heterosexual reproduction represents for men. Though chastity belts and clitorectomies stand out in the historical record as two of the most extreme means by which men have sought to compensate for their lack of control over the contents of the uterus, the monitoring of wives' and daughters' spatial mobility remains the most persistent and prevalent means by which such control is enacted. As has been seen in *The Channel Shore*, women seem most *in their place* when at home, a location which ensures that the patriarch can keep a close watch on the comings and goings of others into and out of the house. Though it seems to

me that the strictures delimiting women's mobility are loosening with time and necessity in Western societies (or at least changing), they are far from extinct: engaging in certain behaviours—whether explicitly sexual or not—continues to attract suspicion regarding sexual propriety or, more vaguely, reputation.<sup>15</sup>

As my analysis of *The Channel Shore* suggests, literary narratives play a significant role in producing and reflecting the spatialized anxieties of female propriety that issue from, and help to reinforce, patriarchal cultural norms. In order to demonstrate the persistence with which authors articulate geographic and sexual wandering from a centre that is realized simultaneously in the ideal of the home and the condition of chastity, I will now shift towards a more regional mode of literary analysis as I consider what some of my other twentieth-century Canadian realist novels contribute to this discussion. Through this widening of my analytic focus I will demonstrate that, although some aspects of the normative geography Bruce constructs in *The Channel Shore* are particular to the social relations conjoined within the particular place called the Channel Shore (such as the gendering of beach and field, for example), the overarching tendency to relate distance from an ideal of female chastity with distance from the socio-material space of the home informs many of the other novels I examine as well.<sup>16</sup> By encountering the extent to which this trend operates across my group of novels, I can begin to underscore the interdependent roles indoor and outdoor space play in the performance of a hegemonic female identity.

Within the group of novels here under consideration, there is a remarkable tendency to associate geographic restlessness in women with danger, transgression, or sexual impropriety. In *Two Solitudes*, for example, Heather Methuen expresses her

restlessness and frustration with the constricted mobility she feels as a Protestant, bourgeois, female subject—a constriction she figures as a “straight-jacket” particular to “girls” (303). Heather’s class-position, or more specifically her wealth, lends her an extraordinary mobility in ways. She has a car and travels in it without restriction. Yet gender- and class-based social proprieties limit the circumstances in which Heather can exercise her independence. As an unmarried woman, Heather has a far greater mobility during the day than she does at night, for example. When she leaves a stifling family dinner party and escapes unnoticed to the lower summit of Mount Royal (in Westmount) to enjoy the expanded view, the narrator tells us that Heather’s mother “would consider it most improper for her to be here alone at night” (252). And again, the narrator directly relates this vigilance to issues of sexual propriety by reporting that, at this forbidden spot, “half a dozen necking couples sat in the darkness of parked cars . . .” (252). It is also worthy of note that, once married, Heather becomes a passenger in her own vehicle (344).

In the case of Naomi Nakane, the central character (and our primary narrator) in Kogawa’s *Obasan*, we see an extreme example of the tendency to associate geographic restlessness and danger. While recalling her upbringing, Naomi constructs her home and the world outside of it as opposing places of safety and danger, respectively. “Inside the house in Vancouver,” she explains, “there is confidence and laughter, music and meal times, games and storytelling. But outside, even in the backyard, there is an infinitely unpredictable, unknown, and often dangerous world” (58). Given that Naomi narrates memories of being sexually abused by her neighbour, Old Man Gower, it could be argued that her association of the world outside the home with danger is particular to Naomi’s context. Though this aspect of her personal history obviously influences the care with

which Naomi draws the line between inside and outside, safety and danger, I do not think that this factor alone sufficiently explains her hesitancy to travel freely in the world, even as an adult. In fact, Naomi's phobia about wandering from the safe haven of her home is overdetermined by an inextricable combination of factors—her gender, her Japanese-Canadian heritage, the experience of internment that arose from (or coincided with) the racialization of this identity, her sense of being abandoned by her mother, and her early experiences of sexual abuse in Old Man Gower's home and yard.

As if wary of being found out of place, the adult Naomi travels only between her job in Cecil to the nearby town of Granton, where her Aunt and Uncle continue to live. As thought-provoking as Naomi's limited mobility is, it is her attitude towards Aunt Emily that reveals most overtly Naomi's disapproval of female mobility (and indeed, female political agency). We first meet Emily when she visits Granton on her way back to her home in Toronto after having attended a conference in California (33). Emily tells us that her Aunt has made "nine trips in all" to Granton from various locations (32). In representing Emily, Naomi continually masculinizes, dehumanizes, or animalizes her more mobile, ambitious, and politicized aunt. Naomi describes her as "a little old grey-haired Mighty Mouse" (32); "a bull against the wind" (33); "a small tank of a woman" with a "Winston Churchill stoop" (33); she is "Stephen Leacock's horseman riding off in all directions at once" (33); she is "one of the world's white blood cells, rushing from trouble spot to trouble spot" on "legs as shapely as Japanese radishes" (34; 33). The message Naomi's demeaning descriptions deliver is clear enough: not only is there something unseemly about Emily's geographical mobility and the socio-political engagement which is its cause, but there is also something downright masculine about it.

Judging from the novels I have examined thus far, a female character's exhibition of a sensual love of nature is often invoked as a sign of sexual impropriety. Perhaps it is as simple a matter as associating distance from the home with distance from social mores, and thus with a greater likelihood of forgetting or transgressing them. Or perhaps there is some primitive economy of female propriety that reads a display of ardent desire for *anything* as a sign of seemingly inordinate sexual desire. Whatever its root cause, a thought-provoking trend emerges from a cross-examination of the texts under consideration: female characters who conceive children outside the institution of marriage are frequently shown to have engaged in sexual relations out of doors and to have exhibited a sensual love of the outdoors.<sup>17</sup> For instance, Hazel McKee conceives her child with Anse in "Clem Wilmot's hayfield above the school-house" (19), but has already shown early signs of trouble when,

Once for no reason except to try something new and daring, she had walked through the woods to a hidden inlet of Graham's Lake, had stripped and waded shuddering into cold spring water until it closed around her shoulders. (14)

And the narrator establishes a direct link between Hazel's earlier behaviour and her transgressive sexual desire. As she walks to a second liaison with Anse, we are told that what Hazel felt "in her marrow now, a thousand times intensified, was the dark excitement, the chill of the lake, its cold insistent meaningless message along the nerves of the lower body, the breast, the mind" (14).

Judith Gare, the spirited protagonist of Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese*, also conceives a child out of doors with her lover Sven Sandbo. A short time before this

occurs, during a rare moment of leisure, Jude is shown taking her dog for a walk “through the bush to a little ravine where a pool had gathered below the thread of a spring” (53). We are told that, “Not knowing fully what she was doing, Judith took off all her clothing and lay flat on the damp ground with the waxy feeling of new, sunless vegetation under her” (53). And it is at this same spring that Jude and Sven meet and conceive their child (165).

The character of Alice Gull from Ondaatje’s *In the Skin of a Lion* also conceives her child, Hana, out of wedlock. Although neither Alice nor Hana is seen to suffer the stigma of female impropriety or illegitimacy (being political activists, they situate themselves outside of the constraints of hegemonic sexual propriety), the same place-based semiotic governs Hana’s conception. Alice recalls for Patrick the route to the place where she and Cato retreated for their weekly encounters: “fifty yards off the road, across a creek . . . then into the longhouse of cedars . . . all through the year” (141). “It is important,” she tells Patrick, summing up the meaning of their outdoor sexual retreats, “to be close to the surface of the earth” (140-41). It is worth noting that, although Alice suffers no direct repercussions from sexual transgression of the public/private distinction, the spirit of social rebellion and daring which nurtures these desires destroys her in the end: Alice is the only woman in Ondaatje’s novel to participate directly in political activism, and she dies as a direct result of these activities.

Excepting Kathleen’s rape by her father, the only impregnation that occurs outside of marriage in Ann-Marie MacDonald’s *Fall on Your Knees* also occurs out of doors.<sup>18</sup> What is interesting about the instance MacDonald narrates, however, is that the place where Francis conceives her child is not represented as an asocial space of nature. It is a

social space, on the margin between indoors and outdoors, with a distinct history first as “an abandoned bootleg mine,” and then as a monument to the infant Francis accidentally drowns (265; 379-81). Francis deliberately lures Leo Taylor to a spot she has constructed as something of a shrine to Ambrose; as such, this place is a highly acculturated outdoor place. Though Francis does not fit the pattern of the sensual lover of nature as do Hazel McKee and Judith Gare, she does display an affinity for outdoor places and for wandering from home. In her early teens, for example, she frequently “plays hookey down by the Shore,” and soon after she takes “to walking or trotting the nine miles to [the nearest town of] Sidney where she heads for the docks of the Esplanade and hangs around the ships” (246).

In sharp contrast to Francis, who comes after her mother’s death to identify with the role of “bad daughter,” the “good daughter,” Mercedes, the cooker of meals and the keeper of the Piper home, is keenly aware of gender proprieties and rarely leaves the Piper home (260). The first time Francis does not come home at night, the narrator reports that “Mercedes was frantic” (318). Yet, in a degree of self-repression that recalls Eva McKee’s inability to follow her daughter across the threshold separating house from field, Mercedes cannot bring herself to leave the house to seek out her sister. Although Mercedes “changed in and out of her nightgown, wrung her hands, and several times was halfway out the front door” (318), her self-understanding restrains Mercedes from taking the direct action of leaving home to pursue her delinquent sister; instead, “she returned to her vigil at the kitchen table,” this place and activity constituting the appropriate role for the “good daughter” (318; 260).

It is shortly after this scene that Mercedes rejects her Christian understanding of goodness as meekness and self-sacrifice and adopts a more aggressive, agential morality. According to the narrator, this alteration in self-understanding ensues as Mercedes pushes her knife-wielding father down the attic stairs to prevent a murder. This voice reports to us that Mercedes “decides at that moment to stop her penance in the coal cellar” because she comes to the sudden realization that “no good act is ever unaccompanied by evil” (372). When Francis fails to come home *that* evening, Mercedes leaves the house, takes the family car out into the foggy night, and finds her sister with Leo Taylor in the bootleg mine.

Ethel Wilson’s *Swamp Angel* provides an ideal note on which to conclude my analysis because, in a sense, this text constitutes the exception that demonstrates two of the rules delineated by my cross-textual analysis: first, that geographic wandering and sexual impropriety tend to be articulated in literary representations of female characters; and second, that the exhibition of a sensual love of nature tends to be a precursor to counter-hegemonic sexual behaviour in female characters.

Wilson’s protagonist Maggie Lloyd Vardoe commits both of these gender-infractions, if you will. She wanders from home and hearth (and indeed abandons her husband rather unceremoniously), and she repeatedly displays a sensual love of nature. After her minutely calculated escape from Vancouver and from married life, for example, Maggie finds a deep level of solace (likened to “the respite that perhaps comes to the soul after death” (40)) while reposing on the banks of the Similkameen river. After arriving at the Lodge, she takes great joy from observing wildlife (90) and from her daily ritual of diving into the chill waters of Three Loon Lake (99).

Yet these seeming signs of trouble lead nowhere in Wilson's text. Maggie's interrelated quests for a new place in the world, for a life lived closer to nature, and for an enhanced self-understanding, are highly successful and given full narrative sanction. At the text's conclusion, the narrator comments that "things were falling into place; thus and so they should be. This was Maggie's own sphere" (156). Yet, as if such a simultaneous triumph of self-placement and self-understanding were only allowable to those women who exist outside of patriarchy's libidinal economy, Maggie appears as a figure devoid of sexual desire. After having escaped "the night's hateful assaults" at the hands of her second husband, after having put behind her the "humiliations between four small walls and in the compass of a double bed," Maggie at last finds peace and her desired identity as the matron of Three Loon Lodge (23; 96). In this role, Maggie can exercise her skill as a care-giver, "serving other people," feeding and comforting them in times of crisis, while keeping only her own company in bed (99).

Perhaps because a direct affirmation of Maggie's lack of sexual desire seemed too indelicate a narrative task for Wilson to tackle, her narrator goes to great lengths to ensure that Maggie is insulated from all potential for sexual interaction with men. The narrator places great stress on Haldar Gunnarsen's debilitating hip injury, for instance (70-71; 84; 88). And Maggie herself takes pains to secure a Chinese-Canadian "boy" to complete those tasks of maintenance and construction that she cannot herself perform (128). Indeed, I believe that the young, awkward and compliant Angus Quong, with "his round dark peasant face with the thick glasses," is deployed as a racialized other by Wilson for two related purposes (109). First, Angus's difference provides Wilson with a means of conveying indirectly to her readers that the relationship between the "boy" and Maggie

could not possibly go beyond that of platonic affection (128). Ann-Marie MacDonald's narrator invokes an analogous logic in explaining why James Piper contracts Leo Taylor to drive Kathleen to and from school: "the fact that Taylor was coloured," the narrator explains, "made James feel all the more confident of the necessary distance between driver and passenger" (58). Second, and relatedly, Maggie's determination to hire what Vera calls "a Chinese," though justified by the most ostensibly liberal of attitudes on Maggie's part, also furthers her own desire to maintain control over Three Loon Lodge (85). Angus's difference, together with his lack of experience and mild character, assures both Maggie, and Wilson's readership, that he poses no threat to Maggie's power around the Lodge (Maggie tells Vera that the Chinese are "very dutiful") (85).

As if Wilson sensed that anxieties regarding biological reproduction lay at the heart of the social constraints limiting women's freedom to behave as full social agents, her narrator takes pains to absent Maggie from patriarchy's libidinal economy. As *Swamp Angel* demonstrates, distance from this economy brings a tremendous freedom to transgress the spatial norms that typically govern gender propriety. Maggie wanders from home and hearth *and* exhibits a sensual love of nature and not only lives to tell the tale, but triumphs.

## Conclusions

Having now completed the second of the three parts that constitute this dissertation, I would like to begin my wrap-up of part two by refreshing my readers' sense of where we are within this project's larger schema. As my project's title suggests, I envision this study as a processual effort to re-formulate the role regionalism plays in Canadian literary criticism. Implicit in this agenda is my conviction that regionalism has always had a valuable function to fulfill as Canadian literary criticism's spatialized branch of enquiry, but that the roles it has thus far been cast in have failed, for different reasons, to foreground space's social effectivity and, relatedly, to recognize regionalism's status as an analytic *process*.

In part one I initiated the process of recasting regionalism's role in Canadian literary studies by completing the preparatory work—I introduced, categorized and critiqued the roles regionalism has thus far been scripted into performing within discourses of Canadian literary regionalism and explained how these roles have disabled regionalism's ability to focus attention upon the social efficacy of space. I also drafted a new role for the literary region, one I derived by melding what I see as the best elements from its former roles with some of the insights offered by contemporary human geographers. Though it is but a step in the on-going production of literary regionalism, this new role highlights regionalism's status as an analytic process of spatial analysis, one ideally suited to investigating the relationship between literary representations of socio-material space and identity formation.

If part one was dedicated to completing the preparatory, *backstage* work, as it were, part two has chronicled this new player's first foray onto the stage of Canadian literary criticism. Yet it is only the first act of regionalism's multifaceted performance that I have staged in introducing the concept of place and exemplifying its capacity to initiate and facilitate regional literary analyses. Though part two is figured as the first act of a lengthier performance, this is not the only means of encapsulating the work I have presented here; as my central focus upon Bruce's *The Channel Shore* suggests, place studies *need not* be scripted to play the role of the incipient region, however admirably they fulfill this function. Section two is, first and foremost, a study of the place called, and the places conjoined within, the Channel Shore.

The implicit message delivered by part two is that place-based literary analyses are not tangential to my overarching goal of recasting regionalism, but represent an integral step towards achieving this goal. In so far as my effort to re-cast the role regionalism plays in Canadian literary studies represents an attempt to focus analytic attention upon the role representations of socio-material space play in organizing social relations, place studies and regional studies work towards remarkably similar ends. As I understand and utilize them, these two modes of literary analysis differ only in two regards: first, regional studies are cross-textual while place studies focus upon single texts; and second, regional studies bespeak a particular focus upon the social relations that inform performances of identity, while place studies do not necessarily involve an intensive focus upon the phenomenon of identity. Because my study of *The Channel Shore* has emphasized the relationship between place and identity, my analysis of place has served as a productive introduction to the regional mode of analysis that I advance in

this dissertation. It was by gaining a thorough grounding in the concept of place and the techniques of place-analysis, I reasoned, that my readers could most easily begin to develop an intuitive understanding of the approach to regional literary analysis I recommend. In a sense, the process of readerly initiation comes to a close in this conclusion; in part three I provide a more fully fledged regional literary analysis, and one that is largely unencumbered by an accompanying methodological agenda. In part three I no longer strive to describe the regional mode of analysis I advance here, but simply exemplify it.

But before moving on to this first full performance of regionalism's new role, I want to take a last look at the work accomplished in part two. I have ranged over a great deal of conceptual and narrative ground in my study of place. Because of the wide-ranging nature of this study, I want to conclude by examining the connections between section one and section two and to note trends that are worthy of a final underscoring. In addition, it seems to me that certain cautions and qualifications are called for because of the central place Bruce's *The Channel Shore* occupies in my analysis of place and gender identity.

It is my hope that section one's more theoretically oriented work has begun to resonate in my readers' minds with an enhanced relevance and clarity as a result of section two's more applied analyses. In particular, the issue of boundedness raised by Doreen Massey's theorization of place should by now have begun to assume a more pressing significance. The boundaries that keep Eva McKee from following her pregnant daughter over the threshold of her home into the fields, or explain why Josie Gordon spends a sizeable portion of her life watching the world pass by her kitchen window, or

necessitate the pregnant Hazel McKee's temporary exile from the Shore, are clearly not impermeable in any absolute sense. In fiction, as in life, the sky would not have fallen had Eva rushed into the fields after her daughter, if Josie had developed the habit of walking the backroads in the evenings, or if Hazel had remained on the Shore to carry her child. Yet these boundaries are no less real for their lack of overt materiality. Were these changes to have occurred while Bruce's normative geography remained otherwise unchanged, these alterations would certainly have changed the narrator's—if not our own—understanding of these women's characters.

As I have endeavored to demonstrate through my analysis of *The Channel Shore*, the boundaries that demarcate literary places are for the most part clearly permeable in the sense that they do not dictate characters' behaviours and are not universally applied. Further, the permeability of the boundaries that demarcate literary places has been shown to depend upon a variety of interrelated factors—a character's social and economic power within a narrative world, the range of identities he or she is affiliated with (whether through choice or social conscription), and the degree of narrative privilege she or he is allotted within a given text.

It is only through envisioning literary places as entities demarcated by boundaries that are at once existent *and* permeable that Hazel's desire to take to the hayfields in an effort to resist knowledge of her pregnancy becomes meaningful. Such a vision of place-boundaries also explains why Hazel's decision to run to her father's fishing hut to confess her pregnancy resonates with gender-significance. It also explains why pregnancy enforces the unfortunate Hazel's flight from the Shore while the more privileged Margaret and Alan can remain on the Shore after disclosing their erotic longing. All of

these instances are exceptions to unstated social rules that are articulated through a vocabulary of place-difference. I view such exceptions as demonstrations of the need to retain an understanding of place as bounded, but by *semi-permeable membranes* (to borrow a term from the sciences). Like the insight gained by examining the situation of Maggie from *Swamp Angel*, or Vangie Murphy from *The Channel Shore*, exceptions often provide the most helpful clues to understanding the interpenetrating ideologies that govern the permeability of such place-boundaries.

One insight that stands out from a long view of my analysis is that some place-boundaries are much more easily discerned than others. At times it is very difficult to determine where one place ends and another begins. Although it is clear enough that Hazel McKee *must* beat a hasty retreat from the Channel Shore to Toronto because the Shore is not the kind of place where a woman can carry an illegitimate child with impunity (as Vangie Murphy's social marginalization demonstrates with a cruel persistence), it is no easy matter to determine just how far Hazel has to travel from the Shore to ensure that her stigma would not reflect back upon her family. Yet as the situations of Naomi Nakane, Hazel and Eva McKee and Mercedes Piper all demonstrate, architectural dwellings constitute one of the more stable and definitively bounded places; and for female characters, the distinction between inside and outside the home is deeply sedimented and remains, even in contemporary fiction, highly significant.

As I stated earlier, what attracted me to Bruce's novel was the relative clarity of his normative geography and his keen eye for the role the practices of everyday life play in producing and reproducing social meaning. Yet Bruce's text is (to my mind) highly conservative; the differing rules that govern the flow of male and female characters out of

and back into the Shore, the text's repeated tendency to deploy female characters as catalysts for the articulation of shifts in male identity, and its tendency to fuse place and community—despite the presence of characters who clearly interrupt this social continuity—all attest to this conservatism. Thus, in a sense, the very qualities that make *The Channel Shore* an excellent medium for demonstrating the existence of normative geographies and the techniques for disclosing them also make it an easy target for a feminist analysis of place and identity. Though I found the consistency with which gender inequities emerged from my assessment of Bruce's novel disturbing, given the time, place, and nostalgic mode of this novel, I did not find them surprising. Having said this, I was surprised to see the parallels that emerged as I shifted from a place-based to a regional mode of literary analysis in instigating a cross-textual examination of the role indoor and outdoor places play in articulating hegemonic and counter-hegemonic female identities. In particular, the persistence of the connection between a female character's tendency to transgress the norms of female sexual propriety and her tendency to wander from home and hearth surprised me, as did my ability to explain Maggie Lloyd Vardoe's insulation from this logic through her distance from sexual availability.

Yet, in addition to these cross-temporal consistencies, it should be noted that contemporary texts do exhibit certain improvements in the situations of female characters. Kae in Sky Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* clearly has a tremendous amount of spatial mobility as well as the freedom to determine the course of her life (though I would note that Kae's lesbian liaisons with Hermia always occur at a safe distance from Vancouver). And it may be a hopeful sign that Alice's adolescent daughter, Hana, takes possession of the steering wheel at the end of *In the Skin of a Lion*. And Lily Piper does

survive her enforced exodus from the family home and from Cape Breton to find relative happiness and contentment with Rose in New York City (though I wonder if Lily Piper, as something of a modern-day saint, is not a more contemporary Maggie Lloyd Vardoe—a woman who gains the freedom to wander with impunity by virtue of being absented from patriarchy's libidinal economy. Her more sexualized sister's exodus to New York City ends, once again, with her pregnancy and death).

More generally, in the more contemporary twentieth-century Canadian realist novels I have looked at in section two, the relationship between place and gender identity becomes more complex. In order to explain the enhanced mobility of these more contemporary female characters it is necessary to address relatively idiosyncratic, psychological circumstances, as well as those that arise not just from gender, but from the mutual articulation of gender, ethnicity, sexuality and class. In other words, it is far less often the case that women in these more contemporary novels are held in place—or forced from place—by virtue of gender alone. Though gender unquestionably plays a role in Naomi Nakane's geographic and emotional stultification, for example, it certainly does not explain these problems exhaustively. Similarly, the inability of either Mercedes or Francis Piper to leave their home and forge independent lives is more convincingly explained by a deep-seated family dysfunction that is certainly informed by gender difference but not determined by gender alone.

Although it seems accurate to conclude that advances have been made in the degree of freedom women have to both wander at will and choose their own life-paths and places, and that the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel reflects this advance, I would add that, although the boundaries have expanded, they still exist. I wonder, for

example, if the death of Alice Gull in Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* and the criticism Naomi levels against her more mobile and politically engaged Aunt in *Obasan* signal that the hegemonic boundaries, which function to keep women in their place, are now shifting from the sexual to the political arena as the stigmatization of the loose woman begins to wane with the waxing of women's social power. (Though I should add that this increase in social power is barely discernible for poor women, and that the gains of middle-class or bourgeois women have been marked by outpourings of male anger directed towards keeping women in our place, such as that seen at the Université de Montréal's *École Polytechnique* on December 6, 1989).

I feel that a final caution is necessary to warn against ascribing too great a significance to the role *any* singular identity-position plays in explaining the relationship between place and identity in these realist novels. Although, as my analysis of *The Channel Shore* has demonstrated, realist novels tend to establish normative geographies, some of the most apparent and powerful of which attempt to regularize gender identity, this analysis has also demonstrated that such normative geographies are never universally applied. The point I want to stress is that identity-difference does not exhaustively explain the exceptions to otherwise stable rules. Of equal significance in explaining why some characters suffer harsh consequences for transgressing the rules that constitute a text's normative geography while others do not are the degree of narrative privilege a character is allotted and the function he or she fulfills within a narrative. And these three factors—identity, degree of narrative privilege and narrative function—are themselves interrelated.

I have gauged a character's degree of narrative privilege by focusing on which characters constitute exceptions to otherwise stable rules and paying close attention to which characters are imbued with the greatest place-based authority. A character's role within a narrative, regardless of the relative power such an identity-position (say of gender) has in the larger scope of things, plays a crucial role in determining who gets either to authorize an overriding sense of place or, more concretely, to determine who does and does not belong in a given place. Though it is the two male protagonists in *The Channel Shore*, Grant Marshall and Alan (Marshall) Gordon, who are allotted the greatest place-based authority and play the largest role in determining who is in and who is out of place, in the cases of Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* and Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese*, it is female characters who fulfill this function.

In *Swamp Angel* it is Maggie Lloyd who determines that Edward Vardoe is an obscene presence in her life, and that she is out of place both in her marriage and within the city of Vancouver. Maggie finds her place at Three Loon Lake, but only after determining and enacting her conviction that the former matriarch of this establishment, Vera Gunnarson, is decidedly out of place. It is Maggie who exercises her place-based authority in effectively displacing Vera from the Lodge and in determining that the compliant young Angus Quong is the right kind of person for Three Loon Lake. In *Wild Geese* Lind Archer plays the most formative role in determining both that Judith is out of place on the Gare farm and that Caleb's place-based authority over Judith is illegitimate. By interrupting the virtually doxic authority Caleb has exercised over Judith, and by awakening in Jude the realization that all places are not like the farm, and, therefore, not as Caleb represents them, Lind inspires Jude with the will to resist Caleb and the

ambition to seek a new place in the world with Sven. Through her example and her actions, it is Lind who effectively moves Jude from hinterland to metropole.

In both these cases, the women who exercise place-based authority come from outside the place within which they exercise it; in both cases, these women come to a rural location from an urban one, and in both cases, they are of a somewhat higher social class than the people who inhabit the places within which they exercise their authority. Lind Archer has been trained as a teacher, speaks with better grammar than the people she tutors and lives amongst, and dresses in a manner that signals her habituation to a more bourgeois milieu than the people of Oeland. Though Maggie was herself raised in a New Brunswick fishing lodge, her background as the daughter of "a very educated man," and her familiarity with both metropole *and* hinterland give her something of an edge over the Gunnarsens, who are represented as unsophisticated people, and particularly over Vera, who is both "city-bred" and described rather bluntly by the narrator as "not intelligent" (69; 87).

Thus I conclude by underlining the fact that there is a tremendous fluidity to the power-economy of place and identity. A seemingly disempowered social identity can be transformed and enhanced by its articulation with other identity positions. It is crucial, then, to resist the temptation to draw firm conclusions about any one kind of identity (in this case, gender) without considering other identity-positions that articulate the social place of a given character, and without taking account of the narrative function he or she fulfills within a novel.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Within the larger field of literary studies, those works that do focus upon place (such as Leonard Lutwack's *The Role of Place in Literature* (1984), Bruce Bennett's *Place, Region and Community* (1984), Roberto Dainotto's *Place in Literature* (2000) and Ian Baucom's *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (1999)) do not offer definitions of place, nor do they attempt to locate the concept of place within a larger vocabulary of spatial terms. Instead, these studies tend to either champion place without defining the term (see Lutwack, Bennett and Baucom, for example) or to critique place as a reactionary category of literary analysis without either clarifying its meaning or offering a more productive understanding of the term (see Dainotto).

<sup>2</sup> This means of distinguishing space from place is still in evidence within comparatively recent scholarly work. In her introduction to *The Geography of Identity* (1994), for example, Patricia Yaeger invokes the work of Jonathan Sime to explain that “‘place’ is a term that ‘implies a strong emotional tie . . . between a person and a particular physical location,’ while space is associated with an abstract or geometric vision of the built environment” (Sime qtd. in Yaeger 5).

<sup>3</sup> Derek Gregory's commentary on part two has alerted me to how Massey's characterization of this sense of place as “global” tends to undermine her goal of emphasizing the interconnections between places because it implies two distinct scales—the global and the local—rather than one interconnected whole. I follow Gregory in thinking that the sense of place Massey seeks here seems more accurately characterized as porous than global.

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<sup>4</sup> In “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” William Cronon explains that, in opposition to its extreme romanticization in contemporary times, the term “wilderness” has a long association with absence, lack, and self-loss. As he explains, “to be a wilderness was to be ‘deserted,’ ‘savage,’ ‘desolate,’ ‘barren’—in short, a ‘waste,’ the word’s nearest synonym” (70). He notes further that “it was used over and over again in the King James Version [of the bible] to refer to places on the margins of civilization where it is all too easy to lose oneself in moral confusion and despair” (70).

<sup>5</sup> For an interesting examination of how sense of place is constituted through distance, and of how this distance is simultaneously cultural *and* physical, see Kathleen Venema’s “Mapping Culture onto Geography: ‘Distance from the Fort’ in Samuel Hearne’s Journal.”

<sup>6</sup> For more on the relationship between Sky Lee’s text, the demands of capital, and the demographics of Vancouver’s Chinatown, see Chalykoff.

<sup>7</sup> For my purposes, the most important facet of what I am calling the “traditional” realist novel is its reliance upon a third person, omniscient narrator; see Lodge, 46.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that the Katens’ store also manifests aspects of the carnivalesque (as Stallybrass and White describe it) that go beyond the association between “the fair and the marketplace” (8). In particular, the store exhibits the qualities of randomness and hybridity, or the mixing of high and low. It is the place where people “gathered at random” (36). It is also “a place . . . from which boys and girls . . . walked home together in the dark, paired off or in little groups of a single sex. Almost as they

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did from church, but with more hilarity" (36). And, intriguingly, the Katens' store is imbued with some of the sacrilegious aspects of carnival. We are told, for example, that "when new varnished pews were installed in the Methodist church at Currie Head, Felix [Katen] had bought the discarded benches. Five of these were arranged in front of the store for convenience" (35). The more righteous of the Methodists are said to have "regretted this," as the narrator admits to finding "something disturbing" about the placement of Church benches within Katens' store (35).

<sup>9</sup> On the occasion of Hazel and Anse's second (and final) sexual encounter, Bruce gives spatial and temporal expression to this difference in character by contrasting their bodily responses to the same situation. In this scene Anse and Hazel both arrive at a designated field but, due to brush and trees, neither sees the other. We are told that "Hazel rose directly [from where she awaited Anse] and scanned the woods openly" (20). By contrast, Anse sees Hazel, grins, and watches her from a distance. After a moment's waiting, he "walked out of the shadow of the spruce" (20). The openness (and by implication, honesty) of Hazel's self-comportment is contrasted with Anse's seemingly innate tendency to dissimulate, to lurk behind objects and to take voyeuristic (spatial) and strategic (temporal) advantage of his obscurity. The narrator makes this impression more concrete by telling us that, while Anse "could be furtive in a manner that seemed direct, . . . it was almost impossible for Hazel to be furtive at all" (20).

<sup>10</sup> Bruce's narrator gives us another example of the subtle means by which this voice tends to essentialize characters as good or bad in specifying the excuse Hazel makes to justify her meeting with Anse. On leaving the house on a Sunday afternoon to

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meet with her lover in a nearby field, Hazel tells her father that she is going strawberry picking—a transgressive cultural practice for Protestants on Sundays (11). And in fact, after having sex, Hazel and Anse do pick strawberries. It is by such subtle means that Bruce's narrator encourages us to read Hazel's character as essentially good, but misdirected (22).

<sup>11</sup> See Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints* and Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* for two more Canadian examples.

<sup>12</sup> It could even be argued that Hazel's function within this narrative is to die in so far as it is her death that secures the Shore peoples' silence regarding Alan's paternity—and it is the tension created by this uneasy silence that carries Bruce's plot forward. Had Hazel lived, Alan's paternity would have been far more difficult to obfuscate: it is not only out of deference to Grant and the McKees that the vast majority of the Shore people respect Grant's wishes in remaining silent about Alan's paternity. In a very real sense Hazel secures this loyalty by dying—this, they reason, is price enough for her sin.

<sup>13</sup> The protagonist's father in Alistair MacLeod's short story "The Boat" demonstrates strong parallels with Stewart Gordon; a comparison of the two figures would make an interesting study.

<sup>14</sup> Hazel McKee's status as a morally ambiguous character—a good woman gone bad—provides another clue that helps to explain why she is killed off.

<sup>15</sup> Doreen Massey argues that "survey after survey has shown how women's mobility . . . is restricted . . . in a thousand different ways, from physical violence to being ogled at or made to feel quite simply 'out of place,'" and she quotes a review by D. Birket

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who actually argues that “it is far, far more demanding for a woman to wander now than ever before” (*Space, Place and Gender* 148).

<sup>16</sup> My current analysis is dedicated to demonstrating the persistence with which sexual and geographic transgression are articulated in twentieth-century Canadian realist novels, often as an inadvertent means of reinforcing the power of this articulation. However, it is important to bear in mind that literary narratives can at times reproduce such trends as a self-conscious means of disempowering this articulation’s moral efficacy. I think in particular here of Aritha van Herk’s subversive celebration of the articulated character of spatial and sexual wandering in *No Fixed Address*.

<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that no details are given describing the location in which Vangie Murphy conceives her two children. By contrast, the one clear exception to this rule is provided by Suzie Wong from *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, who claims to have conceived her child with Morgan in the Wong family home (175-6). Though Suzie is represented as rebellious, she exhibits no particular love of the outdoors, but instead recalls with relish the time she was able to bring Morgan into her warm, dry house on the one occasion when she is granted sole possession of it (*ibid*).

<sup>18</sup> I am deliberately excluding from consideration here the instance in which Kathleen Piper conceives twins as a result of being raped by her father. What marks this incident as different is the utter absence of desire or volition on Kathleen’s part. Since the trend I am establishing links a sensual love of nature with a tendency to transgress norms of sexual propriety, and in so doing traces the transcoding of spatial and sexual

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modes of desire, Kathleen's lack of both volition and desire mark this event as inappropriate to this analysis.

### Part Three

#### **Constructing A Region of Denial and Purgation: Nature, Sublimity and Identity Formation in the Twentieth-Century Canadian Realist Novel**

Part of the trauma of modernity is exactly this mind-shaking suspicion that the world is not enlistable on humanity's side—that human values must resign themselves to being grounded in nothing more solid than themselves . . .

(Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 86)

#### **Section One: Nature, Sublimity, Identity**

In part three of this dissertation I investigate how and why literary representations of socio-material space come to enable performances of identity within my group of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels. But I want to focus on a particular kind of socio-material space and a particular kind of identity. All of the instances of identity formation I examine pertain to individual characters and some of their most dramatic narrative moments. What concerns me here are those overtly meaningful moments when characters undergo sudden shifts in identity, experience epiphanies of self-knowledge, come to new understandings of the paths their lives will take and, relatedly, re-assess the social alliances that structure their self-understandings.

In collecting and examining these pivotal (and at times histrionic) narrative moments, I was struck by how often they occur out of doors and within relatively bucolic surroundings. The representations of socio-material space I focus on vary greatly in their particulars—they include wheat fields, mountainsides, riversides, knolls, bluffs, swamps, waterfalls and skylines. Yet, as I will go on to argue in greater detail, these sites have a unity in that their shared status as outdoor places, and as places that reveal no overt signs

of human presence, encourages us to interpret them as asocial spaces of nature. And it is their status as seemingly natural places, I argue, that imbues these sites with the power to catalyze shifts in identity.

This study emerges from my efforts to explain the role representations of nature fulfill in these negotiations of selfhood, a series of efforts I divide into three sections. In the first section, I lay the groundwork for my explanation by introducing and exploring concepts that offer what I see as the most appropriate tools for explaining the work that nature is performing in these scenes. Not surprisingly, I begin with the concept of nature itself, and focus on conceptualizations of nature currently emerging from post-structuralist theorists. Because I relate the capacity representations of nature have to enable shifts in identity to the sublime's enduring cultural legacy, I dedicate a substantial portion of section one to familiarizing readers with some of the interpretations of sublime experience currently being offered by philosophers and literary critics. I place particular emphasis on the analysis of the Kantian sublime Terry Eagleton provides in *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* because, like Eagleton, I am most interested in the Kantian sublime's capacity to perform ideological work. I conclude section one by comparing the vision of identity formation that emerges from contemporary readings of the Kantian sublime with the view of identity my analyses in sections two and three rely upon.

In section two I demonstrate the primary means by which sublime experience—or what I call “the residual sublime”—manifests itself as an agent of identity production in the collection of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels I examine here. By naming and characterizing the spatial tropes, rhetorics and social practices through which the

residual sublime exhibits its presence, I will be constructing a poetics of identity formation in the outdoors of the twentieth century Canadian realist novel.

In the third section of this study, I focus particular attention upon the ideological and psychological work the residual sublime performs. These two capacities are closely interrelated. I argue that the residual sublime performs ideological work in that it encourages characters and readers alike to imagine themselves as autonomous individuals, subjects whose identities do not result from social interaction, but from seemingly independent acts of self-creation. It is because the residual sublime enables characters to persuade themselves that nature has itself induced a quasi-transcendent level of experience in them that it facilitates their desire to re-constitute themselves as wholly new. By buttressing characters' desires to believe that they have undergone epiphanic moments of rebirth in a seemingly asocial nature, residually sublime experience performs psychological work because it provides them with an opportunity to cleanse themselves of those aspects of their history that cause them guilt or shame.

It is through this tripartite process that literary representations of the socio-material space of nature acquire meaning and coalesce to reveal what I call a region of denial and purgation. In other words, we approach this region by incremental stages. In the first stage I develop the critical lenses required to see this region through my discussion of nature, sublimity and identity; stage two constitutes something of a primer in recognizing the presence of the residual sublime by gaining a familiarity with the rhetorical techniques through which its identity-producing presence is manifested. It is when I turn to conduct the more extensive analyses in section three that I foreground the

region of denial and purgation by emphasizing the residual sublime's capacity to perform ideological and psychological work.

Yet I must confess that these second and third stages are not quite so discrete as my tidy synopsis suggests. It is inevitable that the processes of demonstrating and critiquing the residual sublime blur because the residual sublime is, in the end, a series of rhetorical strategies for mystifying shifts in identity which work by denuding these events of their social and historical context. Because readers are left with only the immediate, natural context to explain the cause of such shifts in identity, the character of these alterations in social affiliation is often not deducible from the discrete passages in which they occur. The residual sublime *works* by misrepresenting long-term social processes as discrete encounters with the natural sublime. Yet in order to demonstrate the residual sublime's presence as an identity-producing strategy, it is often necessary to provide the missing social and historical context that explains what kind of alteration in social affiliation characters have undergone. In providing this fuller context, it is inevitable that I touch upon the residual sublime's capacity to perform ideological and psychological work. In other words, although I dedicate particular energy to foregrounding its presence in section three, we certainly glimpse the region of denial and purgation at points throughout section two as I explain how the residual sublime's presence can be recognized and codified.

I begin with the concept of nature because the ideological and psychological denials enabled by the residual sublime emanate from a more basic denial of nature's status as a social product. Sublime experience provides an ideal means of buttressing these interrelated denials because it is founded on the assumption of nature's otherness.

Susan Glickman draws attention to this aspect of sublimity when she argues, in her Preface to *The Picturesque and the Sublime*, that “The sublime . . . accepts that nature is always already Other . . . ” (ix). I differ from Glickman, however, in explicitly resisting nature’s otherness by viewing sublimity through the lenses provided by theorists who argue that nature’s seeming otherness bespeaks a process of imagining that is always already social.<sup>1</sup> Scholars such as William Cronon, Donna Haraway, Noel Castree and Bruce Braun contend that nature is an “artifactual” phenomenon, something made rather than found (Haraway 297). Haraway expresses this view succinctly when she states that “nature cannot pre-exist its construction” (296). As Castree and Braun comment in “The Construction of Nature and the Nature of Construction,” Haraway’s statement is helpful in that it “allows us to recognize the irreducible presence of the discursive at all levels of human relations with nature” (18). However, Castree and Braun are quick to point out that Haraway’s statement does not mean that “only through language and ideas do things have objective existence” (18). Rather, they argue that Haraway’s position is intended to foreground the epistemological impossibility of accessing a pre-discursive entity called nature; as Castree and Braun express it, “there is no ‘outside’ a general textuality, no ‘getting beyond’ the epistemological clearings in which we stand . . . to obtain certain knowledge” (Castree and Braun 18).

An important aspect of nature’s construction, and one touched on in part two’s study of place, is that it tends to be equated, at least within a North American context, with outdoor space. This is a problematic equation in so far as the practice of viewing nature as that which is out of doors has undoubtedly played a part in producing and maintaining an understanding of nature as something that pre-exists the social.<sup>2</sup>

However, the extent to which my group of novels utilizes outdoor social spaces to different ends than indoor social spaces dictates that I recognize and perpetuate this equation. Though I reproduce it in focusing only upon those shifts in identity that occur out of doors (and in non-urban social spaces), I do so in order to deconstruct the distinction which underlies and empowers this equation—that which opposes the natural to the social.

It is difficult to overemphasize the role played by an asocial nature in this study. None of the practices and spatial tropes I introduce and interrogate here can be understood without critiquing the view that nature is a realm that exists apart from the social. Far from being a passive setting utilized to aestheticize shifts in identity which could, theoretically, have taken place elsewhere, nature's narrative construction as a distinctly non-artifactual entity plays an integral role in the performances of identity examined here. Yet nature's role in these processes is elusive in that it frequently involves the obfuscation of its status as a socially produced and discursively mediated force in such performances. In short, nature's role in these processes is often to perform the absence of a role.

As is suggested by my description of section two as a *poetics* of identity formation, aesthetics also occupies an important role here. In the concept of the aesthetic, we encounter that no-man's land between sensuality and intellection; it is a concept that endeavours to systematize and articulate what Terry Eagleton describes as "the body's long inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the theoretical" (13). As the ensuing analysis will demonstrate, the majority of authors investigated here looks to a largely unproblematised nature as a source of beauty and sublimity, and as an ontological realm

that tantalizes with its seeming capacity to proffer experiences of unalienated being. And it is this highly aestheticized view of nature—so antithetical to its construction as asocial—that is crucial to explaining why authors frequently turn to outdoor places when they narrate significant moments of identity formation in the lives of characters.

The concepts of nature and the aesthetic are both pertinent to processes of identity formation in that they aid authors in their desire (whether conscious or not) to resist the rationalism of a disenchanted world in their depictions of processes of identity-formation. Working symbiotically, with nature as a source of aesthetic pleasure, and the aesthetic as a source of naturalization, this tag-team of concepts combines to bolster an author's capacity to deny that the meaning of identity is grounded in the purely, or merely, social. With the aid of these mutually informing concepts, identity is often represented, not as a socially grounded and derived performance, but as a moment of transcendent communion sanctified by nature, as it once was by a deity. As William Cronon tells us, "Those who have no difficulty seeing God as the expression of our human dreams and desires nonetheless have trouble recognizing that in a secular age Nature can offer precisely the same sort of mirror" (80). Nature and the aesthetic are conjoined in their capacity to deny the social origin of both meaning and selfhood. Nature, or in Cronon's terminology, wilderness, is often construed as "the ultimate landscape of authenticity" because it sustains the illusion that "it is the place where we can see the world as it really is, and so know ourselves as we really are—or ought to be" (Cronon 80). Similarly, the aesthetic represents "the wan hope, in an increasingly rationalized, secularized, demythologized environment, that ultimate purpose and meaning may not be entirely lost" (Eagleton 88).

In many ways, then, the aesthetic is “the mode of religious transcendence of a rationalistic age . . .” (Eagleton 88).

There are a variety of factors that explain why my study of the relationship between nature, sublimity and identity is delimited by my exclusive focus upon processes of individual identity formation. It is no accident that, in common parlance, nature is often utilized as an antonym for culture and civilization. The prevalence of what Braun and Castree refer to as the “modern dualism in which nature is seen as external to society” predisposes us to construct nature, like wilderness, as “the place we seek out as a means of escaping society” (Castree and Braun 4; Cronon 69). Nature emerges from such a dualism as the asocial space *par excellence*, as “the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth” (Cronon 69).

Just as a seemingly asocial nature is frequently opposed to civilization, so the seemingly asocial individual is often opposed to an artificial society. While the individual and nature are often understood to be *found*, organic entities, civilization and society frequently oppose them in being understood as *made*, artifactual entities. And it is this attribution of nature and the individual, on the one hand, and society and culture, on the other, with opposing origins that produces a differing relationship between nature and the individual than it does between nature and groups. While an individual can masquerade within nature as an escapee from civilization (a performance enabled by the hegemonic tendency to construct individuals as autonomous self-creations), and feel herself to be at one with this seemingly asocial space, it takes more work to naturalize the presence of a group within such settings. Groups seem antithetical to nature precisely

because they sit so squarely on the side of civilization within the nature/civilization dualism.<sup>3</sup>

Social theorists have commented upon the differing relationships individuals and groups have to nature, and looked to various sources to explain this difference. In “Canada: The Borderline Case,” for example, Marshall McLuhan sees the predilection to associate outdoor locales with solitude and indoor locales with sociality as unique to North America. He argues that while “in England or France or India people go outside to be social and go inside to be private or alone,” North Americans have been acculturated differently (231).

A century of war on the wilderness made customary the habit of going outside to confront and explore the wilderness and of going inside to be social and secure. Going outside involved energy and effort and struggle in frontier conditions that called for initiative amid solitude. (230)

McLuhan, then, looks to a tradition of practices particular to North America for an explanation of North Americans’ difference from other groups, and he argues from the general premise that “It would be strange indeed if the population of North America had not developed characteristic attitudes to the spaces experienced here” (230).

In “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” William Cronon historicizes and contextualizes North American attitudes to nature in greater detail than McLuhan, and, in so doing, conceives of the “psychological borderline” separating North American and European perspectives on the outdoors as more permeable (McLuhan 230). Cronon characterizes migrants’ feelings about wilderness during early colonial times as fearful and anxious (attitudes easily recognizable to critics

of Canadian literature in Frye's concept of the garrison mentality and Atwood's survival thesis), but argues that "by the end of the nineteenth century, all this had changed" (71). While "Wilderness had once been the antithesis of all that was orderly and good—it had been the darkness, one might say, on the far side of the garden wall[,] . . . now it was frequently likened to Eden itself" (71-2). Though Cronon acknowledges that "The sources of this rather astonishing transformation were many," he collects them "under two broad headings: the sublime and the frontier" (72).

Under the heading of the frontier Cronon asserts much the same argument as McLuhan, though with certain variations. While McLuhan harkens back to the colonial experience of clearing the land to explain more recent attitudes towards the outdoors in North America, Cronon is at once more general and more specific in his approach. He claims (quite rightly) that there is something "peculiarly American" about the frontier myth but at the same time locates the origins of that myth in "the powerful romantic attraction of primitivism, dating back at least to Rousseau . . ." (76). Of the two cultural antecedents he focuses on, however, Cronon argues that "the sublime is the older and more pervasive cultural construct," and he relates it to "that broad transatlantic movement we today label as romanticism . . ." (72).

Cronon is not alone in locating the origin of the tendency to associate natural settings with individuals in the thought of the Romantics, and more specifically in the powerful legacy of the concept of the sublime. In *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* Denis Cosgrove provides a cogent explanation of the reasoning behind this association. Here he argues that the Romantics

celebrated as strongly as any classical economist the central myth of capitalism: the ‘naturalness’ of the isolated individual. But in seeking to escape the alienation implied by this isolation, romantics failed to locate its origins in the new social relations of production . . . because they could not accept society as ‘organic.’ Therefore . . . it had to be found in a natural, moral order which harmonised the individual soul with unspoiled external nature. (231)

Because of their indebtedness to a mindset that held society to be “false and mechanical,” the Romantics conceived of the bonds that cause a group to cohere as the products of human endeavour (Cosgrove 226). Being as yet unprepared to accept a view of humanity as inherently alienated from metaphysical certitude, and being unwilling (or unprepared) to look to socioeconomic factors to explain this alienation, the Romantics sequestered nature away from society and constructed it as a realm in which the individual soul could throw off the chains of alienation and become, for a time, natural.

Though the Romantic—yet still pervasive—tendency to view the individual as the natural measure of humanity partially explains the skewing of my analysis away from an investigation of group identity, genre also plays its part. It is something of a commonplace that the genre of the novel simultaneously reflects and sustains a belief in the self-conscious individual as the natural unit of social analysis and narrative construction. Though it is unquestionable to me that contemporary novelists go to great pains to convey the extent to which identities are constituted through collective interaction (within my own selection of authors I think of Sky Lee, Ann-Marie MacDonald and Michael Ondaatje), it is equally apparent that these efforts constitute

imaginative, and at times awkward, attempts to resist the generic constraints of the realist novel.<sup>4</sup> As David Lodge tells us, the subject of “the traditional novel . . . is characteristically a man or a woman worrying like mad about his or her ‘self’” (62). Despite the many creative attempts at resistance, then, it is still largely the case that the “proper subject matter” of the realist novel “is ‘individuals’ and their relationships” (Williams 181).

In attempting to understand the realist novel’s emphasis upon individuated subjecthood I once again return to the legacy of the Romantics, and in particular to the concept of the sublime. In *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women’s Fiction*, Barbara Claire Freeman argues that

It is no accident that the rise of the novel occurs at the same time that the sublime comes to the fore in eighteenth-century aesthetics, for both depend upon—or perhaps help to construct—a distinctly modern subject . . . The novel and the sublime both emphasize the primacy of the individual and appeal to individual experience as the ultimate arbiter of reality; share a concern with the process through which, at least since the eighteenth century, identities are formed; and reflect upon the value and diversity of individual taste. (Freeman 7-8)

And I would add that, within the majority of the novels I am investigating (as within Kant and so much Romantic poetry) sublimity tends to be inspired by a seemingly asocial, pre-discursive nature.<sup>5</sup> As Thomas Weiskel notes, “All versions of the sublime require a credible god-term, a meaningful jargon of ultimacy . . .” (36). And more often than not the authors studied here look to nature as the source of this ultimacy (36).

It is not, however, that nature was ever held to be inherently sublime. Within the Kantian imaginary, which remains the dominant lens through which to view the sublime, sublimity originates in the mind of the beholder. As Kant states in the *Critique of Judgement*, “true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the [subject] judging, not in the natural object the judgement upon which occasions this state” (qtd. in Sussman 38). Having said this, I would add that there is a striking consensus amongst scholars of the concept that certain sites—mountain and ocean vistas in particular—have a greater than usual propensity for triggering the sublime response in the viewing subject (Kant 95; Eagleton 231; Labbé 37; MacLaren 90; Novak 34). The tendency to associate craggy mountains and raging seas with sublimity is so pervasive that one could be excused for shifting the cause of sublimity from subject to object. This common error is further encouraged by the deceptive grammatical form within which the term is cast; while rules of grammar tell us otherwise, “To claim that you are sublime is not for me to identify some property in you but to report on some feeling in myself” (Eagleton 93).<sup>6</sup> Because mountains and oceans evoke a sublime response in so many viewers (and readers), these sites have themselves been equated with the property of sublimity because “Judgements of taste appear to be descriptions of the world but are in fact concealed emotive utterances, performatives masquerading as constatives” (Eagleton 93).

As Eagleton explains it, the aesthetic, which includes both beauty and sublimity, occupies a unique place in the Kantian philosophical system in that it represents the one intellectual terrain within which Kant veers from his “admirable austerity,” his “sober, clear-eyed realism” and ventures onto a more “mythological path” (87). And nowhere is

this mythologizing tendency more apparent than in that aspect of Kant's aesthetics that theorizes the relationship between nature and the subject of aesthetic judgement.

Along with other Enlightenment philosophical discourses, Kant's *Critiques* helped to construct and disseminate an understanding of the subject as a uniquely rational being, and one distinguished in this capacity from the other entities upon the earth. Henry Sussman explains that

The overall *telos* of the Kantian philosophy is to serve as the conceptual instrument by means of which Judeo-Christian ontotheology is supplemented with a secular religion. Whereas Judeo-Christianity is deity-centered and presupposes the predetermination of human faculties and choices, the Kantian religion is secular in nature and implemented by purely intellectual (i.e., logical) processes. (30, emphasis in original)

Within the Kantian system, the Judeo-Christian God-term is occupied by a transcendental law of Reason. While in the Judeo-Christian system subjects can access the transcendental principle only through faith, in the Kantian system "all transcendental or supersensible entities and processes . . . must be *deducible*, on the basis of human brain-power" (Sussman 30, emphasis added).

Both Sussman and Eagleton argue that in founding a philosophical system upon an abstract law of reason, Kant accrued problems that were effectively solved through his aesthetic theory (though this is not to say that Kant intentionally deployed aesthetics to this end). One of these problems centred on the subject's relation to nature. In positing that human beings are uniquely rational entities, distinguished in this capacity from other

forms of life, Kant effectively denaturalized humanity's presence upon the earth. As Eagleton explains it,

For humanity to experience an exuberant sense of its own unique status is to find itself tragically marooned from any amicably complicit Nature—from some answerable environment which might assure man that his purposes were valid because secretly part of itself. (86)

In positing humanity's separateness from nature, Kant problematized his ability to metaphysically ground his moral vision within an empirically demonstrable source. And Kantian theory is badly in need of such a source since Kant's "law of reason does not *exist*. It is a fiction . . . which we must construct in order to act as rational creatures at all, yet an entity of which the world yields no trace of evidence" (Eagleton 83).

The absence of a tangible metaphysical ground leaves any body of thought on a precarious footing in that it risks "leaving its meanings and values hanging in empty space, as gratuitous as any other structure of meaning . . ." (Eagleton 86). The surest means of obfuscating such arbitrariness is through mythologization: "ideologies flourish," in other words, "in their impulse to eternalize and universalize themselves, to present themselves as unparented and bereft of all siblings" (Eagleton 87). Though Eagleton contends that "Kant sternly refuses to convert the heuristic fiction of a purposive universe to ideological myth," he argues that Kant comes closest to doing so in his aesthetic theory, where he deploys the faculty of imagination to suggest that, if nature is not an explicit source of metaphysical surety, it can at least give us this impression in appearing as humanity's "ally" (Eagleton 87).

It is through his theorization of beauty that Kant manages to stave off the justifiable impression that, within a universe governed by reason, nature is indifferent to us. Beauty helps us to defer such a conclusion because, when we look upon nature and judge it to be beautiful, we experience a pleasure that derives “from a quick sense of the world’s delightful conformity to our capacities . . .” (Eagleton 85). And from this aesthetic response we are said to gain a deeper, less conscious sense that nature is actually *intended* to provide us with such pleasure. This conclusion is, strictly speaking, incorrect. For Kant, nature remains “an impersonal domain of causal processes and autonomous laws,” neither humanity’s friend nor foe (let alone our product) (Eagleton 92). But the correctness or incorrectness of the subject’s perception has little bearing on the end result because in an aesthetic response,

The imagination creates a purposive synthesis, but without feeling the need for a theoretical detour. If the aesthetic yields us no knowledge, then, it proffers us something arguably deeper: the consciousness, beyond all theoretical demonstration, that we are at home in the world because the world is somehow mysteriously designed to suit our capacities. (Eagleton 85)

In a sense, then, the ideological work performed by beauty inheres in its capacity to encourage us to misrecognize ourselves as centred within, and meaningful to, nature. Though such an impression cannot be validated, validation is not required in order for us to “entertain the hypothesis that reality is not altogether indifferent to our moral capacities . . .” (Eagleton 89).

The Kantian sublime works by different means, and to different ends, than beauty. Yet beauty and sublimity share a common function within the Kantian system in so far as they both provide an experiential means by which the subject can intuit linkages between orders of existence that it would otherwise have to take on faith alone. As Sussman puts it, beauty and sublimity are “shifters that mediate between the empirical and the transcendental . . .” (31). In this sense, the Kantian aesthetic can be understood as “the reflection in the lower world of the higher . . .” (Eagleton 98). While beauty lends the subject an intuitive sense that she is metaphysically grounded within nature, sublimity lends her the fleeting intuition that she is metaphysically grounded within the transcendental law of Reason; through sublime experience, this transcendent realm becomes most nearly palpable to the subject.

The sublime response begins when the subject confronts an object “which is seemingly great beyond imaginative comprehension” (Tsang 139). In encountering such an object, the subject’s first reaction is one of failure or “humiliation” because he recognizes his inability to capture imaginatively, or to represent, the infinitude before him (Tsang 139). Eagleton casts this response within psychoanalytic terms by suggesting that

The Kantian sublime is in effect a kind of unconscious process of infinite desire, which like the Freudian unconscious continually risks swamping and overloading the pitiable ego with an excess of affects. The subject of the sublime is accordingly decentred, plunged into loss and pain, [and] undergoes a crisis and fading of identity. (90)

The subject is decentred in the sense that she fails to gain an impression of shared purposiveness between herself and nature; in fact, sublimity “indicates nothing purposive in nature,” and is in this sense (amongst others) beauty’s opposite (Watson 493).

What sublimity takes from the subject by denying a sense of common purpose with nature it gives back by bolstering his sense of autonomy; through sublimity “we feel in ourselves a purposiveness quite independent of nature” (Watson 493). Such a sense of purposiveness is achieved by drawing a distinction between the human capacity to imagine on the one hand, and our capacity to reason on the other. In the experience of sublimity the subject learns that, although he cannot exhaustively master the object of his gaze through imagination, he can gain conceptual control over this object through his faculty of reason.

The viewing subject achieves such command by undoing her initial misrecognition of the object as itself sublime; in a moment of self-consciousness the subject turns upon herself and gains an awareness that the object has not so much defeated her, as it has revealed the limits of her capacity to imagine. In the second stage of sublime experience, then, “The subject of the imaginary, who imputes a fetishistic power to the object, must so to speak come to its senses, undo this projection and recognize that this power resides in it rather than in the object” (Eagleton 92).

The experience of sublimity is, in a sense, a mode of crisis management for a threatened ego: while the pleasure produced by the experience of beauty encourages us to maintain our fetishization of the object of our gaze, the pain inflicted upon the ego by sublime experience, in which we are “Hurled beyond our own sensuous limits,” demands some form of compensatory action on the subject’s part (Eagleton 91). This we take in

mastering the object of our gaze conceptually, and by so doing, we are said to gain “some dim notion of the suprasensory, which is nothing less than the law of Reason inscribed within us” (Eagleton 91). In the Kantian sublime we are rewarded for acknowledging our alienation from nature by gaining an evanescent intuition of our status as *supernatural*, by being “reminded,” against the evidence of beauty, “that our true resting place is in infinity” (Eagleton 90).

Some 200 years after Kant published his *Critique of Judgement* (1790), it is hardly surprising that there are many ways in which his theory of sublimity seems outmoded in the light of contemporary social theory. Through the experience of sublimity, the subject is thought to effectively shift the ground of his identity from nature to the transcendent principle of reason. Within the Kantian imaginary, this move constitutes a shift from a *false* identification with the material and sensual to an *authentic* identification with the ideational and rational. But the cognitive distance separating these grounds becomes greatly attenuated when nature is understood to be a social construct, and reason is no longer theorized as radically distinct from imagination, but is itself contaminated with the indeterminacies and desires of subjectivity. Once we bring these insights to bear upon Kant’s aesthetic theory, sublimity becomes a process through which the subject shifts the ground of her identity from one socially mediated ideational realm to another, from the social construct of the natural to the social construct of the rational. Amongst other things, such a contemporarization of Kantian aesthetic theory demonstrates the ineluctable role the social now occupies in contemporary understandings of identity formation.<sup>7</sup> The meaning we reap from identity is increasingly

attributed to the social realm, a realm which, like the subject himself, floats free of any metaphysical ground.

Despite Kant's occlusion of the role of the social in processes of identity formation, there are ways in which the Kantian sublime retains its significance not only to fictional representations of identity formation, but also to contemporary theorizations of this process. For one, the Kantian sublime remains an effective model for expressing the processual, performative character of identity formation. As Steven Knapp points out, "the self whose stability is served by the sublime is a self *produced* in the moment of the sublime" (79, emphasis added). Jean-François Lyotard conveys the evanescence of such moments in figuring the sublime as "a sudden blazing, and without future" (55).

Judging from his contemporary commentators, Kant also appears to have expressed through his theorization of sublime experience the subject's determination to emerge from traumatic, ego-threatening encounters with some sense of selfhood, however contingent, in place. Whether critics choose to focus upon the initial, self-defeating component of sublime experience or on its latter, self-affirming aspect, there is wide agreement that sublimity impels the subject towards some form of productive work on the self. Focusing upon the sublime's initial moment of failure, Susan Glickman comments that "the sublime moment, in revealing the inadequacy of our knowledge of the world, inspires us to make new meanings and thereby recover our sense of self" (Glickman 42). Freeman focuses on the latter, triumphal stage of sublime experience during which the subject "achieves supremacy over an excess that resists its powers," and argues that this "central moment of the sublime marks the self's newly enhanced sense of identity . . ." (3). And Tsang argues in *The Sublime: Groundwork Towards a Theory* that "the so-

called postmodern version of the sublime," which he associates with the work of Deleuze, Foucault and Lyotard, emphasizes "our creative tendency to transcend ourselves, to go beyond tradition and convention, to radically redefine ourselves" (xv).

Whether one wishes to counter Kant, as Eagleton suggests many deconstructivists do, in viewing the sublime as "a point of fracture and fading, an abyssal undermining of metaphysical certitudes," or to retain Kant's sense that the sublime is not "an occasion for despair," but rather one of triumphal communion and self-affirmation, the Kantian sublime remains to this day a peculiarly compelling construct (Eagleton 90; Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* 143). For my purposes, this construct's most pertinent aspects remain those stressed by Eagleton, who foregrounds the extent to which the Kantian sublime represents a form of resistance to the passing of metaphysical certitudes. And perhaps its most trenchant aspect is its articulation of a seemingly insatiable will-to-identity.

## Section Two: Tracing the Presence of the Residual Sublime

There are signs that the link with spatial orientation lies very deep in the human psyche. In some very extreme cases of what are described as ‘narcissistic personality disorders,’ which take the form of a radical uncertainty about oneself and about what is of value to one, patients show signs of spatial disorientation as well at moments of acute crisis. The disorientation and uncertainty about where one stands as a person spills over into a loss of grip on one’s stance in physical space.

(Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 28)

Metaphor is what originally brings to visibility the figure of what is not visible.

(Michel Deguy, “The Discourse of Exaltation,” 9)

Thomas Weiskel contended back in 1976 that “we have long since been too ironic for the capacious gestures of the Romantic sublime” (6). “To please us,” he argues, “the sublime must now be abridged, reduced, and parodied as the grotesque, somehow hedged with irony . . .” (6). Although I will demonstrate in the ensuing analysis that the sublime need not be “parodied as the grotesque” or “somehow hedged with irony,” it is, typically, found in an “abridged” or “reduced” form (Weiskel 6). It is in part to acknowledge this paring down of sublime experience in the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel that I call the collection of representational effects I will be tracing here the residual sublime.

This term, the residual sublime, is also intended to recognize the inevitable alteration that accompanies the translation of concepts from one discourse to another. It should come as no great surprise that sublime experience is not represented in the novels treated here with the degree of accuracy or detail provided by Kant’s commentators; a

loss of exactitude is to be expected when philosophical ideas are integrated within literary narratives. Even in reference to an overtly philosophical poem such as Shelley's "Mont Blanc," David Perkins cautions that, while the poem "can be interpreted as drawing . . . on several philosophical systems," we should not read it with the expectation that Shelley "expound[s] his ideas with systematic precision" (968). And this same caution applies to the collection of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels under scrutiny here; while instances of the residual sublime constitute attempts to represent shifts in identity that are at times evocative and creative, and at others rather tired from overuse, at all times they stand in a more connotative than denotative relation to the Kantian sublime.

Perhaps the most substantive philosophical inaccuracy novelists perpetuate when they deploy the residual sublime to convey shifts in identity is to blur the expected effects of beauty and sublimity. Within the Kantian schema, sublimity is supposed to produce an effect of quasi-transcendence in which the subject intuits her relation to a source of metaphysical certitude. Yet there are instances in which evocations of the residual sublime replicate the expected effect of beauty by suggesting the naturalization of an identity or relationship. In the novels I examine, a persistent pantheism plays a part in the blurring of Kant's distinction: when nature is itself represented as a source or expression of divinity, the distinction between naturalization and transcendence becomes harder to maintain. Yet the melding of these two aesthetic responses poses less of a challenge to my present endeavour than might be supposed, since, for my purposes, the most important effect of beauty and sublimity is their *shared* tendency to deflect the work of identity formation away from the social realm.

I also intend the residual sublime to acknowledge Weiskel's point that the geopolitical and historical era in which sublimity reached its zenith, an era marked by "the grand confidence of a heady imperialism," has passed (Weiskel 6). Yet sublime imagery has demonstrated a particular resilience within the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel. This resilience may be explained in part by this sub-genre's twin preoccupations with "land and landscape" and "questions of identity," and it may well be an indication that sublimity has not yet been supplanted by an equally convenient or compelling means of representing shifts in identity (Bordessa 62; 63). Whatever the causes of the sublime's resilience, the ensuing analysis is intended to counter Weiskel's claim that the sublime is "a moribund aesthetic" (6). Though in some senses theoretically outmoded, sublimity retains its relevance as part of an overtly spatialized poetics of identity formation. In what follows I will utilize examples from my group of novels to delineate the various means by which authors invoke the residual sublime before turning to explore some of the reasons for its tenacity.

What I trace in the residual sublime is a learned discourse constituted by a series of rhetorical strategies for conveying shifts in identity. The presence of the residual sublime can be signalled by a myriad of interrelated narrative elements that result from a character's response to nature. At times the residual sublime can take the form of a geographic trope wherein novelists situate characters on the brink of an important life-decision or portentous encounter upon an elevated landform such as a knoll, ridge, bluff, summit, or precipice.

This facet of the residual sublime, which I term vertical parallelism, displays the influence of both the Burkeian and Kantian sublime. It retains from the Burkeian sublime

the precondition that the experience of sublimity entails “our confrontation of danger, although a danger we encounter figuratively, vicariously, in the pleasurable knowledge that we cannot actually be harmed” (Eagleton 54; see also Glickman 43). Such positionings invoke the Kantian sublime in so far as they synchronize the moment that an event of significance to a character’s identity occurs with the moment at which his or her viewing capacity is maximized. Thus a character’s potential for self-alteration and her potential to perceive natural infinitude reach their zenith together.

In *Two Solitudes* MacLennan’s narrator deploys vertical parallelism to represent Athanase Tallard’s pivotal decision to reject traditional *habitant* values by joining forces with Huntly McQueen to build a factory on his ancestral property. This decision is a momentous one for Athanase, who is growing aware of his declining strength and longs to leave some tangible mark of his presence upon the world. McQueen’s plan certainly affords Athanase an opportunity to alter his socio-economic identity from something of a feudal overlord to that of a capitalist. More important for Athanase, however, are the cultural implications of the opportunity McQueen offers; for him, the building of this factory represents what might be his last grand opportunity to give material expression to a forward-looking aspect of his self-understanding that has long been dormant. As a capitalist, Athanase could perform his identity as a progressive Francophone, one who embraces risk and change, and in so doing, displays how thoroughly he has overcome what he perceives to be the “cautious, conservative, [and] static” mindset that has characterized French-Canadians since their defeat at the hands of the British (99). On the other hand, the risks Athanase would undertake in assenting to McQueen’s plan are considerable (as MacLennan’s plot goes on to demonstrate). The factory would rapidly

convert the sleepy parish of Sainte-Marc into a bustling company town, and change inevitably brings resistance, especially from those who accrue most benefit from the status quo—in this case, the Catholic church.

Athanase thinks through his decision while ascending “a bridle path” towards the falls McQueen has identified as the source of the prospective factory’s power (98). After some effort Athanase reaches the apex of his vertical trajectory in arriving at “the place where the gully became precipitous” and “the slopes were at least a hundred feet on either side” (98). From there, we are told, “The falls thundered down before him, a permanent cloud of spray hanging over the cauldron where the water boiled below” (98). As Athanase stands and beholds this view, the narrator informs us that “Suddenly the full force of the idea exploded in his mind” (98). After an extended description in which Athanase “imagine[s] the factory standing in clean lines before him,” he begins his descent, this epiphany having ended his former prevarication: he decides to “tell McQueen of his decision” at the earliest opportunity (99).

Sky Lee’s narrator, Kae Ying Woo, deploys a similar technique to represent the consolidation of a romantic bond between Gwei Chang and Kelora Chen in the prologue to *Disappearing Moon Cafe*. Kelora is the character who rescues Gwei Chang from the mountainous terrain in which he becomes lost during his search for the bones of workers who died building the CPR. Soon after she brings him to her father’s cabin, which sits “high up on the cliff side of a mountain overlooking the water,” Gwei Chang becomes aware of Kelora’s romantic interest in him (5). Though he initially responds to her overtures with confused embarrassment (9), his attitude appears to change rather suddenly. Kae tells us that

One day, Gwei Chang stood on the very edge of the bluff to admire the far-reaching beauty of this tiny spot on earth. The view was breathtaking, like a windy crevice against heaven. It made him dizzy with joy, his toes curled over rock as he pressed his body up against the wind. As the Chinese say, “mountain and water”: the delirious heights and bottomless depths flung him out into the clarity of the sky.

“A view like a soaring eagle’s.” Kelora had followed him, and Gwei Chang could feel her soothing powers reach out for him. He looked at her as she stepped up to the ridge, and she looked at him, and they both smiled down at the world, because they knew then and there that they would fly together. (10)

This passage displays obvious parallels with that from *Two Solitudes* in that the narrator uses vertical parallelism to figure Gwei Chang’s psychic condition spatially; he is not just *physically* situated “on the very edge of the bluff”; his sense of identity also teeters on the brink of transition (10).

Yet, because *Disappearing Moon Cafe* discloses information in a non-linear fashion, some interpretive work is required to explain the shift in identity Gwei Chang undergoes on the bluff. It is through a gradual process of narrative disclosure that Kae reveals her own sense of why the young Gwei Chang is at first reluctant to return Kelora’s romantic advances. When we first encounter him in Kae’s narrative, Gwei Chang occupies a position between two worlds; though located in the mountains of British Columbia, he is “fresh off the boat from China,” and, as such, still enmeshed within the network of social relations that emanate from his home village (12). Of crucial

importance to Gwei Chang's place in this network of social relations is his position as the eldest son of a rural peasant family that struggles for subsistence. This identity brings with it a number of duties; it is Gwei Chang's "duty as the eldest son," for example, to make money in "the Gold Mountains" so that he can support his family (235; 6). After having made good in Canada, Gwei Chang has a further duty to return to his village in China and assume his place within an arranged marriage (235; 27). According to the rules governing his familial and cultural identity, Gwei Chang has no business consolidating a romantic bond with Kelora, let alone formalizing that bond by fulfilling the matrimonial requirements of "Kelora's family of the Shi'atko clan" or producing a child with her (8; 15). Though Gwei Chang eventually follows through with the plan his familial position dictates when he returns to China in 1894 to marry Mui Lan, he avoids these duties for a while (27-8). From 1892 to some time during the latter half of 1894, Gwei Chang performs an alternate identity as Kelora's husband—a man seemingly without conflicting obligations (234). It is his pivotal decision to veer from the trajectory his identity as eldest son proscribes, and to forge an alternate life-path with Kelora, that Gwei Chang reaches on the bluff.

With this fuller context in place, we can readily see how Kae's use of vertical parallelism effaces the complex circumstances that explain Gwei Chang's shift in identity from dutiful son to newly-independent social agent. The residual sublime inferentially deflects the work of identity production away from the social realm. According to Kae's representation of this event, Gwei Chang's shift in identity has nothing to do with his placement within a wide-ranging network of social relations and everything to do with the feelings for Kelora that appear to be catalyzed by his encounter with the natural

sublime. This instance of vertical parallelism performs ideological work in that it mystifies the bond Gwei Chang forges with Kelora; my contextualization of Gwei Chang's situation demonstrates that, contrary to its narrative representation, Gwei Chang's re-alignment of his socio-cultural identity is neither the work of an instant, nor the product of sublime experience. Rather, Gwei Chang's seemingly epiphanic discovery that he and Kelora "would fly together" is the end product of a complex process of psychological negotiation on his part, one informed by social relations that extend beyond both the temporal and spatial context in which this decision is figured.

Though Kae presents us with a classic instance of the vertical parallelism in this scenario, the terms in which she represents Gwei Chang's shift in identity exemplify several other characteristics of the residual sublime. Regardless of one's particular location within nature, the presence of the residual sublime can be signalled by the reaction one has to a given site; a character may experience a sense of vertigo, boundlessness or infinitude before nature, for example. Narrators typically alert readers to such a response on a character's part by suggesting that she can no longer differentiate between herself and that which she gazes upon.

In the passage cited above from *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, for instance, the narrator invokes a rhetoric of infinitude to represent Gwei Chang's reaction to the panorama before him. Kae indicates to us that Chang cannot fix this view within a stable perspective because its impact upon him renders it unframeable: he stands suspended between its "delirious heights and bottomless depths" (10). Here the narrator's use of the adjective "delirious" expresses Chang's apparent inability to distinguish between the scene he gazes upon and his response to it (10). This voice also draws our attention to the

vertiginous character of Chang's response to this site, a response that is described in terms that are simultaneously emotional and physiological—the view, which he finds “breathtaking,” renders him “dizzy with joy” (10).

In a rhetorical move that includes, but goes beyond, instances of vertical parallelism, the presence of the residual sublime can also be signaled by what I term a rhetoric of liminality. Just as characters tend to seek out natural sites at what Tsang calls “limit situation[s]” in their lives, so narrators often focus upon boundaries, thresholds and margins within nature to represent a character’s response to such sites (xx). Thus the rhetoric of liminality describes the narrative tendency to figure a character’s psychic condition through this voice’s choice of descriptive imagery. Kae deploys a rhetoric of liminality in the above passage when she emphasizes Gwei Chang’s situation *between* things. He is, for example, poised between flight and stasis, situated “on the very edge of the bluff,” with his toes “curled over rock” and his body “pressed . . . up against the wind” (10). The narrator also suggests that the pair hovers on the edge of humanity itself; the description of their view invokes both divine and animal imagery. While the narrator figures their view as “a windy crevice against heaven,” she has Kelora liken it to that experienced by “a soaring eagle” (10). Rather than resolve this ambiguous construction of them as both gods and animals, the narrator maintains their place in this ontological border-zone. Just as the capacity for flight is the feature common to both birds and many gods, so Kelora and Gwei Chang are said to have gained a sudden knowledge that they “would fly together” (10).

It is worth noting the inevitable irony Kae perpetuates in this passage, and one that accompanies all narrative invocations of the residual sublime. The sublime is,

formally, that which exceeds our capacity for representation. It *should* be impossible to depict. The level of narrative mediation that characterizes the realist novel makes it an ideal genre for overcoming this problem since the illusion that the character experiencing sublimity cannot represent the scene before him can be maintained by mediating his impressions through the narrator. In Lee's example, for instance, though the narrative voice gives no indication that this locale is somehow unrepresentable in its grandeur—the description itself is managed deftly—this voice suggests that Gwei Chang is rendered speechless by it. He utters not a word, and the knowledge of his sudden identification with Kelora occurs *non-verbally* (though it is, of course, Kae who represents Gwei Chang as silenced).

What I call vertical parallelism shares certain commonalities with what Jacqueline Labb   refers to in *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* as “the prospect view” (ix), a view in which “the poet as seer or observer [is] placed high on an eminence” (x). Labb   argues that “In the Romantic period, many male authors use this posture to indicate both heightened awareness and enlarged vision” (x). In the Romantic poetry she takes as her focus Labb   sees this position as a spatialized expression of power in that it “reflects a superior social position” (xi). Though she acknowledges that the Romantic period is not without its exceptions, Labb   contends that “Achieving the eminence is a privilege of the male writer, an extension of the social privileges his gender brings him” (xii). Although there are narrative instances within my group of novels in which such a posture can be interpreted as connoting patriarchal privilege, such instances do not constitute an overarching trend. Given that novels require a mediating narrative presence, one which can interrogate and resist hegemonic social codes, it is perhaps not

surprising that generalizations about what identity is connoted by Labbé's "prospect view" are harder for me to draw than for Labbé (x). I find the notion of vertical parallelism a more precise term to apply to novelistic depictions of what Labbé calls the prospect view because it draws more explicit attention to the processual, performative aspect of identity formation. While the *view* suggests a stable footing, and by inference a stable subject position, the concept of verticality draws attention to the process of ascent and suggests the precariousness of any subject-position. The significance of this difference in emphasis is borne out within my group of novels.

Even when a posture akin to Labbé's prospect view is assumed by male characters shown to exercise patriarchal authority over others, this position is just as likely to problematize as to signify patriarchal privilege. Though Athanase Tallard's assumption of such a position appears, when examined in isolation, to emphasize his power and agency, this narrative tableau comes to resonate with irony as we read on in MacLennan's text and witness Athanase's progressive loss of power, agency, and health at the hands of McQueen and the Catholic church.

Ostenso's narrator deploys vertical parallelism to a similar end in the third chapter of *Wild Geese*, where we encounter Caleb Gare on "a ridge from which he could look east and west, north and south, upon the land that was his . . ." (19). From here Caleb contemplates not only his holdings in land, but also the complex power dynamic he must maintain in order to perpetuate his performance as Oeland's tyrannical patriarch. While Caleb allows himself "a glow of satisfaction" as he stands contemplating his social and spatial holdings, he also guards against complacency by recognizing the contingency of

his power and privilege: "He could hold all this, and more," he reminds himself, "as long as he held the whip hand over Amelia" (19).

Though this incident would seem to constitute a classic example of how the "prospect view" can be used to connote male authority, Osteno's narrator actually utilizes it to foreshadow the undermining of Caleb's authority (Labbé x). This is achieved by a kind of narrative enjambment that integrates the second and third chapters of *Wild Geese*. In the concluding paragraphs of chapter two, the narrator situates the figure of the newly arrived teacher at the upper story window of Caleb's home to take in the view. Having found herself "restless in her new surroundings," we are told, Lind waits "until the girl [Jude] was asleep beside her" and then "kne[els] at her window and look[s] out into the night" (18). Thus Osteno's second chapter ends with Lind in firm possession of the narrative gaze: as she looks out, we are told, "there was still a pale glow from the sunset, and the land stretched out black and remote under it" (18). When chapter three begins by stating that "Far out across the prairie a lantern was swinging low along the earth, and dimly visible was the squat, top-heavy form of a man," it seems plausible—if not probable—that Lind remains in possession of the narrative gaze as she watches the man who is quickly identified as "Caleb Gare" ascend to his ridge (18).

Though Osteno's narrator leaves open the question of who is in possession of this narrative gaze, the symbolic resonance of these juxtaposed gazes is hard to ignore. While Caleb stands upon the ridge thinking through the trajectory of his power, the singularity of his visual command is being undermined by the gaze of the one figure for whom his calculations have failed to account. Caleb Gare, who time and again proves himself a master of surveillance, here finds himself unwittingly fixed in the gaze of the

other whose presence will play so integral a part in ending his reign of terror over his family, and indeed Oeland.<sup>8</sup> What first seems to be a classic instance of a “prospect view” connoting Caleb’s patriarchal authority appears, when examined within a fuller narrative context, to suggest the precariousness of this authority. As is typical of vertical parallelism, Caleb’s placement upon a ridge does not symbolize the stability of his identity but, rather, in its capacity to foreshadow his eventual fall from social eminence, its instability.

Though I caution against associating vertical parallelism with any one subject-position, what can be said, at least with regard to the realist novels I examine here, is that such postures tend to alert us to a character’s momentary *narrative* privilege because they provide a means by which narrators signal to readers that an event of significance to a character’s identity is about to occur. In an incident that displays the same prophetic properties as those demonstrated by the competing glances of Lind and Caleb, Lind Archer first encounters the figure of her future husband, Mark Jordan, “from the top of [a] sharp ridge where the forks of three roads met” (47). Though Lind has no knowledge of the significance of this event, the narrator clearly does and uses the residual sublime to provide readers with a portent of the future union of these two strangers. It should be noted in this instance, however, that the narrator’s use of cartographic imagery also plays a part in drawing readerly attention to the incident: roadways often evoke the theme of choice, and, thus, draw attention to the opening up or closing down of a character’s potential agency.

The case of Lind Archer demonstrates that even in the earliest of the novels investigated here (first published in 1925) vertical parallelism is not the exclusive

preserve of male characters. On three occasions, Osteno's narrator situates Lind in locales distinguished by their relative height. And in keeping with the characteristics of vertical parallelism, in all three of these instances Lind is situated in locales distinguished by their relative height and expanded view to entertain lofty thoughts, thoughts of significance either to her marital or metaphysical identity. Just as she first sees Mark Jordan from atop a "sharp ridge," so Osteno's narrator situates Lind upon "a little green mound overlooking a marsh of marigolds" to entertain grandmother Bjarnasson's auguring that she "will have a lover very soon" (72-3; 45). And similarly, it is when Lind and Mark are located upon "a little sunny knoll at the edge of Gare's timber" that Lind comes to ponder the infinite dynamism of being and the degree of agency we can exercise over this life-force (127-8).

Yet Lind Archer is not just any character: she is an educated and comparatively urbane figure who comes to Oeland with no long-term commitment to stay. Because of her status as something of an elite outsider, Lind enjoys a greater freedom from Oeland's hegemonic rules of social decorum that do other female characters in *Wild Geese*. Given these factors, it seems hard to escape the conclusion that Osteno associates Lind with sites of vertical elevation in order to suggest (whether consciously or not) her elevated *social* status within Oeland.

And this point is only strengthened by contrast with Jude, who seeks out an "earthy place," which she accesses by travelling "through the bush to a little ravine where a pool had gathered below the thread of a spring," when she requires a place for quiet thought or meetings with her lover (54; 53; 114; 149; 164-5). Though the residual sublime is invoked as a means of articulating aspects of Jude's identity on all four

occasions when she visits this spot, Osteno relies on techniques other than vertical parallelism to do so.

It is in this “earthy place,” for example, that Osteno’s narrator deploys the residual sublime to posit Jude’s relation to an extra-human force, a force she believes has articulated her identity as an individual distinct from the Gares (54). Lying naked upon the ground, Jude becomes conscious of her place upon an earth that seems newly alive to her, “as if it might have a heart and mind hidden here in the woods” (53). Jude initially looks to her own body to explain her sudden consciousness of “something forbiddingly beautiful,” but concludes that “there was something beyond this. She could feel it in the freeness of the air, in the depth of the earth” (53):

Under her body there were, she had been taught, eight thousand miles of earth. On the other side, what? Above her body there were leagues and leagues of air, leading like wings—to what? The marvellous confusion and complexity of all the world had singled her out from the rest of the Gares. She was no longer one of them. (53)

The relationship between identity formation and sublime experience is replicated with particular force and rigor in this passage. Jude’s engagement of sublime experience begins when she attempts to assess her physical situation upon the surface of the earth: she imagines herself lying between “eight thousand miles of earth” and “leagues and leagues of air” (53). Yet Jude rapidly acknowledges her incapacity to imagine the extremities of the earth’s atmosphere—“on the other side, what?”; “leagues and leagues of air, leading like wings—to what?” she wonders (53). Her failure of imagination does not defeat Jude; rather, as in the Kantian sublime, this encounter with boundlessness

catalyzes her intuitive awareness of being related to a force beyond herself. And it is this force, figured as “the marvelous confusion and complexity of all the world,” which Jude imbues with the capacity to have individuated her as a subject with a unique identity: it “had singled her out from the rest of the Gares. She was no longer one of them” (53).

Of course Jude does not just *happen upon* sublime experience; rather, she seeks it out for very particular reasons. Sublimity provides a means by which Jude can placate the sense of guilt she feels for wanting “to escape, to fly from something—she kn[ows] not what. Caleb . . . Ellen . . . the farm, the hot reek of manure in the stable . . .” (53). Up to this point in the narrative Jude has repressed her desire to sever her identification with her family out of consideration for her mother’s welfare. As the narrator explains, “Always pity stood in the way of the tide of violence she felt could break from her. Pity for Amelia, who would get what Caleb did not dare mete out to her, Judith” (53).

The sudden arrival of Lind Archer provides an opportunity for Jude to break the cycle of desire and repression that has thus far stilled her rebellious impulses. Lind’s appearance effectively breaks the orthodoxy of Caleb’s regime for Jude because it provides her with living proof that her present mode of existence is not inevitable. Through Lind’s example Jude perceives that a different mode of being in the world is indeed possible; through Lind’s attentions Jude begins to wonder if she herself is not worthy of a less arduous, and more aesthetically pleasing, lifestyle.

But this is not how *Jude* interprets the effect of Lind’s arrival because it is not in her interests to do so; such a reading does nothing to break the pattern of anger and pity that sustains Caleb’s power over Jude. Instead, Jude mystifies the teacher’s sudden appearance as a means of deflecting responsibility for her desire to leave away from

herself and onto an external source over which—by definition—she has no control.

According to Jude, Lind's arrival constitutes demonstrable proof that Jude has been recognized as different by a force whose existence she can only intuit through sublime experience. For, as is seen when I continue the quotation provided above, Jude directly relates the articulation of her identity as an individual to Lind's arrival:

The marvellous confusion and complexity of all the world had singled her out from the rest of the Gares. She was no longer one of them. Lind Archer had come and her delicate fingers had sprung a secret lock in Jude's being. She had opened like a tight bud. There was no going back now into the darkness. (53)

Just as Christ is interpreted by Christians as a perceptible sign of God's existence, so Jude reads Lind's arrival as evidence of the existence of a force she can neither comprehend nor even fully imagine, but a force she knows, through Lind's singular effect upon her, has destined her for a lot different from the rest of the Gares.<sup>9</sup>

It is hardly surprising that Jude's desire to escape the farm leads to the rapid intensification of her relationship with Sven Sandbo. As an uneducated young woman without independent means it is virtually inevitable that Jude would fix her sights on the one figure who expresses an overt romantic interest in her and who has demonstrated his ability to survive on his own outside of Oeland. Yet it is precisely because Sven is the most logical means by which Jude can actualize her desire for escape that she has reason to question whether her attachment to him derives from love or expedience. And indeed, she may have cause for this questioning. When Jude's initial foray into sublime experience awakened her to a profound sense of her own freedom, she questioned the

strength of her attachment to her childhood sweetheart: "Was it Sven she wanted, now that she was so strangely free," she asked herself (53). Under these circumstances her response was less than enthusiastic: "something beyond Sven, perhaps. . . . freedom, freedom" (53). In the more sober light her daily existence reflects back to her, however, Sven appears as Jude's only realistic means of getting to "a more profuse place, where life was like silk, and she belonged there" (113).

Jude's sense that she is destined for better things places her in a quandary that sublime experience is well equipped to resolve. Because she is too idealistic a character to accept Sven's marriage proposal out of pragmatic need, Jude requires some means of assuring herself that her relationship with Sven, like her alternate existence, is meant to be. Having successfully utilized sublime experience to persuade herself that she is meant for another life, it is logical that Jude should again look to this technique to assure herself that her identification with Sven is similarly destined. Jude attempts to gain this assurance by constructing her bond with Sven as a phenomenon that lies outside the bounds of representation. Thus by enacting one of the symptoms of sublime experience—being rendered speechless—Jude attempts to prove to herself that her relationship with Sven is sanctioned by a force greater than themselves.

Jude exhibits the first symptoms of this desire when she meets Sven "At the spring where weeks before she had lain on the ground with her clothing in a heap beside her . . ." (114). It is here, at the site where sublime experience first enabled her to articulate her difference from the Gares, that she and Sven are said to have

sat down together beside the water-hole and listened to the insects in the air humming of rain. Judith placed her hands over Sven's mouth when he started to speak.

"Don't!" she whispered. "You can hear the clouds move!" (114)

In this instance Sven complies with Jude's desire: "They sat in silence," we are told, "and listened to the close, forboding [sic] stir above and around them" (114). That the sensual details they focus upon foreshadow the coming of more than rain is inferred when Sven's patience is rewarded by a firm commitment from Jude: "'I will go with you after the haying,' she told him" (114).

In the second, instance in which Jude attempts to consecrate her relationship with Sven by replicating the effects of sublime experience, her confused lover offers more resistance. On this occasion Jude precedes Sven to the spring. Finding herself alone, she appears to ritualistically prepare herself for sublime experience by repeating the same actions that preceded her first encounter with sublimity. Though she does not cast aside all of her clothing, she does remove her "heavy overalls," thus allowing "the coolness of the ground [to creep] into her loose clothing" (149). After this, the narrator tells us that

she threw herself upon the moss under the birches, grasping the slender trunks of the trees in her hands and straining her body against the earth. . .

The light from the setting sun seemed to run down the smooth white bark of the birches like gilt. There was no movement, except the narrow trickle of the water from the spring, and the occasional flare of a bird above the brown depth of the pool. There was no sound save the tuning of the frogs in the marsh that seemed far away, and the infrequent call of a catbird on

the wing. Here was clarity undreamed of, such clarity as the soul should have, in desire and fulfillment. Judith held her breasts in ecstasy. (149)

It is not just the narrative construction of Jude's response to nature as ecstatic that signals the presence of the residual sublime here; it is also invoked by the profusion of descriptive imagery itself. This mode of representation (ironically) attempts to signal by its very abundance the apparent unrepresentability of the natural scene it constructs.

Peter de Bolla identifies this profuseness as the key characteristic of sublime discourse, a discourse that he argues is "self-transforming" in "its propensity to produce to excess" (12).

Because she has taken the necessary steps to sensitize herself to sublimity, Jude believes that the stage is set for a sublime consecration of her bond with her lover. Sven enters the scene and we are told that Jude

saw him for a moment in the light with the long shadow stripes of the birches falling upon him. In that moment he came to her as a god, out of space. Judith did not move and he came and looked down at her.

"Why don't you say something, Judie?" he finally asked querulously, "I never know what you're thinking about."

Judith flushed with disappointment. She sprang up.

"Oh—you," she said hotly. "Why do I always have to *say* something? Isn't it enough for you that I'm here at all?" (149)

Because Sven fails to intuit Jude's desire for a sublime encounter between herself and the lover who "came to her as a god," Jude is forced to abandon her desire to construct their

relationship as unrepresentable. This technique having failed, she is left little choice but to verbally communicate her sense of their shared otherness:

“I thought you might know—” her breast rose quickly. . . .you’ve got to learn to be like me. There’s something in me you don’t know. Nobody knows—in here. We’re going off somewhere—far away, you and I. We’re goin’—going—to be somebody else, great people, like you read about. . . .We’re going to be different, not like people round here, Sven, or even in the town you worked in. We’re going away, across the ocean, maybe. Aren’t we, Sven?” (150).

What Jude had hoped to reap from her willed engagement of sublime experience was the assurance that Sven, too, had sensed his status as an individual singled out “by the marvellous confusion and complexity of all the world” (53). As Jude’s explanation makes clear, it was her hope that, having gleaned their shared difference from those they live amongst, Sven would have joined her in viewing their departure from Oeland as an inevitable result of this separateness. Instead, Jude is forced to verbally perform the work of identity formation she had hoped the natural sublime would enact silently by exhibiting, rather than proclaiming, their difference.

It is worth noting how Osteno draws attention to Jude’s awareness that sublime experience is a social strategy for producing identity as a natural attribute. Jude would have preferred to draw Sven into an encounter with the residual sublime as a means of (supposedly) *displaying* their social distinction to him. Once this strategy fails, however, Jude readily reveals her knowledge that such distinction is not a natural attribute, but an effect achieved by a consistent social performance; not something they *are*, in other

words, but something they are “going to be” (150). And Jude is determined to master the appropriate behaviours of her desired identity: even in her overwrought condition, she takes care to correct her grammar.

The examples provided by Jude’s various attempts to reconstitute her selfhood in the “earthy place” by the spring serve as a useful reminder that a symbolic relation between state of mind and geographic locality such as that articulated within vertical parallelism is not a necessary component of the residual sublime (54). Subjectivity remains the standard by which sublime experience is gauged. As Alasdair MacIntyre tells us, “It is not what properties that object has, but the situation in which it is encountered that renders it . . . interpretable” as sublime (ix). In what is perhaps the most “abridged” instance of the residual sublime, the constitution of the sublime “object” requires nothing more than the will to produce a transparent space that satisfies a desire for infinitude (Weiskel 6). It was Northrop Frye who alerted me to the significance of what I term, after him, “the faraway look.” In his conclusion to the *Literary History of Canada*, Frye suggests that “It would be interesting to know how many Canadian novels associate nobility of character with a faraway look, or base their perorations on a long-range perspective” (828). Though I follow Frye’s lead in examining this particular poetic of identity formation, I look to different sources to explain the phenomenon. While I interpret this technique as another emanation of the sublime’s enduring influence upon the way we represent processes of identity formation (an influence that need not be delimited by national borders), Frye sees it as “something that Canadian sensibility has inherited from the *voyageurs*” (828).

The faraway look is one in which a character fixes her gaze on the far distance. But ironically, the most frequent effect of such a look is to signal the intensity and significance of the character's gaze *inward*. The focus of this introspection is almost always a facet of the self's identity and its relation to the social world, a world this look constitutes as external to the self. Though the faraway look requires no particular geographic landform through which to figure subjectivity, it is a trope nonetheless; in this instance of the residual sublime, the seemingly unbounded depth of the subject's outward gaze into nature acts as a spatial metaphor conveying the infinitude of subjectivity itself.

When deployed in the presence of another, the faraway look is a narrative technique that, at the most general level, conveys to one's interlocutors or to a reading audience a disjunction between a character's sense of self and another's knowledge of him. More particularly, there are instances in which this narrative device provides a sophisticated means of expressing a character's sense of internal fracture, his inability to integrate two facets of his identity within a consistent performance. In such circumstances the faraway look is a narrative means of managing incoherence in so far as it enables a narrator to express through language a sense of this medium's inability to express certain complex states of subjectivity. Such instances foreground the inherent irony of narrative invocations of the residual sublime: while the faraway look suggests that actions speak louder than words, such actions must, of course, be described to the reader through language.

In *Obasan*, for example, Naomi utilizes this facet of the faraway look to describe her brother Stephen's response to the news of their father's death. Naomi tells us that on the night Nakayama-sensei visits to convey this news Stephen comes to retrieve her from

the swamp where she has been playing. "Stephen squats beside me," Naomi tells us, "and seems about to say something several times but stops. He looks at me, then off in the distance frowning" (205).

Stephen's several failed attempts at speech, followed by his "frowning" look into the distance, metaphorically convey his inability to resolve a conflict arising from a sense that he is required to perform two incompatible facets of his identity simultaneously (205). For one, the fact that Stephen looks "off in the distance *frowning*" suggests his dissatisfaction at finding that, after several attempts at speech, he is unable to communicate verbally (205, emphasis added). While Stephen's persistent *attempts* to speak signal his awareness that he, as Naomi's closest living relative and her only sibling, is expected to disclose the news of their father's death to Naomi, Stephen's frown signals his displeasure at having failed to meet his obligations as her older brother. And it is the obligations that accompany the second, conflictual identity Stephen must perform—that of bereaved son—which leave him with only non-verbal means of conveying his knowledge of his fraternal obligations to his sister. With his faraway look Stephen conveys to Naomi the inexpressibility of their new identity as fatherless children; his decision to forgo speech and instead engage the far distance displays Stephen's sense that the vastness of their loss can only be conveyed through its construction as sublime, a mode of self-expression which dictates that he fall silent before the enormity of his news.

Kogawa's narrator deploys the faraway look to a similar end during the scene in which Naomi and her Aunt Emily are engaged in a late-night conversation in Granton. After her Obasan and Uncle have gone to bed, Naomi wonders aloud to Emily, "What do you think happened to Mother and Grandma in Japan?" (186). Emily, whom we later

learn is painfully aware of the fates these women suffered as victims of the bombing of Nagasaki, first registers a “startle [that] was so swift and subtle it barely registered” (186). Emily’s more overt response to what Naomi reads as a “beam of pain” her Aunt “extinguished immediately” is to engage in a faraway look: “She stared into the blackness,” Naomi tells us (186).

In this context the faraway look is used as a means of expressing Emily’s inability to meet the social demands that arise from two conflictual aspects of her identity. Barring the option of outright deceit, such an internal blockage can only be expressed through silence. The identity Emily prefers to perform publicly is strongly informed by her belief in confronting and redressing historical wrong-doings; we learn somewhat later in the narrative that Emily has long wanted to inform Naomi and Stephen of the shared fate of their mother and grandmother, but has always deferred to the wishes of Uncle and Obasan, who want to protect “the children” from this information (219). Naomi’s sudden and direct question to her Aunt throws Emily into a momentary identity crisis; while her adult self demands full disclosure, this dictate is in direct conflict with the demands of Emily’s familial identity. Finding herself momentarily bereft of a coherent identity to perform, Emily turns to the sky.

Emily’s faraway look is a remarkably efficient means of conveying several aspects of her subjectivity in this context. For one, it expresses her desire to escape the social realm and the conflicting demands it presses upon her by fixing her gaze on the only available parcel of *nature* at her immediate disposal—that piece of the sky visible through the kitchen’s screen door (186). (It is no coincidence that Emily’s next vocal gesture is to suggest a walk (186)). Emily’s faraway look also recalls Stephen’s earlier

one; the vastness of the prairie sky provides a fit correlative for the enormity of the grief Naomi's question has called to the surface of Emily's mind. Her faraway look also allows Emily to give some expression to the moral paradox she finds herself suspended within (as if all paradoxes were ultimately resolved through a large enough perspective). And lastly, this faraway look provides a means by which Emily can acknowledge to herself the communicational blockage that has risen between Aunt and niece without hurting the vulnerable Naomi.

As the two scenarios from *Obasan* suggest, the faraway look does not so much convey a character's unwillingness to communicate as it does the presence of an impediment that arises from a character's inability to negotiate two facets of her or his identity. Though neither Stephen nor Aunt Emily manages to resolve the internal conflicts that keep them from speech, the faraway look need not signal a verbal impasse between interlocutors. In *Fall on Your Knees*, for example, the faraway look is deployed as a means of facilitating a difficult verbal exchange between two characters.

MacDonald's narrator brings the faraway look into play towards the end of the novel as James Piper, having been morally transformed as a result of a stroke, determines to make his peace with his daughter Francis. At this point in the novel Francis has spent a good deal of her young life attempting to piece together a coherent narrative of the events of the fateful evening her elder sister died giving birth to twins. It was Francis, herself a child at the time, who discovered her dead sister and the babies by themselves in the attic. Being determined to baptize the infants, Francis inadvertently drowns the male child before being discovered by her father. James long wondered how to interpret Francis's seemingly inexplicable actions but, riddled with guilt at his own complicity in

these tragic events, he allowed his hostility towards his daughter to grow in proportion with Francis's burgeoning need to formulate an adult understanding of this formative evening.

Yet all this changes after James's stroke. Shortly before his death, James is impelled to confess to Francis his role in this complex scenario. Francis, having herself become pregnant as a means of making reparations for the child she drowned, is sitting alone on the veranda one afternoon when, with no forewarning, her father "looks off at nothing in particular and starts talking" (433). The narrator tells us that Francis "doesn't look at him. She knows he will fly away if she does that" (433). The trouble the older James encounters while he grapples with his former identity as a sexually abusive father is suggested both by his inability to meet Francis's gaze and by the difficulty with which he tells his tale. "It takes six days," we are told: "Mercedes leaves them each morning on the veranda and every afternoon she sees them when she returns up the street. It's as though they hadn't moved . . . They look so peaceful sitting side by side with their eyes settled on separate pieces of sky" (433-4). James deploys a faraway look in his efforts to integrate two seemingly irreconcilable facets of his identity (as was the case with both Stephen Nakane and Emily from *Obasan*). In this instance James struggles to negotiate a narrative route between his present, beneficent identity and his former, abusive one.

More specifically, James's faraway look provides a means by which he can resolve a paradox that frustrates his efforts to communicate. While Francis's presence is what renders James's negotiation of this narrative route meaningful—his confession is driven by his desire to help Francis come to peace with her inadvertent infanticide—her presence is also the largest impediment to this process. It is a far greater challenge to

acknowledge a socially despised identity before another than to acknowledge it to oneself. And Francis's proximity cannot help but signify the presence of the social. By engaging in a faraway look James comes closest to resolving his paradoxical need both to have Francis present and to keep the presence of the social at bay. The faraway look opens up a seemingly asocial space within which James can shelter his ego from society's scorn while he negotiates the requisite narrative path his conscience demands he traverse.

The example of James Piper demonstrates how the faraway look can invoke the individuating metaphysic of the sublime in its tendency to signify a character's desire to keep the social world, with its capacities to judge, delimit, and undermine our self-constructions and self-perceptions, at a manageable distance. As was the case with James, this look can signify a character's attention to a seemingly transparent space of selfhood, a more malleable, forgiving, and extensive realm wherein our capacity to acknowledge aspects of our self-understanding repressed by social constraints can range freely over the infinitude of individuated consciousness.

As a technique that addresses the tension between interiority and exteriority, the faraway look can at times reveal a narrator's implicit reliance on the construct of authenticity: it is a narrative strategy that can suggest the existence of a real identity that a character hides while masquerading as another self. Osteno's narrator demonstrates this facet of the faraway look in *Wild Geese* when Amelia is confronted by the sudden knowledge that the son she conceived out of wedlock with Del Jordan is living in Oeland. It is Lind Archer who announces to Amelia, with no knowledge of Amelia's relation to her new romantic interest, "I've been riding with a most interesting man, and a handsome one, too" (67). Because Amelia believes she knows every man living in Oeland, she asks

Lind his name and is told, "Jordan—Mark Jordan" (67). "Amelia paused for a moment," we are told, "as if she were staring at something in the dark pasture beyond the fence" (67).

Not only does Amelia's faraway look draw the reader's attention to the radical gap in knowledge that separates Amelia's and Lind's sense of what is at stake in Lind's disclosure, it also reinvokes our knowledge of Amelia's seemingly true identity as a woman of a more elevated social class than she now occupies, a woman whom Caleb has blackmailed into masquerading as "a farm woman" (26). As Amelia herself recalls, there was a time when she had worn "silks," when "She had been a girl . . . not like her own daughters, but like Lind Archer" (71; 35).

Though Lind never suspects Amelia's seemingly *true* identity as a woman who, like her fiance, is "not a farm hand by nature," she comes closest to doing so when she catches Amelia unawares engaging in a faraway look. It is when "Lind had awakened early one morning and had looked out from her window to see Amelia staring with transfixed eyes at the dawn—or something beyond the dawn" that the teacher questions the authenticity of the everyday identity Amelia performs (26). As she watches Amelia, Lind muses to herself that "it was not like a farm woman to do that" (26). It is worth noting that it is only in *Wild Geese*, the earliest of the novels I investigate here, that the faraway look is deployed to convey social distinction.

### **Section Three: Tracing the Ideological and Psychological Work Enabled by the Residual Sublime**

Having now demonstrated what I see as some the most significant means by which twentieth-century Canadian realist novels invoke the presence of the residual sublime, I now want to turn to a more direct investigation of some of the ideological and psychological work the residual sublime enables. I begin by picking up on a point I introduced earlier: towards the end of section one I argued that the Kantian sublime retains its relevance to contemporary understandings of identity formation despite its denial of the role the social plays in such processes. Though I still maintain that this denial of the social represents perhaps the most fundamental means by which the Kantian sublime differs from contemporary understandings of identity formation, I now want to suggest that part of the reason sublime experience remains relevant to fictional depictions of identity formation is precisely *because* of this denial. In a sense the ascension of the role of the social within contemporary understandings of identity formation has effectively depersonalized identity. That which seems most intimately our own—our sense of selfhood—must, upon reflection, be acknowledged as the dynamic product of social forces largely beyond our control, and thus as something disturbingly alien to us. This is not the case within the Kantian sublime, in which the subject of aesthetic judgement trades “one absolute self-identity for another” (Eagleton 92). Because identity formation appears within the sublime as an asocial event that produces an autonomous, self-identical subject, invoking elements of sublime experience is a convenient means of

effacing, and at times even of repressing, the formative role the social plays in processes of identity production.

This is not to suggest that my group of authors always represent identity as the asocial product of individual consciousness. Rather, the presence of the residual sublime frequently leaves these novels open to two mutually incompatible interpretations of how characters constitute their identities. While realist novels almost always include evidence that enables critics to demonstrate that characters constitute their identities through interactions with others, many of the novels I am working with resist, or at least supplement, this interpretation by proffering a second means of understanding shifts in identity. In this second mode, identity appears less as a relational and transient product of social interaction than as the (relatively) stable product of quasi-mystical rites of passage in which seemingly autonomous subjects interact with seemingly asocial forces of nature. This epiphanic mode of identity formation has already been seen at work in some of the examples utilized to demonstrate characteristics of the residual sublime. I think in particular of the shift in identity Gwei Chang undergoes on the edge of the bluff with Kelora and of the sudden conviction Jude gains of her difference from the Gares as she lies by the spring (Lee 10; Ostenson 53). In the two final examples I will examine here, I want to focus upon two particular aspects of the epiphanic mode of identity formation. First, I will examine how the residual sublime enables characters (and narrators) to occlude the role of the social in representing shifts in identity. Second, I will interrogate the motivations for desocializing the process of identity formation—what psychological work is accomplished by effacing the role of the social in such processes?

The first of these two instances is from Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* and occurs to Kae during the narrative year of 1968 in the chapter entitled "Identity Crisis" (160). The identity crisis Kae narrates in this chapter involves a two-step process whereby she severs her identification with Morgan as both a lover and intellectual rôle-model and goes on to achieve a condition of seeming self-identity. These processes are drawn together in that they both occur during a summer adventure that begins with Kae's sudden decision to drive from Vancouver to New York in order to seek out her uncle.

Kae retrospectively constructs this trip as a "quest" that "changed [her] life," an adventure during which she claims she "grew up suddenly" (162). The chain of events that ends in Kae's sudden transition is triggered by the most mundane of activities. Bored and restless, Kae is washing the '64 mustang she recently received as a high-school graduation present and "thinking about the long, hot, empty summer. Thinking about university in the fall. Thinking about going out to find a summer job . . ." (161). It is in this state that she decides to take her new car out for a drive (161).

Kae suggests that it is through the experience of driving that she gains the impetus to undertake her quest, an impetus that derives from an instance of what Joseph Tabbi calls *The Postmodern Sublime*. As Tabbi explains, the postmodern sublime names a contemporary variant of sublime experience found in "postmodern writing" in which the role nature typically fulfills within the Kantian sublime is replaced by "a technological process" (ix). The technological process at play in this scenario is the sensation of mechanized speed Kae experiences while driving her car. She tells us that "Driving it out on the open highway was such a pleasure, I discovered sheer ecstasy in the car's hypnotic rhythm of freedom. It was like something unthrottled in my head, and the vehicle flew

through space that wasn't distance and didn't matter any more. The TransCanada a satin ribbon trance. It beckoned me on and on" (161). Kae represents this experience as sublime through several means. She certainly stresses the transcendent quality of mechanized speed: through the car's "hypnotic rhythm" she discovers "sheer ecstasy" (161). This experience also transforms former constraints into novel potentialities; just as the speed of the vehicle alters Kae's sense of space as a delimiter of distance, so her sense of consciousness is enhanced—"something unthrottled in my head," she reports, and, by so doing, displays the sublime's tendency to blur the distinction between the subject of sublime experience and the so-called sublime object. And finally, as in the Kantian sublime, Kae attempts to apprehend infinitude, if only the infinitude of her own desire to perpetuate this experience: the "satin ribbon trance" of the highway beckons her "on and on" (161).

Having been "beckoned" all the way to New York City, Kae finds Morgan, or at least his "stewed carcass" (162). When I examine the events that occur in New York retrospectively, it appears that Kae arrived hoping to mark two rites of passage with Morgan: the sexual consummation of her relationship with the man she tells us she "loved" and the imparting of "her most precious secret"—her desire to "be a writer" (160; 161). Though both experiences occur, neither brings Kae the kind of epiphany she expects; as she puts it, "I'd driven three thousand miles, six days of speedometer fatigue, to sit on barstools with him, filthy cavelike arches over us" (160). In her sexual relations with Morgan, Kae comes to understand that his fascination with her is only a manifestation of his unresolved feelings regarding Suzie's death (161; 166). Though she confesses to Morgan her ambition to write, he greets this intimacy with embittered

cynicism, “his lips smeared with venom” (161). Not surprisingly, Kae’s time with Morgan ends in a shouting match that concludes when she finds herself, “half-dressed and [her] suitcase half-packed, thrown out on the filthy stairwell” (166).

According to Kae’s narrative reconstruction of events, it is on the drive from New York back to Vancouver that she suddenly comes to realize that she has undergone a shift in identity. As if she has experienced a radical alteration in selfhood without warning or conscious awareness, Kae comes to discover that her “quest” has transformed her from a high-school graduate with a crush on her uncle to the writer we encounter in her narrative (162). She sums up the experience as follows:

I don’t know how much of Morgan I found left in the stewed carcass I met, but at the end of my quest I found somebody else in my place. Somebody who was more enduring than I, more inquisitive, even when the truth stung. Somebody who could log the thoughts I didn’t even know I had in me. Somebody powerful, who stood alone on the edge of a great expansive wheat field, with the morning sun at her back, watching a new rising, a new life roll hill upon hill in from infinity. Weeping as wave after wave of sweet-scented wind blew crisp and clean through my soul.

(162)

Though Kae implies that the characteristics of inquisitiveness, endurance and power she lists merely describe the capacities of the “somebody else,” whom she discovers, *post facto*, “in [her] place,” I contend that this passage constitutes a narrative production of a new Kae (162). The residual sublime’s identity-producing capacity is demonstrated with particular clarity in this passage. While it begins with Kae’s representation of herself as a

divided subject, one who stands apart from the “somebody else” who now occupies “[her] place,” by its conclusion the narrative voice has cast out the remnants of the relatively disempowered and unenduring former self who entered into this “quest” and come to identify solely with the newer, stronger, braver Kae (162). It is a self-identical narrative voice that recalls to us the experience of having wept “as wave after wave of sweet-scented wind blew crisp and clean through my soul” (162).

There is no question that Kae’s representation of this event meets our expectations of residually sublime experience. The rhetoric of liminality is apparent in Kae’s location of herself “on the edge of a great expanse of wheat field” and in her choice of temporal context: she greets her new self with the coming of a new dawn (162). We also find the expected reference to infinitude here, as well as evidence of the kind of “self-transforming” narrative excess de Bolla associates with the discourse of the sublime (12).

What I want to focus attention upon at present is the psychological work Kae presses the residual sublime into performing here. The nature of this work begins to emerge when I question what bearing Kae’s experience in the wheat field has on her shift in identity. Why is it that, in narrating her final, emotionally laden encounter with Morgan, Kae lends the residual sublime such a pivotal role in altering her identity? I would suggest that the residual sublime makes such an unexpected appearance at this point in Kae’s narrative because it furthers her desire to repress her knowledge of the highly social origin of her shift in identity, and to deny her knowledge of the ineradicable mark Morgan has left on her selfhood. Feeling shame at having been the instigating party in an incestuous liaison, at having exposed her “most precious secret” to an cynical alcoholic in a “filthy” bar, at having been thrown, “half-dressed,” onto a “filthy

stairwell,” Kae wants nothing more than to cleanse herself of all traces of the man she formally identified with, but has come to find “disgusting” (160; 166). In its capacity to manufacture sudden shifts in identity, the residual sublime furthers Kae’s desire to re-draw the boundaries of her selfhood and to place Morgan safely on the exterior of a self that the residual sublime enables her to consecrate as new.

It is not that the residual sublime allows Kae to deny outright the role Morgan has played in the “quest” that “changed [her] life” (162). Rather, it lends Kae a degree of psychological and temporal control over Morgan’s role in her life: any informing influence he exercised was over the old Kae, a self now irretrievably behind her (162). By staging an epiphanic moment of self-transformation in the solitude of a seemingly asocial nature Kae fulfills her desire to deny the unsavory trace Morgan has left on her being.

What makes Kae’s “identity crisis” a uniquely salient demonstration of the residual sublime’s continuing legacy is the fact that *Disappearing Moon Cafe* constitutes a forthright attempt to deny that identity-production is a phenomenon the individual can exercise singular control over. Kae’s narrative re-production of her self as a subject purged of Morgan’s contaminating influence contradicts her overarching desire to convey through her storytelling strategy the sense in which “an individual is not an individual at all,” but rather the dynamic product of social interaction and historical embeddedness (189). It is this more socialized and processual vision of identity formation that Hermia comes closest to articulating when she asks Kae if her narrative strategy implies that “individuals must gather their identity from all the generations that touch them—past and present, no matter how slightly?” (189).

Kae's experience in the wheat field is not, of course, the only appearance the residual sublime makes in *Disappearing Moon Cafe*: we encountered this strategy of identity-production in the text's prologue in section one when I discussed the shift in identity Gwei Chang undergoes, via vertical parallelism, on the bluff with Kelora. Because Gwei Chang's alteration in self-understanding was mediated via Kae's voice and consciousness, however, I could not conclude that the understanding of identity formation implied by this scenario contradicted that which Hermia articulates in her question to Kae. I had to (and must still) consider the possibility that Kae invokes the residual sublime self-consciously at this early point in her narrative representation of Gwei Chang's past: she could have her own reasons for purposefully pressing this rhetorical technique into service.

Kae could, for instance, have deployed the residual sublime in her prologue because she sensed the psychological work it could perform in managing the guilt Gwei Chang must surely have felt in retrospectively reviewing his decision to remain with Kelora, and a badly paid job, while his family in China depended upon him for succor. In this case, Kae's invocation of the residual sublime would not reveal her own investment in the understanding of identity this phenomenon depends upon, but would rather reveal her intuition that Gwei Chang might well have found the residual sublime a convenient moral refuge because it would allow him to displace the agency for his decision onto a force seemingly beyond his sway. It is certainly true that, by representing his decision as the product of an encounter with the natural sublime, Gwei Chang could suggest that his moment of identification with Kelora was the product of an unthinking moment when

nature's aesthetic power overwhelmed his better judgement and, by so doing, made a difficult moral decision appear as the inevitable course of action.

But the residual sublime's appearance in Kae's encounter with the wheat field is a different matter. The fact that it is Kae who invokes the residual sublime *on her own behalf*, in order to resolve her own "Identity Crisis," renders this phenomenon's later appearance in the text less interpretively elastic (Lee 160). It is still possible that Lee self-consciously introduces residually sublime experience into Kae's self-narrativization as a means of mocking her protagonist's efforts to subvert an individualized understanding of identity formation, but I see little textual evidence to corroborate this interpretation. It seems more likely to me that Lee deploys this technique unselfconsciously, at least in this later instance, and in so doing, displays the extent to which her own identification with Kae has blinded her to the fact that the residual sublime instantiates an understanding of identity formation that her narrative strategy is intended to undermine. Though I suggest that this inconsistency constitutes a weak point in Lee's novel, my intention in demonstrating its presence is not to evaluate the text, but to foreground the depth of the sublime's legacy, and to underscore the intensity of its appeal as an intuitively recognizable and aesthetically coherent technique writers access, often unthinkingly, when they want to represent shifts in identity—it is an authorial temptation that is hard to resist. It is precisely the *intuitive* level of the residual sublime's appeal that motivates me to stress its ideological implications because the appeal of the aesthetic inheres in its ability to temporarily disempower our critical faculties; as Eagleton reminds us, in the act of aesthetic judgement, "the imagination creates a purposive synthesis, but without feeling the need for a theoretical detour" (85).

I will conclude my investigation of the role the residual sublime plays in processes of identity formation with a detailed analysis of Wilson's *Swamp Angel*. Besides providing a format in which I can review the various techniques authors use to invoke the residual sublime, this analysis fulfills several additional functions for this study. For one, since Maggie Lloyd Vardoe's desire for self-alteration is, like Kae's, based on a need to cleanse her identity of an aspect of her social history that she is unwilling to acknowledge, this analysis continues to explore the psychological work the residual sublime performs. Its broader scope also allows me to display the residual sublime's status as a uniquely successful technique for producing subjects anew; though Wilson's narrator deploys several spatialized strategies in an effort to articulate Maggie as a subject cleansed of her past affiliation with Edward, only residually sublime experience enables her to accomplish this end. And finally, the broader range of this analysis permits me to demonstrate in detail how the residual sublime allows authors to suggest that identity formation is both the product of social interaction and of epiphanic encounters between individuals and an asocial nature.

In Wilson's *Swamp Angel* the tension between these two understandings of identity formation is rendered with particular acuity. On one level Wilson's text provides ample evidence to suggest that Maggie's desire to alter her identity from Maggie Vardoe to Maggie Lloyd is not the work of a transformative moment, but is a hard-fought, on-going process. When we first encounter Maggie at her living room window, she has been preparing for over a year to leave Edward Vardoe and "Everything was, she thought, in order" (13). As Maggie reports to Hilda and Nell Severance in a letter posted *en route* to Chilliwack that evening, "My plans have been made for some time . . ." (41). Over the

course of this year, Maggie has organized the details of her getaway with steadfast precision (16-20). She has sought out surreptitious employment in order to fund her flight from Edward (14-15); she has decided where she wants to go, and what she will do to support herself when she gets there (36; 60); and she has put a painstaking amount of thought into arranging a cab to whisk her away, at a pre-appointed hour, from home and husband (23-26).

In a sense all of this work and planning implies that, by the time we encounter Maggie at the text's outset, she has already undergone a shift in *self-understanding*; though she is still socially and legally identified as Maggie Vardoe, we would fully expect that she thinks of herself as Maggie Lloyd by this point in time. And this is in fact the name Maggie gives to Mr Spencer, the proprietor of the Sporting Goods shop for whom she makes fishing flies to fund her flight from home. Before her departure from Vancouver, however, Maggie is careful to articulate her self-perception socially only within controlled circumstances; she deliberately withholds from Mr Spencer her address and phone number, thus ensuring that he has no means of contacting her (14-15).

As the actions of Wilson's text suggest, a shift in identity requires more than an alteration in self-understanding. It is not enough for Maggie to merely think of herself as Maggie Lloyd; in order to transform this changed self-perception into a functioning identity Maggie must alter the manner in which she is socially recognized. And this she does by displacing herself from Edward Vardoe and from Vancouver, the place where others are most likely to recognize Maggie as Edward's wife, and where she must have recognized herself as such for a time.<sup>10</sup>

It is tempting to claim that in order to transform herself from Mrs Vardoe to Mrs Lloyd, Maggie must transfer her shift in self-understanding from the personal to the social realm. Yet to claim this is to deny the degree to which even seemingly personal feelings about ourselves and our relation to the world are informed by the interactions we have with others, and by our reliance upon conceptual categories we produce and reproduce collectively: no facet of identity formation escapes the constitutive role of the social. And Wilson's text appears to bear this out when we examine the motivations that influence Maggie's shift in self-understanding.

Such an examination begins with a question: why can Maggie no longer bear her identification with Edward Vardoe? The simple answer is that which she gives to herself: "I hate everything he does," she thinks while preparing gravy for their final meal together. "He has only to hang up his hat and I despise him. Being near him is awful" (17). While Maggie's feelings of hatred for her husband constitute justifiable grounds for leaving him, these feelings do not explain why Maggie steals away from Edward clandestinely, conferring upon him the dignity of neither an explanation nor a good-bye. The legitimacy of Maggie's own justification—that, were she to have granted Edward the respect and recognition signified by an explanation, "she would have involved her friends" (36)—is undermined by the fact that, upon discovering his wife's absence from their home, Edward proceeds first to telephone, and then to visit Nell and Hilda Severance (30-31). And in another context Maggie actually encourages Hilda to involve herself: "I'm not asking anything of you, Hilda," Maggie writes in her letter to the Severances, "unless, if you can help Edward, do. Perhaps you can. I can't" (41).

The manner of Maggie's departure from Edward is more suggestive of contempt than it is of hatred—her behaviour implies that Edward is beneath her consideration. And it is the highly social basis of this contempt that motivates Maggie's seemingly personal desire for a shift in self-understanding. Though Wilson's narrator never states it outright, this voice suggests through several means that Maggie married "beneath herself" while in a state of depression following the deaths of her husband, daughter, and father. The narrator refers to this marriage as "an act of compassion and fatal stupidity" on Maggie's part and reports that it was "to everyone's surprise" that Maggie married the "bumptious" Edward (16; 52). And although the narrator never says so directly, this voice also suggests that Edward is well aware of having married "above" himself; we are told, for example, that when Maggie and Edward worked in the same New Brunswick shop together, "Eddie Vardoe was very respectful [to Maggie] because she had been Miss MacDonald whose father was such an educated man, then Mrs Tom Lloyd. . ." (52).

Though Maggie comes from the very *petit-bourgeois* class that Edward is entering (in an interesting coincidence) just as Maggie leaves him, Maggie is of a different *social* class than Edward, one governed by different values, tastes, and rules of decorum than Edward's. There is, of course, the issue of education. We are already aware that Maggie's father was "a very educated man"; Edward is seen to display deference towards educational qualifications, but he reveals no personal interest (or perhaps skill) in presenting himself as an educated man (52). While Maggie is shown to speak in perfect English, for example, Wilson's narrator stresses Edward's unselfconscious use of ungrammatical speech. "If you gointa show people reel estate," he reports to Maggie

shortly before her flight from him, “you gotta have the right car. Something conservative but snappy. Snappy but refined. See?” (17-18).

As for taste, Maggie favours a very plain mode of self-presentation; hers is a style distinguished by its disinclination to attract attention. When he first sees her, Maggie strikes Mr Spencer as “unpretentious”; to Haldar Gunnarsen she first appears “strong and plain and sensible” (14; 75). By contrast, Edward presents a somewhat flashier image to the world. When we first encounter Maggie and Edward, Maggie is wearing a “good tweed suit,” while her husband is described as wearing a tie “on which athletes argued in yellow and red” (19; 17). And Wilson ensures that Maggie’s distaste for such garb is known to the reader by making us privy to her impression of it: “‘What a tie,’ thought Mrs Vardoe” (17).

Perhaps no one issue demonstrates Maggie’s and Edward’s different understandings of correct decorum more readily than their attitudes towards social advancement and money. The narrator is careful to let us know that Maggie arrives at Three Loon Lake with “a large order of foodstuffs that were essential to her cooking (bought and paid for)” (73). She entertains three job offers over the course of the text without once disclosing wages or showing concern for financial details. Edward is unable to sustain such a show of financial disinterest; he is openly obsessed with money and social advancement. His first act within the text is to report to the indifferent Maggie the bargaining price for his new car—“four hundred cash and easy terms” (17). Shortly thereafter, Edward rebukes his wife for the cost of the roast she serves at dinner; “you buying six pound roasts when I gotta get a new car and get started in a new business! Bet it wasn’t far off a dollar a pound” he comments, his voice “shrill with anger” (18).

What I am suggesting is that although both Maggie and Edward are affiliated with the same economic class, Maggie's values, tastes and decorum display her identification with something closer to a bourgeois social identity, while Edward's manners and values attest to his identification with elements of both working class and *petit bourgeois* social mores. Of greatest importance to his relationship with Maggie, however, is Edward's failure to conform to a bourgeois sensibility.

Given this context, it seems valid to read Maggie's desire to end her identification with Edward Vardoe as substantively informed by a desire not to be identified with those elements of their shared economic class which signify a lack of social distinction—overt ambition, a transparent obsession with money, brashness, and a lack of so-called cultural refinement. Wilson's narrator certainly takes care to emphasize Maggie's lack of socioeconomic ambition, and instead draws attention to her altruism and love of "serving other people": "her thought went first to others, not to herself," we are told (99; 142).<sup>11</sup> Maggie's lack of concern for social advancement is displayed almost ostentatiously during the episode in which she is sought out for her tactful manner of caregiving by Mr Cunningham, a wealthy client of the Gunnarsens' lodge. When Cunningham offers Maggie a job (via Mr Gunnarsen) managing one of his lodges "at a salary that nearly caused Haldar to faint," Maggie gives Haldar the noncommittal reply, "how lovely, how lovely" (138). It is only when Haldar, sick with worry at the prospect of losing Maggie, presses her for a more definitive response to Cunningham's offer that Maggie acknowledges the possibility of being so self-seeking as to abandon Haldar for a better offer. "'Go!' said Maggie with surprise. 'Of course I won't go—not unless you want me to—but how *lovely* to be asked!'" (139).

However inadvertently, Wilson captures one of the ironies of identity formation very effectively in this element of Maggie's character; although her altruism, generosity and lack of ambition are traits that mark Maggie's difference from the penny-pinching and overtly ambitious Edward, it seems likely that this very mark of distinction is not a feature inherent to Maggie, but is rather a product of Maggie's active desire to perform for herself and others her difference from the husband who comes to constitute Maggie's despised other. That which is intended to bespeak Maggie's difference from Edward can thus be seen as a record of her social affiliation with him. Yet, as will become increasingly apparent, it is exactly this reciprocal quality of social interaction that Maggie is desperate to deny.

To summarize my position thus far, I have argued that the manner in which Maggie's desire to end her identification with Edward is represented in *Swamp Angel* conveys an understanding of identity formation as a process, and one which requires social articulation. In addition, I have examined the role class relations play in shaping Maggie's feelings towards her husband and herself in order to demonstrate the degree to which even the seemingly personal feelings that motivate shifts in identity are highly social in so far as they are feelings about our position within a dynamic network of social relations.

Although I have supported these arguments with evidence from Wilson's text, this is not the only interpretation of identity formation that *Swamp Angel* is open to. There is a level at which Wilson's narrative resists representing Maggie's shift in identity as part of an on-going process in which social relations are qualitatively realigned, and proffers in its place an understanding of Maggie's transition in identity as a fundamental rupture

that Maggie herself instigates within her network of social relations. What Maggie desires is not so much to re-align Edward Vardoe's place within her network of social relations as it is to purge him from it through an act of individual will. In her desire for utter autonomy, then, and in her individual approach to attaining this desire, Maggie denies the role the social plays in constituting her identity. Unlike Maggie, Wilson's narrator exhibits an ambiguous relation to the two understandings of identity which coexist within *Swamp Angel*. Although this voice appears more skeptical than Maggie about the possibility of identity *purification*, it also supports uncritically Maggie's efforts to attain autonomy from Edward Vardoe.

*Swamp Angel*'s resistance to an understanding of identity formation as a process of social articulation is evinced early in the text. Maggie's mode of departure from Edward reveals more than a desire to gradually shift her social affiliations. In her refusal to even recognize, let alone act upon, the social obligations that follow from her legal, sexual and physical affiliation with Edward, Maggie reveals a desire to deny the inevitability with which this relationship, like all human relations, must leave its mark upon her social being.

The most overt means by which Maggie reveals her desire to expunge all trace of Edward from her self-understanding is through her narrative self-construction late in the text. After Maggie has spent a season at Three Loon Lake, Henry Corder approaches her and suggests that Maggie's failure to disclose her personal history to anyone around the Kamloops area, including the Gunnarsens, has encouraged idle speculation. In response, Maggie tells her tale to Henry: "She told him about Tom, and Polly, and her father, and the lodge lost and gone, and her working in the store, but she did not tell him about

Edward Vardoe because there was no need to do that. That was as if it had not been" (117). I will now turn my attention to the pivotal time between Maggie's departure from Edward and her arrival at Three Loon Lake, an interval during which Maggie manages to place Edward Vardoe safely under erasure within her life-story. In particular I want to focus upon the role spatiality and aesthetics play in allowing Maggie to convince herself that her former affiliation with Edward "was as if it had not been" (117).

From the time Maggie leaves Vancouver to the time she begins her work at Three Loon Lake, she remains in transit and in transition. It is during this period of Maggie's greatest mobility and vulnerability that Wilson's narrator plays a particularly active role as an accomplice who aids Maggie's desire to eliminate Edward Vardoe from her life. Together Maggie and the narrator attempt to actualize this desire through several different productions of space and nature.

The moment Maggie enters the taxi outside her home, the narrator begins to stress the role spatial and temporal displacement plays in extricating Maggie from Edward. "The forward movement of the taxi through the dark was separating Mrs Lloyd as did every moment of passing time from the house that had been called her home," we are told (23). And Maggie's narrative privilege is also expressed spatially. While Wilson's narrator renders space and time transparent as a means of accommodating Maggie's will in reporting that she "exulted . . . in new time, in new space, because now she had got free," Edward remains trapped within the unforgiving co-ordinates of absolute space: as Maggie proceeds to the bus station we are told that "the fixed point of the house which still contained Edward Vardoe became more irrevocably far away" (23).

During Maggie's trip from Vancouver to Kamloops the narrator's sympathetic participation in Maggie's quest to attain autonomy is revealed through the extensive use this voice makes of geographic and cartographic description. By outlining the alternate routes Maggie could take at various points in her journey, this trip is represented to the reader as a series of decisions for Maggie to make. The narrator describes two possible routes from Vancouver to New Westminister, for example, before specifying that "The Chinese taxi in which Mrs Lloyd escaped away from her discarded but still lawful husband . . . followed neither of these routes," but instead, as befits the clandestine nature of Maggie's escape, took "secondary roads, which were very dark," towards a "third highway" (21).

Maggie is confronted by another decision when she comes to the "two forks of highroads" at Hope. The narrator explains that Maggie could follow "the northern fork" which proceeds to Kamloops via "the old Cariboo Trail along the steep banks of the Fraser River" or, alternately, she could take the "second road, which branches at Hope" and "follows the Hope-Princeton Trail" in a southerly direction (35-6). After these alternatives have been outlined we are told that the Hope-Princeton Highway "was the road that Maggie chose, at least as far as the river with the dancing name Similkameen" (36). As a result of this narrative attention to cartographic alternatives and geographic choices, Maggie takes on the character of a modern-day explorer, an independent sojourner of selfhood who articulates her own identity through autonomous acts of agency.

During her bus trip along the Hope-Princeton Highway Maggie and the narrator press a third mode of spatial production into service to convince Maggie of her freedom

from Edward. In this instance Maggie and the narrator deploy a discourse of environmental determinism to suggest that Maggie's physical and geographic difference from Edward must also connote her social difference from him. First Wilson's narrator suggests that at this point in her journey Maggie "was so far now from what she had left behind her on Capitol Hill that she had no fear of being overtaken [by Edward]" (36). Maggie goes one step further in suggesting that this distance has severed her identification with Edward. "If at any time now, Maggie thought, she should by some ridiculous calculation or miscalculation be overtaken and confronted by Edward Vardoe, she would not mind. She was Tom Lloyd's own widow again. She would not hide nor be afraid. She would not protest, upbraid, defend" (36). And the narrator supports Maggie's inferential investment of geography with the capacity to transform identity in assuring the reader that "when you have reached Hope and the roads that divide there you have quite left Vancouver and the Pacific Ocean. They are disproportionately remote. You are entering a continent . . ." (36).

The success of Maggie's and the narrator's shared attempt to reconstitute Maggie's identity as radically distinct from Edward's via environmental determinism is, however, short-lived. At the very moment that Maggie asserts her difference from Edward by reclaiming her identity as "Tom Lloyd's own widow again," an obstacle appears between Maggie and her desire for autonomy—her sense of guilt at having refused to recognize her obligations to Edward in stealing away from him (36). Just as Maggie declares herself free from fear of Edward's physical presence, his psychological presence presses in upon her. It is no surprise that Maggie's guilt appears at this moment; having gained a degree of security regarding her desired identity, Maggie's mind can now

dispense with its self-protective behaviour and indulge in some long-repressed introspection. Freudian terminology provides an alternate means of explaining this coincidence: the moment Maggie's ego asserts itself by claiming its desired identity, her superego steps in to punish this assertiveness by activating its more critical, judgmental function.

Maggie's feelings of guilt are a testament to the consistency of Wilson's characterization: it is only fitting that guilt should impede Maggie's efforts to perform the autonomous identity she desires because her manner of leaving Edward failed to conform to the rules of decorum which (partially) constitute this desired identity: in short, Maggie feels unworthy of the identity of Maggie Lloyd because Maggie Lloyd would not behave as Maggie Lloyd Vardoe has. The problem is, of course, that the very extremity of Maggie's desire to claim an identity purged of all remnants of Edward Vardoe has led her to transgress her own moral standards, and thus to enter into self-conflict. It is at this point in the text that Maggie is said to have "grieved a little, and helplessly, because (she thought) another woman would have done this thing better. Another woman would have faced Eddie Vardoe and told him that she could not live with him any longer "(36). As the parenthetical reference suggests, the narrator does not necessarily join Maggie in condemning her means of extricating herself from "Eddie" (36). Indeed, the narrator's opinion on this matter is made plain on the evening of Maggie's departure from Capital Hill when this voice condemns not Maggie, but Edward, whom we are told is (not socially, but) essentially unsuitable for Maggie. Were there "a small space in his mind remain[ing] lit by sense," Wilson's narrator reports, Edward would have realized that "it was intrinsic to him that [Maggie] should go" (31).

But Maggie is unable to eliminate her guilt through an investment in the narrator's essentialist variety of sociological fatalism. For now she attempts to purge this guilt through rationalization. "She could not have borne the small scenes and the big scenes and the pursuit and the shoutings if she had quite faced him," she tells herself (36). "She had borne the humiliations she had borne, but she could not endure the other" (36). But in order to justify her own behaviour Maggie is forced to acknowledge her intimate relation to Edward; only I can understand why my behaviour was called for, she reasons, because "I know him so well" (37). Yet it is precisely such a recognition of her intimate relation to her husband that Maggie is endeavouring to suppress. Not surprisingly, this recognition catalyzes in Maggie a new wave of "revulsion" for Edward, and a more direct attempt to reclaim her autonomy—"he is he, and I am I," she claims (not for the last time) (37).

Given Maggie's desperation to reconstitute herself as a subject freed from all trace of Edward, and given that her bid to do so via environmental determinism only catalyzes a cyclical process of self-doubt and self-assertion, it is not hard to see the value offered by a little ritualistic experience: no other level of experience foregrounds—or more accurately, *produces*—beginnings and endings quite so effectively. And it is experiences of this order that Maggie seeks, and finds, along a deserted section of the Similkameen river at a place with "nowhere near," a place "a matter of some miles" from "the next camp," a place where the "sound of the immediate rippling water" insulates Maggie's ears from the "sound of passing cars," a place that can, in short, facilitate Maggie's need to commune with her version of the transcendent within a seemingly asocial nature (37).

We are told that, after leaving the bus, and supposedly society itself, "Maggie walked down to the margin of the river as in an enchantment" (37). Immediately the earth begins to take on, via Wilson's narrator, the sensual pliancy that typifies aesthetic experience: "the pine-needle earth felt soft," we are told (37). In response to this welcoming, centering sensuality, Maggie first sits, then lies upon the surface of the earth and, "looking up at the sky . . . [gives] herself up to the high morning" (37).

Something had happened, she thought as she lay there, to her sense of smell. It had become vitiated. But now her breath drank and drank again the scent of firs and pines and juniper. Time dissolved, and space dissolved, and she smelt again the pinewoods of New Brunswick, one with these woods, a continent away, and she was all but a child again. No, she was nothing. No thought, no memories occupied her. The clouds, that drifted across the blue, drifted through her mind as she lay idle. (37-8)

This passage announces the presence of the residual sublime through several means. It retains from sublimity the experience of being de-centred, an experience connoted most obviously by the narrator's emphasis on temporal and spatial displacement ("time dissolved, and space dissolved"). As a response to this de-centring, Maggie experiences a sense of unboundedness in her inability to distinguish subject from object ("the clouds, that drifted across the blue, drifted through her mind . . ."). And most crucially, these experiences of displacement and unboundedness are deployed to connote, and by inference to explain, a progressive fading of identity, a process which ends in a fictive annihilation of self (" . . . she was nothing. No thought, no memories occupied her").

The machinations of Maggie's desire to forge a sense of self that is cleansed of all traces of Edward Vardoe are clearly discernible in this scenario. It is no coincidence that Maggie undergoes a disjunctive form of temporal regression here. As was the case in the abridged biography she narrates to Henry Corder, Maggie's spatio-temporal voyage in this passage by-passes her experience of Edward (and of Vancouver, which represents him). Instead, before reverting to a condition of nothingness, Maggie's imagination transports her directly from the banks of the Similkameen River to New Brunswick, the place which connotes those experiences from Maggie's past that she is willing, and indeed eager, to absorb into her new, abridged identity.

Yet Maggie's regression is at best a truncated instance of sublime experience in that it stops short of re-affirming her identity, though it does perform the preparatory work of cleansing Maggie of a troubled selfhood and leaving her in a limbo of nothingness. In a sense this experience represents a failed attempt to achieve sublimity which Maggie rescues by reverting to the less demanding experience of beauty. This scenario displays characteristics typical of the aesthetic response to beauty in its emphasis upon the pleasurable sensual qualities of what Maggie hears, smells and tastes, but primarily in the *effect* this experience has upon her: for a time it effectively naturalizes Maggie's presence within this seemingly asocial world of nature. We are told that, after her respite from self-conscious subjectivity,

She sat up at last, and, looking round, saw a doe standing by a tree trunk,  
 regarding her . . . without fear. It flicked its ears, turned and nibbled at its  
 own coppery flank, turned again its elegant neck, looked at her, and passed  
 on into the woods. Maggie, smiling with pleasure at the sight of the deer,

took out of her knapsack some fruit and biscuits, dipped her little plastic cup, drank of the water, and lay down again. Her fingers strayed and found a pine cone, and through her fingers she saw its rich and elegant brownness. (38)

As if she were herself an unalienated presence within this riverside scene, Maggie inspires no fear in the doe; as if bereft of all social impulses to assert her difference from the non-human world, Maggie responds to the doe's nibbling of its flank by mirroring this activity in turning to her own little lunch. Nature appears as a sphere of unalienated being in this passage, a unitary world in which Maggie exists almost free from desire; when she experiences thirst, the river easily supplies her need; when her hands reach for stimulus, a stray pine cone meets her grasp, supplying through a somnolent synesthesia the fused pleasures of texture and colour.

Not surprisingly, Maggie's provisional status as an identityless child of nature is short-lived. It is no easy feat for a subject to maintain the illusion that she exists in a harmonious relation to an asocial nature; desire inevitably intercedes to break the spell. And such is the case with Maggie: when hunger strikes again, Maggie reaches for her fishing rod and effectively undoes this illusion through her need to assert her (inescapably) domineering, appropriative relationship over the space she has produced as an ontologically centering sanctuary. It is immediately after Maggie lands the "small trout" that will supply her dinner and "[breaks] back the small neck" that "A thought as thin and cruel as a pipe fish cut through her mind" (38). This "thought" signals the return of Maggie's repressed sense of guilt over her treatment of Edward Vardoe, a thought which necessarily disrupts Maggie's illusion of naturalness and reinstates her within her

troubled social identity (38). Although for now “The pipe fish slid through and away,” the narrator assures us that “It would return” (38).

What was missing in Maggie’s initial attempt to achieve transcendence through the natural sublime was the requisite will-to-identity: she enters into it in too passive a manner, gives her imagination too much sway, and fails to excise Edward’s psychological presence through a purgation of guilt. Maggie does not make this mistake in her second attempt, which soon becomes necessary. For as promised, the “thin cruel thought returned. What dreadful thing had she done to Edward Vardoe?” Maggie asks herself after having made her way down the road to a small camp, eaten her dinner and gone “through the woods, dark now, in the direction of the river noise” (39). This time, rather than throw herself at the mercy of her imaginative capacities, Maggie enters into this second ritualistic cleansing with a clear-eyed determination of her goal—to rid her mind of the last remnants of her husband. “Now this is the very last time I will think about it, the very last, she said to herself despairingly, it was too dreadful to bear. He is he and I am I. He will never forgive me, and I shall always go unforgiven. But this is the very last of it. God help me” (39).

If we consider Maggie’s two attempts to achieve sublimity within a seemingly asocial nature as two stages of a singular attempt, it accords quite effectively with the basic structure of the Kantian sublime. While Maggie’s initial, more sensual effort can be read as a failure to master sublime nature via her imaginative capacity, this second, more rational effort can be seen as an attempt to transcend her psychological blockage by mastering her situation conceptually: Maggie isolates her goal and deliberately invokes a force greater than herself to bring it to fruition. Maggie’s two-pronged endeavour

conforms to our contemporary expectations of sublime experience in that “Sublimity is a repudiation of sensuality *not reason*” (Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations* 143).

Yet not surprisingly there are aspects of Maggie’s quest for sublimity that fail to conform to the understanding of Kantian sublime I have gathered from contemporary scholars. What is to my mind one of the most fascinating aspects of Maggie’s quest for sublimity is the degree to which this level of experience appears to be self-consciously willed by Maggie to forge a new identity. Unlike the Kantian sublime, there is nothing spontaneous or serendipitous about Maggie’s experience. Rather, upon concluding her conviction to be done with Edward and invoking her God’s assistance,

Maggie sat there in the dark and she lifted her heart in desolation and in prayer. The west wind blew down the river channel; and the wind, the river, and the quiet sound of the rippling river, a sigh in the pine trees surrounded by stillness, and the stars in the arc of the night sky between the mountains, the scent of the pines, the ancient rocks below and above her, and the pine-made earth, a physical languor, her solitude, and her troubled mind, and a lifting of her spirit to God by the river brought tears to her eyes. I am on a margin of life, she thought . . . (39-40).

Just as Maggie consciously wills this transformative experience as a means of purging Edward from her identity, so the narrator gives sympathetic expression to Maggie’s will through this voice’s deployment of the rhetorical excess de Bolla identifies as integral to the “self-transforming” discourse of the sublime (12). By deploying a run-on sentence that continually threatens to overrun the boundaries of grammar, Wilson’s narrator endeavours—with an irony inevitable to representations of sublimity—to express the

very impossibility of representing the infinitude of detail which Maggie encounters in her communion with a pantheistic nature.

There is a powerful logic behind Wilson's decision to invoke the residual sublime as a means of purging Maggie of her guilt and thus of the blockage that prevented the reconsolidation of her identity as "Tom Lloyd's own widow again" (36). Weiskel argues that "the sublime moment releases the ego from guilt through an identification with the power by which (in melancholy) it had formerly been punished," and he suggests that "delight is the temporary negation of paralysis, the expulsion of what blocks the mind" (97). Wilson's narrator stops short of suggesting that Maggie delights in being released from her guilt. To suggest delight would, in my opinion, be too overt an admission of the class violence which lurks, repressed, behind Maggie's desire to rid her identity of the last remnants of Edward, her lowly other. In Maggie's context, delight would appear unseemly, and to appear as such would be for Maggie to again transgress the rules of decorum which constitute her difference from Edward.

In her invocation of the residual sublime Wilson's narrator makes extensive use of the rhetoric of liminality. As MacIntyre comments in his introduction to Tsang's study, sublime experience is, in virtually all incarnations, a response to "limit-situations" in which the subject confronts a line between "what can be said and what is unsayable, between what can and what cannot be thought, and between what can and what cannot be willed" (ix). Maggie invokes her God's help after encountering the line between her will to expurgate Edward and her seeming inability to do so without divine intervention. But this is not the only sense in which Wilson's text exhibits the rhetoric of liminality; during the two scenes in which the presence of the residual sublime is most overt in *Swamp*

*Angel*, the narrator's discourse becomes pervaded by invocations of marginality. In Maggie's initial, failed attempt to experience sublimity, for example, she is said to walk to "the margin of the river," and to place herself "on the fringe of some open pinewoods" (37). In the narrator's description of the effect of Maggie's second bid for sublimity, she figures herself as being "on a margin of life" (39). Even the time of year is liminal: Maggie's retreat occurs while "Spring was pouring in over the whole countryside" (40).

And most crucially, of course, Maggie herself partakes of this liminality.

Although I have endeavoured to stress the extent to which Maggie deliberately wills this moment, Wilson's narrator does not acknowledge the artifactual character of Maggie's experience. Instead, it is treated as an authentically epiphanic moment in which the former Maggie Lloyd is reborn, and the former Maggie Vardoe is expunged. After Maggie's second foray into sublimity she is said to have taken a few days rest which were "for Maggie," the narrator tells us, "like the respite that perhaps comes to the soul after death" (40). Yet these are also days of rebirth, days in which Maggie sutures her present self back into that self which preceded her marriage to Edward. It is in this sense that Maggie "after her slavery, and her journey, and her last effort—made alone—stayed still, and accustomed herself to something new which was still fondly familiar to her" (40). This "something" is, of course, Maggie's identity, an identity that is "new" in its distance from Maggie Vardoe, I have argued, but "fondly familiar" in its proximity to that self which preceded Maggie's relationship with Edward (40).

In the end, the residual sublime proves a remarkably successful means of purging Edward Vardoe from Maggie's identity. Though he does appear to her in a dream as a "young anxious boy in a store," Maggie successfully resists the return of the repressed

through a more overt process of othering: in sleep Maggie transforms Edward into “a mink that showed sharp teeth and ran screaming into the bushes”(110). At a point later in the text Wilson’s narrator assures us that

The thought of Edward Vardoe and of the past years seldom disturbed [Maggie]. The image of Edward Vardoe receded as an image from another life and place—which of course it was. If she had stopped to think—and she had not stopped, she was far too busy—she would have noted that the sharp and cruel visitation that had come to her on the banks of the Similkameen River . . . had not come to her again. It would never come to her again with that same poignance (86).

In representing Maggie’s time with Edward as “an image from another life and place,” Wilson’s narrator leaves little doubt about whether Maggie’s elimination of her husband from her self-conception is to be construed as a processual modification or a disjunctive excision (86). The manner in which Wilson ends this pivotal chapter also suggests that Maggie performed this excision through an act of will informed by only three presences—Maggie, her God, and an asocial nature: after resting, Maggie leaves her wilderness retreat and resumes her place in society. “When she took her seat next to the window of the bus leaving Hope,” this chapter concludes, “a woman sat down beside her” (40). With this rapid change of tone and theme, Maggie proceeds directly to Kamloops where she begins a seemingly new life at Three Loon Lake with an identity both “new” yet “fondly familiar” sutured firmly into place (40).

## Conclusions

In part three I have fulfilled several interrelated goals. For one, I have demonstrated that the sublime is not, as yet, the “moribund aesthetic” Thomas Weiskel claimed it was some three decades ago (6). Although literary representation of sublime experience rarely includes all of the details contemporary scholars point to in their discussions of the Kantian sublime, and at times it misrepresents aspects of this experience, the sublime’s residual manifestations remain a pervasive and powerful means by which twentieth-century Canadian realist novels articulate shifts in identity.

Yet my reasons for exhibiting and explaining the residual sublime’s presence have extended beyond my desire to illustrate the Kantian sublime’s continuing significance to twentieth-century Canadian realist novels, as useful an undertaking as this is. My efforts to demonstrate the residual sublime’s cross-textual presence also fulfilled my larger goal of exemplifying the mode of regional literary analysis I introduced in part one’s study of Canadian literary regionalism, and refined in part two’s study of place. This mode of regional analysis requires that the literary critic demonstrate the existence of a cross-textual relationship between literary representations of socio-material space and processes of identity formation. In fact, I fulfill this goal in sections one and two, where I demonstrate how authors deploy sublime representations of nature to articulate shifts in so-called personal identity. This is not, however, the region of denial and purgation I refer to in my title; though we glimpse the region of denial and purgation at points throughout section two, it only comes into full view in the more detailed analyses I reserve for section three.

It is not that I have produced two distinct regions in part three, one of nature and the other of denial and purgation. Rather, this latter region is a more specialized version of its antecedent, one that emerged from my efforts to explain why the more broadly based region of nature exists as a demonstrable literary phenomenon by asking what kind of ideological and psychological work it performs. To assert that the region of denial and purgation emerges from a more overtly ideological mode of regional analysis is not, of course, to suggest that sections one and two arise from neutral analytic ground. As I emphasized in part one, regional literary analysis is not (and never has been) a neutral practice; it inevitably arises from, and reflects, the biases of its practitioner. My own theoretical convictions have shaped this study from start to finish: they have influenced both the means by which I have chosen to demonstrate the existence of a relationship between nature and identity and the meaning I have derived from this regional relationship. Yet their earliest influence is exhibited in the understandings of nature and identity I brought to this process of analysis.

For example, the fact that I approached this study with the conviction that nature is—and has always been—a socially produced space has influenced my approach to the realist novels I work with. I could not treat literary representations of nature as textual givens without reinforcing the asocial vision of nature I wished to argue against; thus one of my initial tasks was to identify those characteristics that I think play the most instrumental role in producing certain literary representations of socio-material space as asocial spaces of nature. What I have interpreted as narrative representations of nature vary greatly in this study, but are united and delimited by their location out of doors, and by their status as literary places that betray no overt signs of human presence (beyond that

of the characters undergoing sublime experience). Though, in my opinion, nature need not, and ideally should not, be limited to outdoor, uninhabited social spaces, this study arises from my conviction that such literary places perform different kinds of cultural work than do their indoor counterparts (and we have seen evidence of the power this distinction has to shape social practice in part two).

Both the soundness of this conviction, and the delicacy of the distinction between indoor and outdoor social spaces, is highlighted in my most minimalist reference to nature, found in *Obasan*. In analyzing the faraway look Emily deploys in response to Naomi's question about the fates of her mother and grandmother, nature is comprised of the parcel of sky Emily is able to see through the screen door (*Obasan* 186). As this example and many others from this study demonstrate, characters tend to seek out so-called natural sites when they wish to escape the constraining forces of the social realm, forces whose presence is harder to efface within architecturally produced social spaces.

My conviction that identity is a socially produced, performative phenomenon has also shaped this study because it has influenced the kinds of narrative moments I have chosen to focus attention upon. Just as this critical gaze propelled me towards those scenarios from my group of novels in which authors and narrators appeared to most blatantly mystify and reify the process of identity formation, so my desire to explain these occurrences led me to the concept of the sublime. Similarly, it is the *critical* character of the gaze I have brought to this project that has influenced my decision not only to explain and exemplify the residual sublime, but to disempower the identity-producing work this literary phenomenon performs by foregrounding its status as a series of rhetorical

techniques. In short, I have endeavoured to demystify the residual sublime in section two by exposing its artifactual character.

These techniques are rarely found in isolation and are tightly interrelated. Nevertheless, they can be listed individually, and divided conveniently into two sets. Although all of the residual sublime's techniques must, of necessity, be mediated to the reader via the narrator's controlling presence, the narrative voice is foregrounded in the first set of techniques in that all signs of sublimity are revealed through the narrator's description of a character's reaction to nature. Thus the first of these sets is distinguished from the second in being more overtly narrator-driven and description-oriented.

I have illustrated several means by which narrative description can construct a character's response as sublime. Narrators can, for instance, invoke what I have termed a rhetoric of infinitude. This narrative technique signifies a sublime response by drawing the reader's attention to a character's inability to master the natural scene upon which he gazes. Alternately, the narrator can draw our attention to the transcendent quality of a character's response by describing the destabilizing effect a natural site has upon him. Such an effect can be suggested either by specifying a character's vertiginous response, or, alternately, by signifying his inability to distinguish between himself and the sublime object. I want to emphasize, however, that explicit references to the boundlessness or infinitude of the so-called sublime object need not accompany invocations of the residual sublime. A narrator can also signal the sublimity of a character's experience through an abundance of narrative description. This technique figures through sheer descriptive effort the apparent inexhaustibility—and ultimate unrepresentability—of the sublime object. It is this technique Peter de Bolla identifies as characteristic of the “self-

transforming" discourse of the sublime (12). And finally, narrators can signal the presence of the residual sublime by invoking what I have termed a rhetoric of liminality. In this technique a character's status as a subject on the threshold of a shift in identity is conveyed by a narrator's descriptive attention to margins, boundaries and thresholds within nature.

In the second set of techniques the narrator's mediating presence is less overt in that sublime experience is signalled by an action undertaken by the character. If the first set of techniques can be roughly characterized as narrator-driven and description-oriented, this second set can be described as character-driven and action-oriented. In what I have termed vertical parallelism, for instance, it is the character's ascent to a position of relative vertical eminence that establishes a metaphoric link between her physical and psychological status as a subject on the brink of a transition in selfhood. While in some instances vertical parallelism is used to articulate shifts in identity, in others it is utilized to foreshadow such shifts. At all times, however, this technique signals a character's close attention to a facet of her identity. I have borrowed Northrop Frye's phrase the faraway look to name the second, more character-driven means by which my novels invoke the residual sublime. In this technique a character fixes her gaze upon the far distance in response to her inability to resolve a conflict between two facets of her identity. In this manifestation of the residual sublime the seemingly unbounded depth of the subject's outward gaze into nature acts as a spatial metaphor conveying the seeming infinitude of subjectivity itself. Thus the faraway look enables a character to enact, through physical gesture, the conflicted social identity which frustrates verbal

articulation. Together these two sets of techniques comprise a poetics of identity formation in the outdoors of the twentieth-century Canadian realist novel.

The role nature plays in empowering this poetics of identity formation is hard to overestimate. And it is a role that is riddled with irony. The residual sublime's capacity to produce shifts in identity hinges on the ability of characters and narrators to interpret and construct nature as an asocial space. These very labours produce a nature that is, of course, ineluctably social. Yet characters and narrators alike have been shown to repeatedly efface their role as participants in the production of nature because it is in their interests to do so; it is precisely such denials that fulfill their desire to view nature as a realm in which they can *escape* the constraining influence of the social realm. Nature emerges from this study as the social space that dare not speak its name.

And indeed, this study reveals that much is at stake in eliding what Haraway terms nature's "artifactual" status (297). Were we to desist from eliding our role as producers of any nature we care to name as such, the residual sublime would cease to function as the highly effective instrument of identity production I have demonstrated it to be. And the sublime's capacity to further our elision of nature's social origins is an integral component of this productivity; it remains such an effective means of articulating shifts in identity in outdoor locales because, as Glickman reminds us, "the sublime . . . accepts that nature is always already Other" (ix).

Though the asocial vision of nature that accompanies the sublime is an important factor in explaining why residually sublime experience remains a popular means of articulating shifts in identity, this is not the only factor that informs its popularity. The sublime is, as Weiskel tells us, "a stunning metaphor" (4). Moreover, it is a necessary

metaphor in the sense that Michel Deguy captures when he argues that “metaphor is what originally brings to visibility the figure of what is not visible” (9). For all of its importance to our lives, and for all of the attention this phenomenon receives, identity remains a stubbornly elusive and frustratingly intangible entity; the residual sublime enables our desire to imbue this construct with a more objective existence than it actually has. Though sublimity is no more tangible a construct than identity, the signs of its presence are more readily recognized by many of us. Though sublimity is no less social a construct than identity, the long historical tradition that has rendered it so familiar has also imbued the signs of its presence with a greater appearance of objectivity. In deploying the residual sublime authors effectively borrow these attributes to render their efforts to represent shifts in identity more recognizable, and thus more seemingly *real* and, ultimately, more convincing or *authentic*.

Though the residual sublime is an undeniably productive phenomenon, it is a productivity I have tried to undermine through three means—by exposing its reliance upon fallacious conceptions of nature and identity formation, by revealing its artifactual status as a series of rhetorical techniques, and, finally, by explicating the ideological and psychological work it performs. It is through this third effort, undertaken in section three, that I construct a region of denial and purgation from components of the more generic region of nature constructed in section two. In fact, sections two and three are highly interrelated in that the process of constructing the region of denial and purgation began at those points in section two when my efforts to exhibit the residual sublime’s techniques required that I touch upon this phenomenon’s capacity to perform ideological and psychological work. I think in particular of my discussion of the scene from the Prologue

of *Disappearing Moon Cafe* in which Kae deploys vertical parallelism to articulate Gwei Chang's seemingly epiphanic identification with Kelora on the bluff. Because Kae discloses information in a non-linear fashion, I was required to gather evidence from various points in the text to explicate the kind of shift in self-understanding Gwei Chang undergoes on the bluff; it is precisely the social origins of this change in identity which Lee's use of vertical parallelism obfuscates (for reasons I speculate about in section three). Similarly, in my effort to explain how Osteno's narrator invokes a rhetoric of infinitude to fulfill Jude's desire to forge an identity independent of her family, I touched upon the psychological work this rhetoric was performing: because the rhetoric of infinitude allows Jude to attribute this alteration in self-understanding to a force seemingly beyond her control, I argued, this technique allows Jude to absolve herself of the guilt that results from her desire to produce herself as a subject distinct from her family.

It was to underscore the residual sublime's capacity to perform ideological and psychological work that I conducted the more detailed studies of scenes from *Disappearing Moon Cafe* and *Swamp Angel* in section three. These analyses demonstrated in closer detail the residual sublime's capacity to represent shifts in identity as discrete events in which characters interact with an asocial nature to produce seemingly autonomous shifts in identity. Though at first glance this would seem a benign enough inaccuracy to perpetuate, this vision of identity-formation carries some disturbing implications for social interaction that come into particularly sharp focus when I investigate them in conjunction with Jude's and Gwei Chang's experiences.

It is no coincidence that in all four of these narrative scenarios, Gwei Chang's, Jude's, Kae's and Maggie's seemingly asocial shifts in identity facilitate their shared desire to instigate radical breaks from other characters. Just as Jude utilizes the residual sublime to convince herself that she is "no longer one of [the Gares]," so the residual sublime fulfills Gwei Chang's desire to produce himself as a subject free from familial obligations, as it enables Kae's desire to instigate a radical break from Morgan and Maggie's desire to constitute herself as a subject purified of all traces of Edward Vardoe (Ostenso 53). All four of these instances reveal the residual sublime's capacity both to further characters' denials of the social origins of their identity and to purge them of guilt by allowing them to attribute morally troubling shifts in identity to asocial forces seemingly beyond their control. This guilt-purging capacity has its positive attributes in that it allows these characters to fulfill goals that this emotion might otherwise have prevented them from pursuing. Yet this same capacity is what allows Gwei Chang, Jude, Kae and Maggie to enact a form of symbolic violence upon the others they effectively cast from their identities, and to do so without having to acknowledge the role they play as the instigators of these, at times, compassionless excisions. In all four of these cases the residual sublime is what enables these characters to deflect responsibility for these processes of othering away from themselves and onto a sublimely intuited force over which they have no apparent control.

When viewed sympathetically, the examples provided by Gwei Chang, Jude, Kae and Maggie constitute a poignant demonstration of the lengths to which characters will go to deny their status as the makers of their own meaning. They also demonstrate the residual sublime's capacity to persuade characters of the seeming authenticity of

transitions in selfhood that would appear to be less real and less meaningful were these characters to acknowledge the role others have played in their production. These examples also elucidate how the residual sublime enables characters to overvalue their own metaphysical significance—by constructing themselves as subjects individuated by a force beyond themselves—while undervaluing the ontological significance of those others who play so instrumental a role in their on-going productions of selfhood. Such over-inflations of personal significance do not so much bespeak a rampant egotism in characters such as Gwei Chang, Jude, Maggie, Kae as they do an insecurity about their identities, one which compels them to police the borders of their selfhood with particular vigour and, at times, particular ruthlessness.

These scenarios also display the ideological work the residual sublime performs in allowing authors to articulate two oppositional depictions of identity formation. Such ambiguity represents a depoliticizing gesture in that it allows authors to avoid taking a firm stand on what human identity is, and, by implication, on the degree to which human beings constitute an interdependent collectivity. Given that the premise that the subject is an autonomous entity is one of the founding principles of a free market economy, an author's depiction of identity cannot help but constitute a political gesture. Having said this, I wonder if the presence of these two, oppositional modes of identity formation indicates the privileged status Jude, Maggie and Kae are afforded in these texts more than it signifies Ostensos's, Wilson's and Lee's refusals to politicize their accounts of identity formation (I do not consider Gwei Chang's case here because Kae may have invoked the residual sublime self-consciously in this instance). It is perhaps because these authors empathize or identify with their protagonists, I suggest, that they remain blind to the

ramifications of the residual sublime: it may not only be Jude, Maggie and Kae who delude themselves about the extent of these women's moral responsibility for the acts of othering the residual sublime enables, in other words, but also Osteno, Wilson and Lee. Within this reading, the residual sublime would not so much represent a means of remaining neutral on the issue of identity formation as it would a means of excusing or justifying a favoured character's actions.

In conclusion I suggest that the presence of the residual sublime within my group of twentieth-century Canadian realist novels constitutes a form of resistance to the loss of metaphysical certitudes and to the enhanced agency and responsibility that follow from this loss. It also suggests a continuing appetite for transcendent experience, even when the legitimacy of such experience is refuted by more explicit, less figurative narrative means. Given the residual sublime's presence in novels that do not otherwise display mystical tendencies, the residual sublime—as a literary device that can transport the subject above the burdens of the social on the most agnostic of wings—appears as the perfect food with which to sate this appetite.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The recent appearance of Susan Glickman's *The Picturesque and the Sublime: A Poetics of the Canadian Landscape* certainly bespeaks an on-going—if not increasing—interest in the sublime. Despite its many fine qualities, Glickman's text is not central to my argument for two reasons. First, we utilize the sublime to very different ends; while Glickman does an admirable job of tracing the role sublimity plays in representing nature as other, as I suggest in the body of my dissertation, her aim is not to problematize or critique this representation. Second, and perhaps more crucially, Glickman pays relatively little attention to the relationship between sublimity and identity formation.

<sup>2</sup> See Cronon's "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" for an in-depth discussion of how the concept of wilderness has impacted our conceptualization of nature.

<sup>3</sup> As we saw in my discussion of Dick Harrison's *Unnamed Country* in part one, the tendency to construct First Nations peoples as "close to the soil, organically and elementally connected with it," makes them a rather complex exception to this rule (Harrison 199).

<sup>4</sup> I think here of the rather forced instance in Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe* in which Hermia asks Kae, "Do you mean that individuals must gather their identity from all the generations that touch them—past and future, no matter how slightly? Do you mean that an individual is not an individual at all, but a series of individuals—some of whom come before her, some after her? Do you mean that this story isn't a story of several generations, but of one individual thinking collectively?" (189). Ondaatje tries, with far greater success in my opinion, to make a similar point about identity when the narrator explains that "Patrick had clung like moss to strangers. . . . Clara and Ambrose and Alice and Temelcoff and Cato—this cluster made up a drama without him. And he himself was

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nothing but a prism that refracted their lives. He searched out things, he collected things. He was an abashed man, an inheritance from his father. Born in Abashed, Ontario. What did the word mean? Something that suggested there was a terrible horizon in him beyond which he couldn't leap. Something hollow, so when alone, when not aligned with another . . . he could hear the rattle within that suggested a space between him and community" (156-7). What I suggest is that the constraints of the narrative form virtually force authors who wish to stress the social character of identity formation to make their point explicitly.

<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that "nature" is the only source of sublime feeling currently being investigated by literary critics. In *Postmodern Sublime*, for example, Joseph Tabbi argues that "Kant's sublime object . . . seems to have been replaced in postmodern literature by a technological process" (ix). Similarly, in *American Sublime* Rob Wilson explores images of technical vastness in contemporary American fiction and collects his findings under the heading of "the nuclear sublime" (228-263). And in *The Feminine Sublime* Barbara Claire Freeman examines not only the ocean in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* to argue for a uniquely feminine sublime, but other less overt realms of vastness and unrepresentability, including the construct of race and the history of slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted, however, that "it would . . . be quite impermissible to decode the pseudo-proposition 'x is beautiful' as 'I like x,' since judgements of taste are for Kant purely disinterested and have nothing to do with one's contingent inclinations and desires" (Eagleton 93). Indeed, for Kant, the (seeming) universality of aesthetic judgement makes it an ideal means of "promot[ing] a unity between individuals on the basis of their subjectivity" (Eagleton 84), such demonstrations of emotional solidarity being all the more necessary because, in matters of moral judgement, the inclinations of subjectivity are to be eschewed, and indeed repressed, in favour of a strictly rational

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mode of judgement, one that takes no account of the particularities of subjecthood. Today, of course, the universality of aesthetic judgement has come under critical assault. See, for instance, Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*.

<sup>7</sup> When I speak of contemporary understandings of identity formation I am thinking in particular of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discussion of the concept in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and Laclau's refinement of this thought in *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, as well as Judith Butler's work on the subject in *Gender Trouble* and Charles Taylor's work in *Sources of the Self* and "The Politics of Recognition." Though there are, of course, some significant differences amongst these thinkers, they are united in their conviction that identity is social in origin and character.

<sup>8</sup> It is also worth noting the almost allegorical quality of this scenario. Given that one of the chief means by which Lind undermines Caleb's authority is through the nurturing relationship she forges with Jude, it is interesting to see Lind's role as Jude's protector figured imaginistically in this early scene. As Caleb stands before his land and concludes to himself that Jude, "who had some of his own will[,] . . . would have to be broken," Lind stands, quite literally, between Caleb and his sleeping daughter (21).

<sup>9</sup> It was Henry Sussman who first drew my attention to the analogy between the sublime's relation to a transcendent principle and Christ's relation to the Christian God. As he explains, "the Christian deity is to a large extent *defined* by its mediatorial qualities and actions. This deity is at once human and divine, corporeal and incorporeal, mutable and transcendental. In the Kantian speculative systems, the comprehensively mediatorial quality of the Christian deity is displaced to a series of shifters that mediate between the empirical and the transcendental, but in a strictly secular way. In different ways, the Kantian Beautiful, Sublime, and Genius occupy an analogous position and effect similar linkages" (Sussman 31).

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that Wilson's narrator deploys social space to differentiate between the two Maggies: before leaving her home, the narrator identifies her as "Mrs Vardoe" (13-18); after being swept away from her "discarded but still lawful husband," she becomes Mrs Lloyd (21). It is also worth noting that this is not the first time Maggie has utilized a change of scene to help articulate a new identity; her marriage to Edward Vardoe also coincided with their exodus from New Brunswick to Vancouver (Wilson 52).

<sup>11</sup> The narrator's representation of Maggie as an altruistic caregiver, unconcerned with her own socioeconomic advancement, actually serves two purposes in Wilson's text, both of which would have helped to mitigate the social threat posed by Wilson's creation of a female character who, in 1950s Canada, leaves her husband and gets away with it. While Maggie's representation as an altruistic woman whose thoughts go first to others handily emphasizes the unsuitability of Maggie and Edward as a couple, it also displays Maggie's conformity to a traditional ideal of femininity. Though she may have transgressed rules of patriarchal decorum in one sense, this characterization suggests, she displays the utmost respect for, and conformity to these rules in another.

### The View from Here: Concluding Remarks

Rather than repeat the conclusions advanced in parts one, two, and three of this dissertation, I would like to wrap up this study by re-presenting it to my readers from a somewhat longer-range perspective. What I seek here is a vantage point from which I can sketch the broad outlines of this study and, in so doing, trace the decisions that have brought it to its current form. Moreover, such a vantage point will enable me to gesture towards some of the analytic terrain that lies just beyond this project's horizons, terrain that my critical lens has not allowed me to bring into clear or sustained focus, but that has come into fleeting and provocative view over the course of these scholarly travels.

In this dissertation I have advanced and exemplified a new approach to regional literary analysis. Before doing so, however, it was necessary to explain why I think a new approach is called for. This I did by simultaneously systematizing and critiquing the work of five influential Canadian literary regionalists, a process whose overarching aim was to defamiliarize this field of study by representing it from an alternate disciplinary perspective. Social and spatial theorists, human geographers and philosophers have all had a hand in allowing me to demonstrate that regions need not be imagined as pre-existent entities, and to re-present them as the open-ended products of a regional mode of analysis. At its most basic level, the region is nothing more (or less) than a useful analytic tool, one whose value inheres in its capacity to draw attention to relationships between human spatiality and social relations. By disclosing the heterodox character of regional literary analysis I have sought to demonstrate that we, as literary critics, can define and practice a regional mode of literary analysis on our own terms. In other words, there is nothing either natural or inevitable about Canadian literary critics' long-standing tendency to associate the regional with the literatures of coast, prairie, hinterland or margin, or with seemingly distinctive, authentic, or indigenous modes of writing.

This study is the result of my attempt to exercise this newly discovered sense of agency by advancing and exemplifying a novel mode of regional literary analysis. Yet it is an agency I have endeavoured to exercise with the knowledge that my own efforts are but one contribution to a tradition of literary analysis that precedes me by generations. Thus I have sought to re-think the process of regional literary analysis, while maintaining a close focus on human spatiality and one of the concepts that has consistently shaped this field's enquiries—identity.

I have chosen to re-imagine literary regionalism as the practice of demonstrating cross-textual patterns in the way literary texts deploy representations of socio-material space in order to articulate identities. There was, of course, nothing inevitable about my decision to imagine literary regionalism in *this way* and not in any number of other ways. At the same time, I was inevitably inclined towards this mode of regional analysis by my own theoretical convictions. For one, I felt that it was time to turn literary regionalism towards the analysis of a more contemporary understanding of both space and identity; thus part one's critiques were guided by my desire to demonstrate what I see as deficiencies in the ways Canadian literary critics have conceptualized regional space and regional identity.

My decision to prioritize representations of *socio-material* space followed from my desire to preserve what I see as the most valuable facet of Canadian literary regionalism's multi-faceted history—its ability to focus attention on the difference that socio-material locatedness makes to the production of social meaning, and in particular, to the production of identities. Although my mode of literary regionalism differs in multiple and substantive ways from both the first- and second-solitude schools I have isolated, this project has been guided by a conservative impulse in so far as I have sought to return Canadian literary regionalism to its earlier focus on (so-called) material space. Despite the problematic means by which Kreisel and McCourt approached regional analysis, it seemed to me that the value of their focus on (so-called) material locatedness

had been lost in the impulse to—quite rightly—distance Canadian literary regionalism from the discourse of environmental determinism that shaped their regional analyses.

What renders this more traditional focus something worthy of preservation is, quite simply, its relative uniqueness: it was in order to better exploit regionalism's potential to address an otherwise neglected facet of identity studies that I decided to prioritize representations of socio-material space. It is this potential that I believe second-solitude regionalists have compromised in their efforts to shift the focus of regional analysis from socio-material to socio-conceptual space. This loss of particularity is most clearly seen in New's *Land Sliding*, where he equates the regional with the marginal. However effectively this approach disrupts the environmental determinism of the first-solitude school, and however admirably it draws attention to the interrelatedness of socio-material and socio-conceptual space, I have declined to take regionalism in this direction because such perspectives on literature and social identity already receive attention: First Nations studies, gay and lesbian studies, feminist studies and ethnic studies are all flourishing as vital branches of Canadian literary scholarship that address the literatures of the social margin. Thus it was regionalism's potential capacity to fill a void within Canadian literary studies, while also preserving a facet of this field's early history, that led me to limit the practice of literary regionalism to the study of those identities that are articulated through representation of socio-material space.

To limit regional literary analysis to such a focus is not to constitute this field as a separate sphere of literary inquiry, one that has no truck with the social margin. As my literary analyses in parts two and three have illustrated, representations of socio-material space play a vital role in producing characters as socially marginal, as they do in gendering, racing, classing and sexualizing them (though I have not examined all of these capacities in equal detail). What I see as one of the most promising aspects of the mode of regional analysis I advance here is its capacity to provide a largely neglected perspective on the production of a myriad of social identities.

I must admit to finding it somewhat ironic that, while endeavouring to expand the breadth of literary regionalism's traditional focus, I have dedicated considerable energy to pursuing some of regionalism's most well-trodden narrative terrain—representations of outdoor, non-urban environments. In part two I focused upon the relationship between moral and geographic wandering in female characters, a substantial portion of which involved demonstrating a link between a female character's tendency to transgress the norms of gender propriety and her tendency to engage in sexual activity out of doors; and in part three I have endeavoured to explain how and why epiphanic shifts in identity frequently occur within an asocial nature—indeed, Kreisel's beloved wheat fields even made an appearance here.

Part two's focus upon outdoor spaces was certainly encouraged by the fact that I chose to exemplify the analysis of literary place using Bruce's *The Channel Shore*. Because the distinction between indoor and outdoor space was so meaningful to the regularization of gender identity in Bruce's novel, it was this spatial distinction I brought to bear upon my other twentieth-century Canadian realist novels as I shifted to my regional mode of analysis. Part three's focus on nature emerged from my desire to focus, in this last third of my dissertation, on developing the most efficient conceptual net I could construct to capture some of the more overtly spatialized moments of identity formation I had encountered in my group of novels. I constructed this conceptual net by hybridizing contemporary conceptualizations of nature with residual manifestations of the Kantian sublime. It was to my surprise and delight that the poetics of identity formation that emerged as I examined and ordered the contents of this net included amongst its occasionally hackneyed items some remarkably subtle and poignant spatial strategies by means of which characters negotiate conflictual facets of their self-understanding.

Though my decision to include some of those twentieth-century Canadian realist novels that tend to be interpreted as regional (such as *Wild Geese* and *The Channel Shore*) has likely played a role in tilting this study towards the investigation of classically

regional environments, I cannot attribute this focus to the texts themselves. My inclusion of Lee's *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*, Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* and MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees* ensured that I could, potentially, have focused on representations of urban space, for example. When I look back on the evolution of part three, I realize that my own socio-material situation should be acknowledged as one of several forces that inclined me towards a focus on nature: finding myself in Vancouver for graduate studies and in possession of a car for the first time, I was predisposed to focus on sublime encounters with nature by my own recent discovery of British Columbia's spectacular system of parks and trails. I have often had to laugh when, finding myself upon a hard-won precipice, my mind turned to lofty thoughts. Despite the training that has taught me to read such places as socio-cultural products, a less conscious portion of my being persisted in trying to efface this knowledge. In one sense, then, part three was a very personal project, one that constituted a pleasurable and thought-provoking effort to exorcise a latent romanticism that is certainly not my personal inheritance, but is an inheritance I must, nonetheless, own.

Though I regret not having had the time and space to explore some of the many *unconventional* regional terrains my group of texts offer up for analysis, I cannot say that I regret the attention I have dedicated to traditional regional terrains. For one, doing so has allowed me to disrupt one of the central myths that has long been used to argue for the distinctiveness of regional literatures. McCourt expresses this myth succinctly when he claims that "true regional literature" must, of necessity, illustrate "the subtle modifications of character which inevitably result from the influence upon ordinary men and women of a highly distinctive environment" (*The Canadian West in Fiction* 56). What my attention to discursive productions of nature and outdoor social spaces has demonstrated is that literary representations of so-called regional environments (as McCourt understood the term) are not nearly so limited and peculiar in their effect on characters as McCourt believed them to be. In part three, for example, I demonstrated

that the residual sublime's capacity to enable shifts in identity has less to do with whether an author is representing a prairie wheat field or a waterfall in Central Canada than it does with an author's need to invoke an asocial nature to articulate the performance of a novel identity position. Within the mode of regionalism I advance here, regions are, by definition, *particular* in that they link representations of specific kinds of socio-material spaces to the articulation of specific kinds of identities. Yet the particularity of the regions I have constructed derives from their hermeneutic, psychological, or ideological function, not from their capacity to draw together representations of any one portion of the earth's environment.

I do regret not having had the opportunity to explore the semiotics of the domicile in greater detail. I touched upon the ideological work performed by the social space of the house in part two, where I demonstrated a link between female characters' tendency to transgress the norms of gender propriety and their tendency to wander from hearth and home. Yet much of interest remains to be said on this topic because this social space plays such a significant role in managing and aestheticizing subjecthood. Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Fall on Your Knees* returned the intriguing possibilities this literary place proffers to the fore of my imagination again and again; with its provocative deployment of attics and cellars, hidden passageways and bootleg mines, hope chests and haunted stairwells, the Piper domicile cries out for an in-depth place-analysis.

Such a place-study could easily extend into a regional analysis of the domicile, one that could tell us a great deal about how architectural barriers enable groups to manage social relations in highly symbolic ways. In both *Fall on Your Knees* and *Obasan*, for example, the uppermost room of the house is utilized as a repository for the artifacts of a repressed family history. Similarly, it is no coincidence that Kae situates both epic battles between Fong Mei and Mui Lan in *Disappearing Moon Cafe* in the bedroom in which Fong Mei is expected to conceive children. While the childless Fong Mei is cowed into submission on the first occasion, she returns, pregnant and vengeful, to

this very room to invert this power-hierarchy at a point later in the text (57-62; 136-7). Nor is it a coincidence that, in *Swamp Angel*, Vera and Maggie engage in their most embittered battle in the lodge kitchen—as the heart of the lodge and of the Gunnarsen's domestic sphere, this room seems the inevitable place in which these women's social relations would reach their apogee of hostility (141). Even Caleb Gare's power waxes and wanes according to his location within the Gare home; while he most frequently exercises his authority around the dining room table or in the living room, he, too, has locales of disempowerment. It is the fact that Caleb cannot enter the upper loft that Lind shares with Jude that produces this room as a social space of resistance, one in which Lind can bolster Jude's flagging spirits after she returns, self-doubting and self-loathing, from the fields. By proffering the delights and privileges of an alternate, more bourgeois and feminized existence, Lind repeatedly rejuvenates Jude's confidence in her ability to perform an identity apart from the one Caleb foists upon her (17; 163-4; 177-8; 223).

Some of the most engaging insights this project has offered are those that emerged in moments when my mind detached itself from the particularities of my immediate scholarly concerns and roamed more freely over the full range of problematics and representations before me. Such moments occasionally revealed trends that operate across the conceptual barriers I have constructed to manage this project, some of which I would like to mention here, not so much because I can derive any overarching insight from them but because they may ignite a helpful spark in my readers, as they have awakened possibilities for future work in myself.

One such trend that has caught my interest is the regularity with which racialized others are deployed as agents who mediate between differing, and often contestatory, social worlds. In *Fall on Your Knees*, for example, it is Leo Taylor who ushers Kathleen Piper from home to school (121), as it is Leo whom James relies upon to transport his bootleg whisky from the hidden still to Jameel's speakeasy (354). It is also Leo who ferries messages between James and the father-in-law who has officially disowned the

Pipers but maintains “a grudging respect for his good-for-nothing son-in-law” (116). And similarly, it is Teresa Taylor who arrives at the Piper home with a cheque when James puts his pride aside and asks his father-in-law to fund Kathleen’s operatic training in New York City (121). In Wilson’s *Swamp Angel*, Maggie goes to considerable trouble to ensure that it is a “Chinese taxi” that sweeps her from home and husband and in so doing, initiates her journey from Vancouver to Kamloops, and from Maggie Vardoe to Maggie Lloyd (21). And in *Two Solitudes*, it is John Yardley who mediates between the community of Saint Marc and the Tallard family after they are ostracized by the villagers on the word of Father Beaubien; after this event Yardley makes the daily trek to Polycarpe Drouin’s store, where he retrieves the Tallards’ mail and conveys it to them “without comment” (183). Though Yardley may not seem a racialized other by contemporary standards, MacLennan explicitly represents the French and English within Quebec as two distinct races (and in so doing, reinforces in the minds of contemporary readers the inherently social, and highly political, character of such categorizations) (10).

These examples reveal the role seemingly casual, day-to-day spatial practices play not so much in expressing racial difference, but in producing and maintaining such radical breaks in social continuity. Such practices also demonstrate the irony that renders the category of race an inherently unstable one: while the very usefulness of race hinges upon its capacity to connote *absolute* social difference, the processes that produce this category inevitably belie the *relative* character of social difference (a relativity which should, but for the effectivity of power, disable this category).

In the above examples it is their apparent radical difference that enables Leo and Teresa Taylor, Joey Quong and John Yardley to act as mediating agents because this difference is read as a sign of their disinterestedness. Their use-value as mediating agents derives from the fact that parties in need of a mediator construct such subjects as agents who operate in social orbits distinct from that of the subject in need of mediation. Were those in need of mediation to acknowledge that they and their mediators exist within

interpenetrating social orbits, the mediator's very function—to prevent a potential loss of honour or social prestige—would be disabled. Although the disinterestedness of such mediators is often a very tenuous social fiction indeed (and one that is exposed as false by all of the texts in question), it is an extremely productive social fiction. Were it not for Yardley's intervention, the Tallards would have to publicly acknowledge their dishonored status within Saint Marc by exhibiting themselves before the derisive public eye; were it not for Joey Quong, Maggie would have incurred a greater risk of having to disclose the nature of her exodus to her cab-driver (thus increasing her likelihood of being found, or of revealing the guilt she suppresses so tenaciously); were it not for Leo Taylor, James Piper would be forced to acknowledge the social relations that link him to the town speakeasy, thereby undermining the guise of social distinction Leo's actions allow James to maintain; and finally, were it not for Teresa, Mr. Mahmoud would be forced to acknowledge his status as an internally conflicted individual, a man who has broken his word in re-establishing social relations between himself and the Pipers.

Something my methodology in part three did not encourage me to dwell upon was the differing degree to which the novels I have collected here were open or closed to the mode of analysis I was utilizing: because this analysis was largely dedicated to demonstrating the temporal and thematic tenacity of the romantic sublime, it was not the place to foreground breaks within this line of continuity. Yet, having demonstrated this continuity, it is these breaks that leave me wondering. I was fascinated to discover, for instance, that in the novel I chose to dwell upon in part two because of its close narrative attention to everyday practices—Bruce's *The Channel Shore*—I was unable to discern any manifestations of the residual sublime. The only other novel for which this was the case was Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*.

I have long puzzled over these exceptions to an otherwise stable rule. Given that five of my novels were written by women, and three by men, authorial gender struck me as a possible explanation for this discontinuity. Both *The Channel Shore* and *In the Skin*

*of a Lion* were written by male authors, yet so is *Two Solitudes*, which does include several manifestations of the residual sublime (only some of which I discussed in part three). I have also puzzled over whether narrative technique could explain these anomalies, yet it is hard to discern a consistent pattern here, either: Ondaatje's mode of narration is very different from Bruce's and shows, in its attention to narrative authority and in its efforts to destabilize this authority, more affinity with the narrative strategies utilized by Lee in *Disappearing Moon Cafe* and MacDonald in *Fall on Your Knees*, both of which did exhibit several manifestations of the residual sublime.

Thus I am left wondering what it is about *In the Skin of a Lion* and *The Channel Shore* that explains the absence of the residual sublime. The one distinguishing feature I have fixed upon is that these novels both pay relatively close narrative attention to processes of male manual labour. Bruce delineates with careful attention processes of logging, fishing and boat-building; Ondaatje also emphasizes the particularities of logging, as well as those of bridge building, tunnel construction, and tanning. While Osteno's *Wild Geese* pays a great deal of attention to the labour-intensive process of farming, this is not a gender-exclusive focus; Jude is clearly represented as the most able-bodied and competent of Caleb's home-grown team of indentured labourers, and she, Ellen and Martin complete these labours together.

I was not surprised to find that Bruce's novel yielded no incidents of the residual sublime; there is something doggedly anti-romantic about this novel, with its minute focus upon modes of social organization and interaction; any romantic inclinations or sentimental feelings Bruce exhibits in this novel are directed towards the place he chronicles and the inevitability that it, too, must be continually transformed with the passage of time. By contrast, I was struck by the absence of any manifestations of the residual sublime in Ondaatje's novel because he brings a very aestheticized eye to social interaction. Ondaatje has a predilection for drawing attention to the vulnerability of human embodiment, an ineluctable condition that renders all characters deserving of a

compassionate assessment; and he often elicits such compassion through a narrative focus upon sensual experience—the traumatized Alice pressing her shock-flushed face against the cold zinc of a table (39); Commissioner Harris's alarm at seeing blood on Patrick's neck as the morning light enters the room in which he is held hostage (241); the young boy, Alfred, "gasp[ing]" as he glimpses the extensive scarring on Carvaggio's neck ("as if some giant bird had left claw marks from trying to lift off the man's head") while removing paint from the convict's face (182).

I tried repeatedly, and in vain, to examine the scene in which Alice falls from the bridge and is rescued by Temelcoff—here, I thought, the residual sublime must, surely, be in evidence. This incident has all the requisite drama; the situation has vertical eminence; this scenario could easily be read as epiphanic in the sense that Alice is re-born as Alice Gull as a result of this fall. Yet it seemed that Ondaatje's careful attention to the bodily mechanics of this rescue—the wrenched shoulder, the careful decision-making process Temelcoff runs through in deciding on a course of action, the phenomenal bodily strength involved in getting back to solid ground—would not recede from view to reveal the traces of another, less materialistic encoding. Ondaatje clearly refused to mystify Alice's rescue, preferring instead to lavish attention on Temelcoff's wondrous capacity to negotiate space and time. Which returns me, full circle, to the shared themes of work, and to the gendered nature of that work, to explain the absence of the residual sublime in these two texts. Which suggests to me that the residual sublime may have ties to processes of engenderment that I have not yet addressed.

But this is work that must be set aside for the present. Having now reviewed some of the decisions that have brought this dissertation to its current form, and gestured towards some of those terrains that beckon me still, the time has come to bid this project farewell. It is a rather daunting task to conclude such an extensive undertaking, but it is a necessary task, and one that demands a careful articulation of my own sense of what I have achieved here. To my mind, this dissertation has made two chief contributions to

the study of Canadian literature; though these contributions are highly interrelated, they are distinguishable. The first is explicitly interdisciplinary; in this dissertation I have instigated a productive dialogue between the fields of Canadian literary criticism and human geography, one that offers vital and largely unexplored insights into the textual production of social meaning and identity. This is a conversation I will continue to pursue long after this project's completion because it has not yet run its course; indeed, I have only begun to explore the novel perspectives human geography can provide on the narrative production of meaning. If I have inspired others to join in this dialogue, I am amply rewarded.

When I assess this project from the perspective of Canadian literary regionalism, I view my efforts to specify and justify my own understanding of what the process of regional literary analysis should entail as my most valuable contribution to this field of study. Whether or not I have managed to persuade my readers to adopt the mode of regional literary analysis I propose here, much value inheres in the exercise of explication itself. Although many Canadian literary critics have participated in the discourse of literary regionalism, too few have paused to question what the process of regional literary analysis should entail, and why. It is my hope that, by emphasizing regionalism's status as an analytic practice over which we have control—and for which we are responsible—I may spur some productive debate about the role this field should play in Canadian literary studies. If I have encouraged Canadian literary critics to re-imagine regional literary analysis as a provocative and pliant process we have only begun to explore, I rest content.

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