

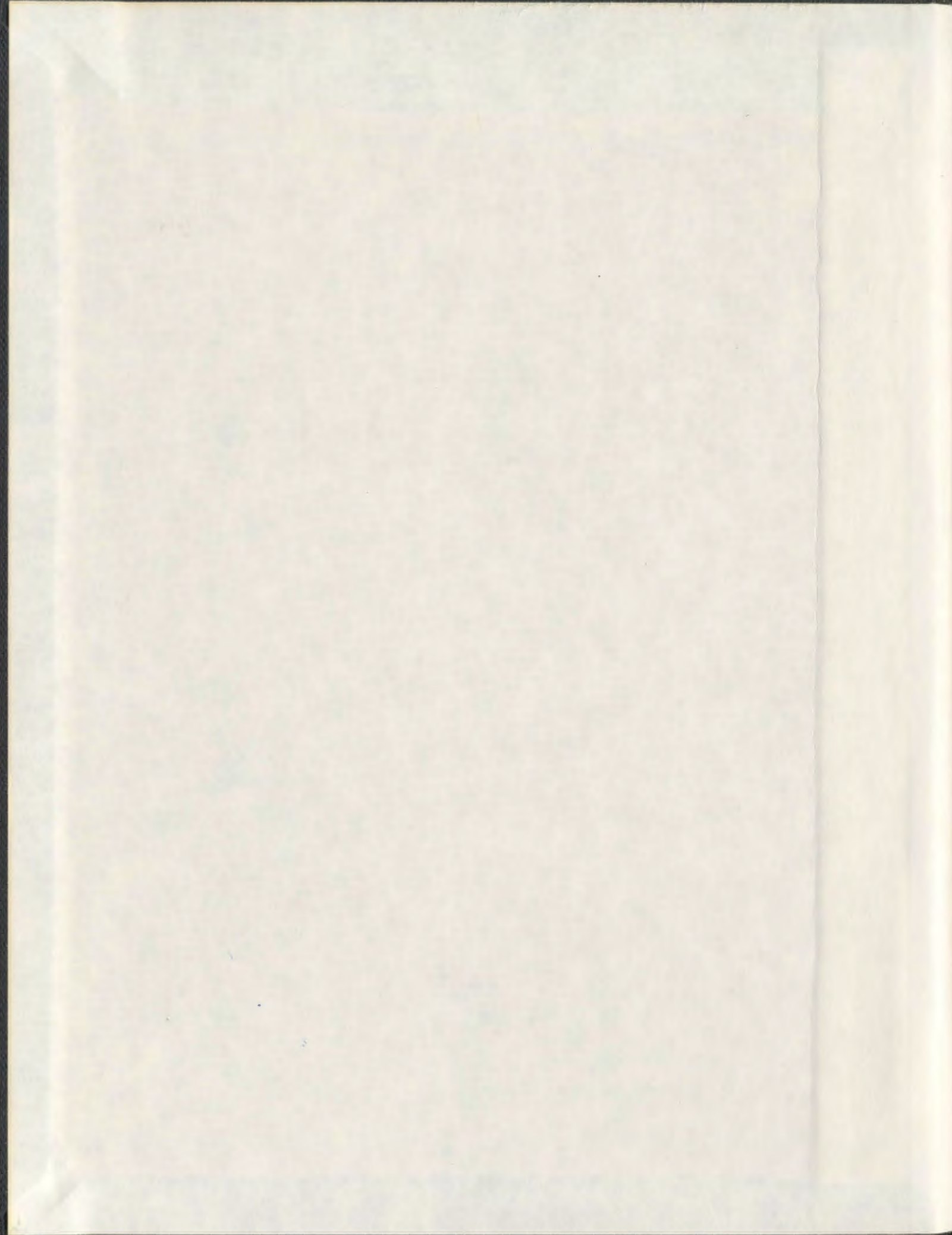
DIALOGIC REGIONAL VOICES:
A STUDY OF SELECTED CONTEMPORARY
ATLANTIC-CANADIAN FICTION

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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Dialogic Regional Voices: A Study of Selected
Contemporary Atlantic-Canadian Fiction

by

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Abstract

This study examines several contemporary Atlantic-Canadian novels, including Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien, by Alden Nowlan, Middlewatch and Penumbra, by Susan Kerslake, Lives of Short Duration and others, by David Adams Richards, and The Afterlife of George Cartwright, by John Steffler. Based on the cultural and political theories of Mikhail M. Bakhtin, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and others, it suggests that these novels employ a dialogic paradigm of relations to counter monologic paradigms that underrate Atlantic Canada and its cultures. As dialogic regional voices, they go further than those of writers such as Thomas Raddall, Charles Bruce, and Ernest Buckler to depict the interaction of conflicting ideological voices. One of their central features is a critique of oppressive hierarchies, especially those associated with national culturalism and exploitative capitalism, whose classificatory schemes misrepresent Atlantic Canada and its literature.

Read as counterdiscourses, the novels of Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, Steffler, and others subvert these hierarchies and argue for a regional hermeneutic that focuses on diversity, plurality, and egalitarianism. To do so, they represent conflicting multiple ideological voices

to show how no one position can accurately represent another; they oppose nationalist systems based on unitarian principles, especially those that attempt to homogenize Canada's regional cultures; and they see the natural world as an ecosystemic environment conducive to dialogic human relationships.

In these novels, the regional ethos is no longer parochially limited; it becomes the site of political antagonisms and universal themes usually associated with national literatures. Through their characters, these novels articulate a new subject position for Atlantic Canada that debunks ultra-regionalist and nationalist stereotypes. Characters are depicted primarily as human beings in opposition to other roles and positions constructed for them by demeaning political or capitalist systems. When read through this alternative hermeneutic, Atlantic Canada and its literature are less subjected to extraneous evaluative schema and can be reassessed according to criteria established within both their own and other cultural and political horizons.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The contemporary Atlantic-Canadian novel is part of a regional literature that has become the site of a debate between nationalist and regionalist critics. This debate is over the representation of Atlantic-Canadian literature and the authority to ascribe it a value. It involves both the politics of identity and cultural values and can be succinctly described by a statement about general ideological debates made by Pierre Bourdieu in Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (1984):

What is at stake in the struggles about the meaning of the social world is power over the classificatory schemes and systems which are the basis of the representations of the groups and therefore of their mobilization and demobilization. (479)

What is at stake in the debate between nationalists and regionalists is the imprimatur to assert a paradigm of relations which can be used to define not only the literature of a region, but that of Canada itself.

Each group wishes to convert its paradigm of relations into a classificatory scheme for evaluating regional literatures. Because neither group has yet established unquestionable control in this area, the Atlantic-Canadian novel has come under the simultaneous application of two major conflicting aesthetics, and the result has been an obfuscation of its polemical and subversive nature.

Critics such as E. K. Brown in the 1940s, thematic critics such as Northrop Frye in the 1970s, and T. D. MacLulich and W. J. Keith in the 1980s and 1990s have contributed in various ways to the development of a nationalist aesthetic.¹ They have done so either by emphasizing the unity of Canada's regions over their diversity or by criticizing regionalist aesthetics for its perceived parochialism and its failure to complement national or universal standards of literary excellence. Although Keith and other critics such as Robert Lecker are more receptive to regionalist writing than are their nationalist predecessors, they still equate regionalism with nihilistic fragmentation and nationalism with meaningful holism. As Lecker, for example, says in his most recent book, Making It Real: The Canonization of English-Canadian Literature (1995),

If one objects to any formulation of the nation as an entity that can be described - that is worth describing - then one has to fall back on a pluralist vision of the country that sees it as a conglomeration of competing forces and centres of power. This is the view endorsed by much contemporary Canadian theory. But if one promotes this view, there is no reason to describe the conglomeration as *Canadian*, and no need to speak to the Canadian public (or students) about it. (9; Lecker's italics)

The implication here is that a regionalist paradigm precludes any notion of national unity at all, even

political unity.

Regionalist critics, such as George Woodcock, Eli Mandel, W. H. New, and E. D. Blodgett, and Atlantic critics, such as Janice Kulyk Keefer, Gwendolyn Davies, and Ursula Kelly, recognize the existence of a political Canada, but emphasize the diversity and autonomy of its regions over any claims for its unity.³ They complain that nationalist critics impose on regional literature a literary standard which they see as privileging a centralist socio-cultural and political hegemony located in Ontario. For example, W. H. New recently comments in Canadian Literature that one possible reason for the lack of publicity for Jack Hodgins's The Macken Charm might be "its distance from the offices of the Globe" ("Reading" 203). A more strident complaint can be found in a letter to the Globe and Mail by George Elliott Clarke, a former Nova Scotian teacher and writer. He charges that

When some Upper Canadian critics deign to assess East Coast art, they are struck at once by a savage myopia, one which deludes them into thinking that 'universal' art can only issue from pricy, cockroach-infested garrets in Toronto or Montreal. ("East" D9)

Although the interpretation of all Atlantic-Canadian novels is affected by this debate between nationalist and regionalist critics, the novels to be studied here, Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien (1973) by Alden Nowlan,

Middlewatch (1976) and Penumbra (1984) by Susan Kerslake, Lives of Short Duration (1981) and others by David Adams Richards, and The Afterlife of George Cartwright (1992) by John Steffler, suffer particular distortions when interpreted through the unificatory principles at work in both the nationalist and regionalist paradigms.³ Under the nationalist aesthetic, these distortions are the result of the application of an urban hermeneutic to a rural sensibility. When these novels do gain national attention, concern with social issues and themes dominates questions of narrative form, metafictional elements, voice, and language.

Further disfiguration results from the misrepresentation of these novels by Atlantic regionalist critics who minimize the importance of their experimental and postmodern features or discuss them only in the context of realism. Generally, the novels are used to illustrate only the conservative and traditional aspects of Atlantic-Canadian literature, particularly those that harmonize with the conventions of the realist novel. An example here would be Keefer, who minimizes the experimental aspects of these novels in Under Eastern Eyes in order to maintain the impression of Maritime or Atlantic-Canadian literature as an autonomous, unified entity with its own conservative regime of values. Consequently, Nowlan's use of narratorial self-reflexivity, Kerslake's psycho-realism and expressionistic

language, and Richards' disjunctive chronology, uses of free indirect discourse, and multiple points of view are not deviant enough from traditional techniques to warrant extended discussion. The experimental and the postmodern may be too abrasive to the notion of a conservative Atlantic-Canadian regime of values to bear sustained reference.

But, as John Frow explains in Cultural Studies and Cultural Value (1995), the concept of regime itself leads to the thesis that

no object, no text, no cultural practice has an intrinsic or necessary meaning or value or function; and that meaning, value, and function are always the effect of specific (and changing, changeable) social relations and mechanisms of significations. (145)

In this context, the undervaluation and misrepresentation of the Atlantic-Canadian novel can be interpreted as strategies by nationalists and regionalists for social as well as aesthetic differentiation and legitimation. Because of this and because, as Frow suggests, "There is no escape from the discourse of value" (134), the critic's job must be "to analyze the social relations of value themselves: to analyze the discourses of value, the socially situated frameworks of valuation from which value judgements are generated by readers" (135). Robert Lecker seems to agree with Frow in Making It Real when he says that "no progress can be made toward a new view of Canadian literature and its canon until

we begin to question and theorize the values informing the works we study and the language we bring to bear on our study" (47). He goes so far as to call for the rewriting of Canadian literary history:

There are voices everywhere. . . . But we've shut them out. . . .

But we can change things. Whoever reads Canadian literary history can write it anew. To re-view and renew Canadian literary history in this way would be to liberate ourselves from the worn-out methodologies and antimethodologies we believe we should believe in or believe we should import. (48)

One of the objectives of this study is to show that a certain stream of the Atlantic-Canadian novel, represented here by the work of Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, Steffler, and others, engages in just such a liberating process. These writers reject relationships based on hierarchies of any kind and promote, instead, a paradigm of relations that is inclusive, pluralistic, and egalitarian in orientation. They espouse a philosophy of human relationships that is best described by Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the "dialogic," which is concerned with the "inter-orientation" of identities, especially as they are metonymized as languages and voices (Dialogic 279). Their strategy involves the presentation of a "multiplicity of social voices," a condition Bakhtin refers to as "heteroglossia" (263). This background of social voices provides the context from which the voices in the foreground derive their meaning. One

common characteristic of their novels, then, is the representation of "dialogized heteroglossia" as the basis for social interrelationships (Dialogic 272-74).

Although every novel is dialogized to some extent, these works highlight the dialogic principle as a means of deconstructing the ideologies of dominant institutions that privilege those who construct them (Dialogic 49). As dialogic regional voices, they criticize unitarianism in both its national and regional forms and call for the dialogization of identities, of ethnicity, race, gender, and languages. They also compare well with other Atlantic-Canadian fiction such as The Black Horse Tavern (1972), The Struggle Outside (1975), and The Bannockbridge Musicians (1978) by Raymond Fraser, Riverrun (1973) by Peter Such, Quilt (1982) by Donna Smyth, Random Passage (1992) by Bernice Morgan, and The Glace Bay Miners' Museum (1995) by Sheldon Currie. All these novels attempt to level traditional social and literary hierarchies of value as a means of granting their characters equal status with other groups privileged by these hierarchies. Their literary and linguistic heterodoxy, their representation of multiple voices and identities, their questioning of institutional regimes of value, and their acceptance of alterity place them at odds with other novels which are less dialogic, which rely more on a rigid hierarchy of literary, social,

and cultural values. Examples of the latter would include Each Man's Son (1951) by Hugh MacLennan and No Man's Land (1995) by Kevin Major.

Bakhtin has said that there are two lines of dialogization: one of harmony and one of disharmony (Dialogic 283). The primary novels in this study show both lines in their depiction of personal and political relations, but their endings show the affected characters in a state of recovery from the pernicious effects of subjugation by dominant individuals or by governing monolithic institutions and their ideologies. At the ends of the novels, characters have moved to extricate themselves from the myths and stereotypes that distance one social or cultural group from another. They invest themselves in their cultural or social opposites, as Sibbi and Morgan do in Middlewatch and Packet and Emma Jane Ward do in Lives. The other possibility is that they realize their complicity in cultural or social hegemony, as Kevin O'Brien does in Various Persons, and as George Cartwright, his brother John, and Mrs. Selby do in Afterlife. In this way, the novelists depict dialogic relations as a possible solution to the problems of subjugation and repression created by a monological approach to relationships.

Before examining in more detail how these respective novels use this dialogic paradigm of relations, it is

necessary to outline with some specificity the relational paradigms favoured by nationalist and regionalist critics. It is also necessary to examine the charge by Canadian deconstructive critics such as Cynthia Sugars, Herb Wyile and Jeanette Lynes, Lianne Moyes, and Barbara Godard, that nationalists and regionalists rely on the same fundamental philosophical premises.¹ Because these discussions provide a background against which the dialogic regional voices may be heard, a survey of the theories relevant to voice and to regional and national identity will be deferred and dealt with in a subsequent chapter on methodology.

1.1 The Nationalist Paradigm

Critics such as E. K. Brown, T. D. MacLulich, W. J. Keith, and Robert Lecker see Canada as a unified mosaic of politically and culturally connected regions. Their emphasis is on the unity of Canada's diverse elements and on regions as mere contributors to the nation. Especially for Brown and MacLulich, regionalism is too closely associated with parochialism and myopia to be trusted solely with communicating national values or universal concepts of humanity; that task is left to nationalist literature. Consequently, most Atlantic-Canadian novels are already handicapped under this aesthetic paradigm. Only those which are seen to transcend the stifling limitations of the region

and to connect with Canadian or universal themes stand a chance of a positive critical reception by nationalist critics.

E. K. Brown's article "The Problem of a Canadian Literature," published in 1943, presents ideas typical of nationalist literary criticism.⁵ Here, Brown complains that outside of Canada the works of Canadian writers such as Morley Callaghan and Mazo de la Roche "have not been important as reflections of phases in a national culture" (4). The problem is that Canada is a collection of provinces that have a "tendency to self-aggrandizement" (21). Using ambiguous phrasing, Brown says that

Among most Canadians there is little eagerness to explore the varieties of Canadian life, little awareness how much variety exists, or what a peril that variety is, in time of crisis, to national unity. (21)

Later, though, Brown is categorical in his attitude toward regionalism: "In the end, however, regionalist art will fail because it stresses the superficial and the peculiar at the expense, at least, if not to the exclusion, of the fundamental and universal" (21). Here the case is clear: regionalism generates the "superficial" and "peculiar," and, therefore, cannot express the "universal."

But how do we reconcile this statement with Brown's earlier criticisms of writers such as Callaghan and de la Roche for omitting descriptive details in their novels that

enable readers to identify the regions or locales in which the novels are set? Is not geographical specificity a key element of regionalism? Brown seems to value "original flavour" (21), but, at the same time, to devalue regionalism. Uncannily, he defines regionalism by its negative aspects and places it in contradistinction to universalism. Its positive aspects, the things which he thinks identify the novels as "Canadian," its "Toronto" or rural Ontario settings, are excluded from his implicit definition (10).

Brown's 1943 essay is a precursor for comments by later critics such as MacLulich and Keith, who respond to regional literature generally on sociological grounds, while at the same time failing to give equal consideration to aesthetic principles. By the time we get to Various Persons, published in 1973, the regional novel has already been stigmatized by its unfair associations with what Brown refers to as the "superficial" and the "peculiar" (21). This confusing and ambiguous view of regionalism becomes a conundrum that plagues the nationalist paradigm, and it is discernible in nationalist statements by later critics such as MacLulich and Keith. Their discussions of nationalism and regionalism become more complex, especially when they are conjugated with aesthetic principles based on thematicism, realism, and experimentation.

T. D. MacLulich speaks as a nationalist when he advocates a traditional realist approach to Canadian fiction and a belief in the literary nationalist project advanced by thematics. In his article "What Was Canadian Literature? Taking Stock of the Canlit Industry" (1984-85), MacLulich attempts a taxonomy of aesthetic paradigms when he recognizes a "split between those who approach literature primarily in terms of its content and those who are more interested in the intricacies of literary technique" (30). He observes that,

Until recently much of the best Canadian fiction has sought to occupy a middle ground, using the conventions of the bourgeois novel to make significant statements about life in particular parts of our country. . . . We should be encouraging such writing (and some of us are) rather than calling for experimental or language-centred fiction. (31-32)

Under this evaluative scheme, any regional literature (or urban for that matter) that features motifs of voice and experimental use of syntax, as do the primary works under study here, is relegated to secondary status. In a later essay, "Thematic Criticism, Literary Nationalism, and the Critics New Clothes" (1987), he adds that "some form of literary nationalism provides the only logical justification for treating Canadian literature as a separate field of study" (17-18). According to this statement, regional literature cannot be evaluated on its own terms, within its

own social and cultural contexts. Such a prescriptive axiology dooms regional cultural nuances to various forms of misinterpretation.

Under these developing nationalist prejudices, Atlantic-Canadian novels such as Nowlan's Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien, Susan Kerslake's Middlewatch and Penumbra, Richards' Lives of Short Duration, and Steffler's The Afterlife of George Cartwright seem doubly doomed; they neither promote literary nationalism nor fully subscribe to conventional realism. The nationalist privileging of nation and realism is part of an evaluative scheme which may be defined by the Bakhtinian term "mono-ideational framework" (Problems 78). This is a reductive, myopic view of literature which denies the representation of multiple, conflicting voices, or what Bakhtin calls the "polyphonic project" (Problems 78). It disregards the authenticity of individual dialogic regional voices in favour of a communal synthesis that creates the impression of a nation whose socio-cultural identity is uniform and cohesive.

Several comments made by W. J. Keith demonstrate that he, too, endorses this framework. Although he rejects outright, in his introduction to Canadian Literature in English (1985), what he identifies as the two extremes of nationalism, he still considers nationalism a movement which "has been beneficial in that it has contributed to an

awakened sense of national purpose" (5). And, although he recognizes Canada's "healthy cultural diversity" (6), he sees this country as "a distinct entity," which is made distinct "in part by virtue of its culture" (8). His concluding comment is that "'Canadian' emerges as a unique designation, and Canadian literature . . . forms itself as the embodiment of a scattered and elusive people's communal vision" (9). This is soft nationalism, nationalism which is less strident in its denial of the regions' contributions to culture in Canada, but it is nationalism which is still confused over what to do with the obtrusive regional voices that demand to be heard. Keith's solution is to ignore them. He goes so far as to exclude from Canadian Literature in English any mention at all of fiction by Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, or even Ray Smith.

From E. K. Brown to MacLulich and Keith, the paradox of nationalism has been its conception of the regions both as constitutive of and abrasive to national identity; regional literature is praiseworthy and canonizable when it promotes national identity and deplorable and dispensable when it promotes only the region's identity. Lecker has noted in Making It Real that this brand of nationalism, or this "national-referential aesthetic," as he calls it, dominated Canadian criticism into the 1980s and that

canonical activity in Canada has been driven by

different applications of the national-referential ideal, and by the assumption that a country without a national literature is not a country at all. (4)

Lecker adds that "the Canadian literary institution promoted self-recognition and national recognition in order to confirm its own canonical status" (5).

These statements take us back to Bourdieu's comment in Distinction about how groups struggle for power over "classificatory schemes and systems" as a means for mobilization (479). What develops in the 1980s seems to be a challenge to the nationalist system by the regionalist system. It is a challenge which leads even flickering nationalists like Lecker to comment that the "history of institutional Canadian criticism no longer strikes me as a purely nationalist project; now I see it as a conflicted narrative, driven by the double desire to reject and accept its Canadianness" (6).³

1.2 The Regionalist Paradigm

Like nationalist critics, regionalist critics such as George Woodcock, Eli Mandel, W. H. New, and E. D. Blodgett see unity in the diversity of regions that comprise Canada. However, their emphasis is on the distinctiveness of each region and on its social and cultural diversity rather than on any sense of unity or community that might exist among

regions. They value local elements in fiction, not in opposition to universal elements, but as universal elements. They are democratic pluralists who counter the distorting biases and prejudices of the nationalist critics by advancing the theory that all significant literature is informed by a specific sense of place. This sense of place, rather than leading to a parochial vision of humanity, can be used symbolically to explore the universal themes in all so-called great literature. When their relational paradigm is converted to a classificatory scheme for ordering literary works, the result is an inclusive canon open to all regions of Canada. In this canon, the Atlantic-Canadian novel achieves a higher literary status than that assigned it by nationalist critics.

Woodcock offers his definitive statement on regionalism in The Meeting of Time and Space: Regionalism in Canadian Literature (1981).⁷ He believes that "to deny regionalism is to deny the Canadian nation as it historically and geographically exists" (9-10). For him, Canada is a confederation with "entities at least as distinct from each other as the cantons of Switzerland" (9-10). But he makes clear that autonomy and sovereignty do not preclude political union, as the nationalists believe. He says, "In fact, region-making and nation-making are aspects of the same process, since the special character of Canada as a

nation is that of a symbiotic union of regions" (22).

Woodcock's "symbiotic union" provides an obvious contrast to Keith's "communal vision" (Canadian Literature 9), which seems to be at the heart of one of Woodcock's complaints about the federalists' attitude towards the regions. He feels that, in their efforts to develop this vision, nationalists have exploited the regions; he says national institutions

have always worked against regional cultures, partly by centralizing the production of books and periodicals, and partly by drawing into their orbit many of the best talents from Canada outside the St. Lawrence valley" (23).

Woodcock could be thinking of Hugh MacLennan, whose Barometer Rising (1941) speaks of nationalist themes from regional ground, as does Two Solitudes (1945).

But Alden Nowlan can serve as an example too. Woodcock says Maritimers

have shown a greater stubbornness over a longer period in sustaining their own literary culture than the people of any other Canadian region except francophone Quebec. Yet there has been nothing enclosed or parochial about such regionalism. It speaks to other Canadians today as eloquently in the poems of Alden Nowlan as in the past it did in the poems of Roberts. (28)

Further defence of regionalism against the nationalist charge of parochialism comes near the end of his lecture, where he explains emphatically that "regionalism is not limiting, any more than true confederalism is" (37).

Woodcock's regionalist philosophy allows him to discuss work by Atlantic-Canadian writers, however briefly, in several of his books, and this exposure helps lift these writers out of the mire of nationalist obscurity.

Mandel's regionalist philosophy also helps raise the status of Atlantic-Canadian literature. We find his regionalist theory outlined in his contribution to Taking Stock: The Calgary Conference on the Canadian Novel (1982). In his paper "The Regional Novel: Borderline Art," he realizes that nationalist and regionalist approaches to literature affect its evaluation (105). He cites charges by A. J. M. Smith, Northrop Frye, and E. K. Brown that regionalism is, respectively, provincial, colonial, and prone to superficiality (104-5). In his view, the problem of these critics is a narrow geographical approach to regionalism. Mandel wants to include historical, economic, political, cultural, and linguistic contexts as well as the geographical (110). He is particularly adamant that region refers not just to physical place but, also, to voice. He aligns himself with Robert Kroetsch's theorizing on "voice" and says it

moves us from mere landscape art to something else in writing, something closer to the shared assumptions of a region, something carried in the folk culture. . . . Stylistically, it calls for a renewal or revitalization of language through a turn toward spoken rather than written or literary modes. Formally, it calls for a rejection of

realism and a reworking of form. (110)

For Mandel, form helps realize the writer's world just as much as content does, and this is why he values Nowlan's Various Persons, because novels like it "tend to allow structural features" to show (115).

Besides broadening the context for theorizing regionalism in Canada, Mandel also defines the regional novel as "borderline art," as the title of his paper suggests:

One major line of argument in this paper is that there is a variety of reasons for thinking of literary regionalism not as the concern with an autonomous world but as the definition of a series of social relationships, boundaries. (119)

Regionalism is caught between forces which "provide identities and distinctions, on the one hand, and relationships on the other" (119). Earlier he says "Distinctions of 'class,' 'region,' and 'ethnicity' might very well apply more adequately to the problem of defining a Canadian character and situation than any concept of 'national unity'" (118-19). So, Mandel is aligning himself with these forces, valuing distinction and identity, but also the relationships among regions, which help form the larger identity of nation. His politics place him on the dialogic border between the monologic extremes of closed regionalism and closed nationalism.

And this is where Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, Steffler,

and others locate their novels. Various Persons transverses the borders between the novel and the short story, and between fiction and metafiction; Middlewatch and Penumbra are set on the border between land and sea, between society and wilderness, and between language and pre-language; Lives of Short Duration and Richards' other novels question regional, national, and international borders, white and native borders, class and cultural borders, and the borders between realism and phenomenology; and Afterlife crosses the cultural borders between the colonial and the imperial, between the Inuit and the white, and between realism and supernaturalism.

These writers engage in what Frank Watt describes, in a panel discussion of Mandel's paper, as the process of identification whereby "what is inside [is] seen in relation to the context of what's outside the region," and it requires one to go back inside to "revalue and reassess" (127). Watt's comments are important because they lead to his observation that this process of identity formation through contextualization leads to a focus on the regions instead of the nation. He refers to the "new regionalism" that

has checked, and slowed up, and countered, and reversed the process of rapid transit and instantaneous communication, the rush toward a standardized, centralized, modern industrial, urban Canada. For the new realists write fiction

which often tends to show a kind of communication which is difficult, gradual, perhaps stalemated, countered by questions of roots and values. (127)

It is this question of conflicting regimes of value that we have to continue to engage in Canadian criticism. W. H. New discusses it in his conference paper, "Beyond Nationalism: On Regionalism."³ New considers the nationalist view of Canada to be untenable, but adds that the notion of Canada's regions as "simply contributing portions of a mosaic whole . . . is equally naive" (15). In referring to regions, New prefers to use the term "social variations," which exist within a society (17). He says "the truly regional voice is one that declares an internal political alternative" which "makes of the vernacular, the local attitude and the spatial allusion not simply a descriptive posture but a political gesture" (17). As readers we need to have "a sensitivity to regional nuance - that is, to the literary structures and metaphors of regions - [which] will make us aware of the link between language and political attitude" (17).

This link between region and voice is further emphasized by Blodgett in his theory of literary regionalism. In "Is a History of the Literatures of Canada Possible?" (1993) he defines nation as "a series of negotiations in which a plurality of ideologies is at issue" (3) and, quoting John Frow, he defines regions as distinct

"universes of discourse" (8). Just as Mandel uses the rhetoric of borders to discuss his regional paradigm, Blodgett, too, considers the regional border to be a "zone of negotiation" (10). If we look at the conflicting interpretations by nationalists and regionalists of Atlantic-Canadian literature, we may easily see how these interpretations are "negotiations" between cultures. In addition, Blodgett says, again referring to nation, that these negotiations are attempts by each culture to translate the other: "Cultural translations . . . possess frames that are shaped for intended audiences, and the same is true of literary translations. They are part of the process of *producing*, not innocently reproducing, meaning" (10; Blodgett's emphasis). For Blodgett, as for Mandel and New, "the Canadian subject is a border . . . eminently capable of translation, which is why it is often difficult to determine with this body of writing how meaning is to be agreed upon" (13).

So far, the regionalist paradigm sounds impressively democratic and egalitarian. But Mandel has said that regionalism can become a form of nationalism when regions overemphasize their autonomy and distinctiveness, that is, they can become as monologic as the nationalists. New, too, has said that a region's autonomy needs to be considered in

conjunction with its involvement in social relationships. A tension between autonomy and interdependence, or distinction and relationships, needs to be maintained in order for a region to identify itself.

A conclusion to be drawn here is that meanings and values are most valid when they are derived from negotiations on cultural borders. And if nationalism is a failure to even recognize the autonomy and distinctiveness of the regions, regionalism is also a failure when it becomes monologic regionalism, when regions construct their own centres and boundaries and devalue relationships with other cultures. Regionalism then becomes, as New says, "a form of 'nationalism' or 'regionalism' writ small" ("Beyond" 15). The distorted interpretations of Atlantic-Canadian novels created by this type of chauvinistic regionalism can be just as damaging as those created by the prejudices and biases of a nationalist agenda. For example, Keefer's regionalist view of Maritime Canada leads to several problematic interpretations of the work of Nowlan, Kerslake, and Richards.

In Under Eastern Eyes, Keefer builds fortifications around Maritime literature by overemphasizing the distinctiveness and coherence of the Maritime region, just as nationalists do when defining Canada. In her "Preface" she refers to how "distinctive" the region is and how

coherent its "ethos and vision" (x, xii). And although there is promise that she will discuss the "interplay of conservative and radical forces in Maritime fiction," her focus is on how conservative she believes that fiction to be (xi). Radical forces become too radical; they threaten her conception of Maritime fiction as conservative, realistic, and mimetic. Consequently, she says

Thus the present vogue for metafiction, mythopoesis, fabulation which has led to a corresponding dismissal or actual ignorance of traditional narrative forms and approaches results not only in the continuing oblivion to which most of us have consigned Maritime literature, but also in an encroachment upon our freedom and our rights as readers. (9)

This mistrust of non-conservative, non-mimetic forms of fiction leads to her misrepresentation of Maritime fiction as overwhelmingly conservative and realistic. She says

even the departures from the norm--De Mille's fabulations, Buckler's explicit concern with sexuality, Nowlan's and Richards' focus on the working-class and poverty-stricken--might seem as colourful and conspicuous as waxed paper. (21)

But there is a certain legerdemain at work in this comment. With the exception of De Mille, she is right to say that what she has mentioned of the work of these authors is not conspicuous. However, to begin with, Keefer has chosen only the inconspicuous features of these writers' works; any postmodern or experimental features are not mentioned here. Granted, she does say, later in the book, that Lives "adapts

certain high-modernist literary techniques for its own post-modernist purpose" (171), and that the techniques used by Kerslake are "part and parcel of postmodernism in fiction" (258). The problem is that her references to postmodernism in Maritime fiction are few; she discusses the novels of Nowlan, Richards, and Kerslake mostly under the rubric of realism and within the thematic parameters of poverty and impoverishment, all this, despite her stated intention in Chapter Five to "test the validity of the conservative stereotype" (124).

When Keefer does discuss the experimental techniques used by Nowlan and Richards, they turn out to be realist, "new strategies" used to develop the theme of "impoverishment" (162). Later she says Nowlan and Richards are among writers who

contest 'canonical' reality . . . and take their place within a long-standing literary tradition in the Maritimes, a tradition in which the facts of poverty and the experience of impoverishment engage both author and text. (162)

Two points must be made here. First, it is incongruous that writers can "contest" the realist tradition and then be assigned a canonical place in that tradition. Are you really contesting a tradition if you are seen merely to move from "soft" realism to "hard" realism (166)? Second, Richards himself has always protested the misrepresentation of his work as obsessed with the impoverished class. In an

interview with Kathleen Scherf in 1990, he says

It's so bloody silly to assume that I'm writing about the working class as a class of oppressed people. Half the characters in my novels earn more than the critics that are criticizing them for being poor. . . . There are four millionaires in Lives of Short Duration, for example. ("David" 166)

Although Keefer has done much in Under Eastern Eyes to promote Maritime literature and to make her readers aware of the technical and structural aspects of its novels, she has left an impression of the Maritimes as a nation unto itself with its own multiple brands of literary realism. Radical ideas and interregional relationships exist, but they are minimized and, therefore, rendered harmless; they pose no threat to the identity of this Maritime nation and its one-dimensional literature.

Other fervent regionalists have the same tendency to highlight the uniqueness and autonomy of the Maritime region, while pitting it against other regional societies and cultures. Gwendolyn Davies, in her book Studies in Maritime Literary History: 1760-1930 (1991), is concerned with the primary question "Is there a distinctive Maritime culture?" (10). This is as it should be, but her intention to establish the autonomy, distinctiveness, and uniqueness of a Maritime literature leads us away from the dialogic middle ground where distinction meets relationships, where critics such as Woodcock, Mandel, New, and Blodgett allow

region to negotiate identity.

Ursula Kelly pays more attention to social and cultural relationships in Marketing Place: Cultural, Politics, Regionalism, and Reading (1993). She says, for example, that Newfoundland is both a region and "(part of) a region within the nation-state of Canada" (4; Kelly's parentheses). But she finds that most social relationships are "unequal relations of power" (84), and these are devastating to Newfoundland literary culture. Like Keefer and Davies, most of what Kelly says sounds very reasonable; yet, when defining regional identity, she retreats from contextualizing regional identity and looks to some "lost autonomy" and the idea of marketing place as a strategy for cultural definition (81). It is true that any region needs to assert its social and cultural character in defiance of nationalist stereotypes and misrepresentations but, like Keefer and Davies, Kelly's politics of identity are positioned too far from the dialogical border to be convincing.

There is no balanced tension in Under Eastern Eyes, Studies in Maritime Literary History, or Marketing Place between distinction and relationships, between inside and outside. There is very little of the "symbiotic union" that Woodcock mentions in these books and there are no negotiations of identity at the cultural borders. In these

readings of Maritime literature, the borders are less borders than they are bulwarks of defence against dialogic conceptions of identity.

1.3 The Deconstructive Critics

The fact that certain regionalist and nationalist critics use the same rhetorical arguments to assert opposing criteria for judging literature has been noted by critics such as Lianne Moyes, Barbara Godard, Jeanette Lynes, Herb Wyile, and Cynthia Sugars. Their deconstructive analyses of both approaches to Canadian literature show the ambiguity that results when any group unwittingly incorporates the arguments of the other. Regionalist critics, they claim, treat their regions as nations and emphasize their autonomy and unity while relying on the same arguments the nationalists use when discussing Canada as a whole. What needs to be clarified here, though, is the fact that the object of critique of these deconstructive critics is really what Bakhtin would refer to as a monologic relational paradigm, which has been used by nationalist and ultra-regionalist critics alike. Other regional pluralists, such as Woodcock, Mandel, New, and Blodgett, do not focus on sovereigntist distinction without also recognizing the necessity of socio-cultural interrelationships as a means of identity formation. Because of this, their theories of

literary regionalism are less subject to the criticism of these deconstructive critics, than are those of Keefer and Davies, and, to a lesser extent, Kelly.

In "*Canadian Literature Criticism: Between the Poles of the Universal-Particular Antinomy*" (1992), Lianne Moyes discusses the arguments offered by those who value the universal in literature and those who value the particular. She points out, though, that each position incorporates the arguments of the other, and "what the binary opposition allows critics to do is to naturalize and authorize the hegemony of specific interests within the Canadian literary/political context" (29). Moyes, like Bourdieu, Frow, and other cultural theorists, sees each group trying to gain power of representation and mobilization through the assertion of its discourse over the discourse of the other group. For Moyes,

Understanding 'Canadian' as discursive context, literature as discourse and discourse as 'a form of power and desire' destabilizes the universal-particular polarity. Once critics acknowledge that the socio-political context shapes any enunciation . . . it is difficult to sustain land-language, region-nation and nation-world dichotomies. (29)

In her conclusion, she considers the middle ground between the universal and the particular to be the most appropriate place for locating Canadian literary criticism. She maintains that

[this] criticism gives the lie to Canada's status

as a nation of nations with borders within its borders. And it is on these borders, the spaces in-between cultures and nations, that Canadian literature criticism negotiates the authority of specific writers, texts and critical discourses. (45)

Moyes' comments seem to have their source in Homi Bhabha, who asserts that

It is in the emergence of the interstices--the overlap and displacement of domains of difference--that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. (Location 2; Bhabha's emphasis)

Again, we are in the realm of the dialogic, a place where regional pluralists such as Woodcock et al. position themselves. It is a place where identities are formed through negotiations of ideologies, a place where Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, and Steffler situate their novels.

Other Canadian critics also take Moyes' approach. In "Canadian? Literary? Theory?," Barbara Godard reads Canadian criticism "not for meaning but to unfold the processes of meaning making" (6). "Meanings," she says, "are made through the theoretical frames brought to bear on texts" (8). This leads to her premise that "The terms 'Canadian Literature' or 'theory' are not embodied in the texts or authors themselves but are invested by institutionalized reading practices and their narratives of legitimation" (9).

We can say that the same applies to the term "Atlantic-

Canadian Literature" or any regional literature, and that readers must always be aware of the frameworks in which criticism and fiction are set. This is what Cynthia Sugars does in her article "On the Rungs of the Double Helix: Theorizing the Canadian Literatures" (1993). On the question of Canadian identity and its regionalist and nationalist components, she, too, seems in line with the regional pluralism of Mandel, New, and Blodgett when she says

I too am constructing a means of having it both ways, by figuring the coexistence of political unity and cultural diversity, recognizing difference while allowing for historical and ideological contexts of similitude and interaction. . . . (38)

Jeanette Lynes and Herb Wyile also examine the ambivalent attitudes towards regionalism in Canadian criticism, although they concentrate on literary histories. Yet, their conclusions are similar to those made by Moyes, Godard, and Sugars. When they consider nationalist and regionalist paradigms of relations, Lynes and Wyile note that

The recognition of diversity, heterogeneity and discontinuity on a national scale . . . turns to a desire for homogeneity, containment and coherence at the regional or provincial level - a celebration and containment of region which is less ambivalent than region's position within a nationalist discourse, but ambivalent all the same. (123)

They make the point that, as a narrative, Marketing Place, too, is "imprisoned, to a certain extent, in ambivalence,

given the dependence of the marginal (or regional) on the centre as a way of understanding its own difference and autonomy" (126; Lynes and Wylie's parentheses).

This "containment of region" requires the construction of "institutionalized reading practices," to use Godard's phrase, which have to be legitimized through the concepts of autonomy and distinction ("Canadian?" 9). These regional critical narratives encode cultural and literary values that declare certain texts acceptable and others unacceptable. In the case of Keefer's twentieth-century study and Davies' eighteenth- to twentieth-century studies, certain aspects of Maritime fiction, such as realism and conservatism, support their descriptions of the Maritime ethos. Novels which confirm this ethos are accepted into the Atlantic canon; novels which contradict this ethos are not. Keefer, for example, passes over all of Ray Smith's work, with the exception of "Cape Breton is the Thought-Control Centre of Canada," because, one supposes, his fiction does not conform to the cultural and literary values associated with Maritime autonomy and distinction.

The work of these deconstructive critics is part of an evolution in both Canadian criticism and fiction that has occurred in the last several decades. It has been realized by a shift from realism and referential language to the more open, pluralistic orientation of experimentalism and

postmodernism. It is within the context of this shift that the novels by Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, and Steffler to be studied here need to be situated. These dialogic regional voices speak from cultural, political, social, and literary borders, the places where crises occur and identities and epistemologies are negotiated. A brief survey of each of these novels will reveal the shape of their advocacy for what Hutcheon refers to as the "recognition of the value of difference and multiplicity" (Canadian Postmodern 23).

1.4 Dialogic Regional Voices

Voice in these novels works ideologically on three interconnected levels: the personal or psychical level, where the characters try to achieve psychological stability in a world of elusive ontological phenomena; the social level, where characters attempt to orient their languages and voices in relation to other personal and socio-cultural languages and voices; and the aesthetic level, where the novels orient themselves within the intertextual world of literature and criticism. While all five novels theorize language and voice on these three levels simultaneously, each emphasizes specific aspects of discourse or uses one level of ideology from which to address the other two.

Nowlan's Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien is situated on the psychical level, in the consciousness of its

titular character. It is through Kevin O'Brien's first-person narration that Nowlan explores metaphysical and phenomenological questions about psychic stability and unity. Is it possible for the psyche to achievement a sense of wholeness? Can the disparate phenomena of the ontological world be interpreted by the principle of philosophical monism? To what degree are we constructed by or through language?

From there Nowlan also questions socially constructed truths which Kevin O'Brien, as a child and as a teenager, accepted as absolutes. As an adult writer, though, Kevin realizes they are fictions, just as the reconstructions of himself as "various persons" in his memoirs are fictions. History, too, is a fiction. The ideological voices in history, especially those that engage in wars, are examined under the dialogic principle and revealed as propagandistic. Nowlan also examines the stifling effects of monological regionalism, which is the ruling philosophy of O'Brien's home town of Lockhartville. He contrasts this with the dialogic interaction of a multitude of voices and ideologies in the world outside of Lockhartville, typically as they are represented in books and magazines of various kinds.

The writing motif takes us into the aesthetics of the novel and into Nowlan's departure from the conventional realist techniques of works such as The Channel Shore (1954)

by Charles Bruce, Each Man's Son (1951) by Hugh MacLennan, Tomorrow Will Be Sunday (1966) by Harold Horwood, and The Nymph and the Lamp (1950) by Thomas Raddall. Nowlan questions the use of certain literary devices and ideas to convey or represent truth, and he often works with a loosely constructed narrative frame suitable to the development of his themes.

Kerslake's novels Middlewatch and Penumbra are thematically and technically close to Various Persons in their study of how language and voice can constitute identity and enable social interaction. But unlike Nowlan, Kerslake uses the physicality of language, rather than speculations about semantics, to show how a shattered or troubled consciousness can fail to make sense of reality. Although they are not close to other Atlantic-Canadian novels in terms of their use of poetic language, they have certain affinities with By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept by Elizabeth Smart, The Double Hook by Sheila Watson, and Coming Through Slaughter by Michael Ondaatje.

At the beginning of Middlewatch, Kerslake uses splintered syntax to illustrate how Sibbi's shattered consciousness has lost its ability to make sense of reality. As Sibbi absorbs the language Morgan offers her, she begins to recreate herself. Also, sections told from Morgan's point of view are alternated with sections told from Sibbi's point

of view. In this way Kerslake develops a dialogue of perspectives that leads to the negotiation of identities. Other sections tell us about Jason, Sibbi's brother, who goes insane because of an accident that results from his self-imposed exile in the wilderness. Because he is overprotective of Sibbi, he becomes xenophobic and shuns interaction with other people. His monological thinking leads him to become a recluse, and Kerslake shows through his demise that rejection of alterity can have only negative consequences.

Similarly, in Penumbra, Kerslake's language captures the benighted spirit of the narrator and her disconsolate view of life on an isolated island. Struggling with a bleak existence on the island, and having few prospects in the mainland town, she has to extricate herself from the claustrophobic consciousness of her father, who has emeshed his identity with one of the insane characters in his charge at the island sanitorium. Kerslake indicates that although this extrication is a painful one, the narrator may find a way to express her identity as her mother does, through story telling. Both novels end, though, with the possibility that dialogic relationships may develop for each of the central characters.

Richards uses similar techniques in many of his novels. For example, in Lives of Short Duration, he matches syntax

to voice in quasi-direct discourse to give characters their own voices. He also alternates between several points of view as a way of granting characters their autonomy and showing readers that the closest they can get to truth is an accumulation of multiple subjective perspectives.

On the social level, Richards' characters are very much aware of the economic and social hierarchies that make the rural area of the Miramichi a peripheral region in relation to the Ontario centre. They feel subjugated by centralist politics and react rebelliously against its social institutions, which treat them as declass   citizens. Richards also depicts his characters in other struggles too. White culture subjugates native culture; the upper and middle class controls the lower class; and global capitalism threatens rural lifestyles.

As opposed to the hierarchial structures governing our society, Richards proposes another structure which is egalitarian and dialogic in principle. Through the incorporation of multiple voices in his narrative, he effectively deconstructs the various heteronomous relationships to show that all voices should be considered equal, that differences are merely differences, not grounds for economic, social, or racial ranking.

Aesthetically, Richards plays with the conventions of realism, as do Nowlan and Kerslake, which define earlier

Atlantic-Canadian novels. Richards uses sentence fragments, pastiches of images, sounds, sights, and sensations, and discontinuous descriptions and observations to show how characters are disoriented because of the antinomies of the social and economic laws that govern them; repetition of images, phrases, sentences, numbers, and scenes replaces a chronologically ordered narrative; and shifting points of view develop a dialogical interaction among character voices.

The Afterlife of George Cartwright also deals with fundamental social issues, but Steffler is concerned more with the larger relationships between societies, cultures, genders, and languages than are Nowlan, Kerslake, or Richards. The Labrador wilds and Inuit culture exert centrifugal forces that work to deconstruct the traditions of patriarchy and sovereignty that Cartwright relies on for his authority. But Mrs. Selby and Cartwright's brother, John, also offer critiques of British society and law. They criticize the British army for its hypocritical violation of the very laws it proposes to uphold; they criticize capitalist exploitation of resources and people, especially the Native peoples of Newfoundland; and they criticize the superior attitude of the British, which allows them to think other cultures and races are inferior to them. Cartwright, though, is surrealistically eaten by a bear at the end of

the novel. Through this scene, Steffler advises us that nature, and not the spurious institutions of civilization, is everlasting and genuine.

With impressive technical virtuosity, Steffler, too, plays with the conventions of the realist novel, including the traditions of linear chronology and the authority of the written word, which existed in Cartwright's time and in the eighteenth-century English novel. Mrs. Selby's entries in Cartwright's journals are meant to draw attention to the falsification of history, to the idea that historiography is a subgenre of fiction.

With Steffler we get more of a playing with time, space, and language in the postmodern sense than we do with Nowlan, Kerslake, or Richards. We also leave the physical world for the world of the surrealistic afterlife. It is there that time and space lose their progressive and linear orderings; chronology and distance become metaphysical elements that are no longer arranged according to scales of any kind; the past, present and future are simultaneously accessible to Cartwright in his afterlife, just as travelling through space is a matter of instantaneous movement. For this reason, Afterlife has more in common with Timothy Findley's Not Wanted on the Voyage and even Kroetsch's Gone Indian than it does with any of its Atlantic-Canadian predecessors.

From Nowlan to Steffler, the ideological emphasis oscillates among the psychical, social, and aesthetic levels of discourse. The solipsistic problem of multiple or fragmented psyches in Nowlan and Kerslake develops in Richards and Steffler into an examination of how society is responsible for that fragmentation when it deludes the individual with its conceptions of truth and authority. By the time we get to the work of Steffler, truth can be found only in fiction, and national or other centralist systems of value are discovered to have no objective ontological or epistemological status.

At this point, it is necessary to examine the concepts of "voice," "region," and "nation" as they are used in theories of discourse, identity politics, and post-colonialism. What theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Homi Bhabha, Laclau and Mouffe, and Edward Said say about these concepts can help contextualize our dialogic regional voices as they are articulated in the contemporary Atlantic-Canadian novel. Their theories can also be used to formulate a methodology for interpreting these novels, one which foregrounds political motivations and cultural biases rather than hiding them under a "universal" aesthetics.

Notes

¹ See E. K. Brown's "The Problem of a Canadian Literature;" Frye's "Conclusion to Literary History of Canada;" T. D. MacLulich's "What Was Canadian Literature? Taking Stock of the Canlit Industry" and "Thematic Criticism, Literary Nationalism, and the Critics' New Clothes;" and W. J. Keith's Canadian Literature in English and "Shooting Niagra? Some Pessimistic Thoughts about the Future of English-Canadian Literary Studies."

² See Woodcock's The Meeting of Time and Space: Regionalism in Canadian Literature; Mandel's Articulating West, Family Romance, and "Foreword" in Contexts of Canadian Literature; Keefer's Under Eastern Eyes: A Critical Reading of Maritime Fiction; Gwendolyn Davies' Studies in Maritime Literary History: 1760-1930 and Myth and Milieu: Atlantic Literature and Culture: 1918-1939; and Kelly's Marketing Place: Cultural Politics, Regionalism, and Reading.

³ William Westfall mentions in his article "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature" that nationalism distorts regional literature (4).

⁴ See Cynthia Sugars' "On the Rungs of the Double Helix: Theorizing the Canadian Literatures;" Lynes and Wyle's "Regionalism and Ambivalence in Canadian Literary History;" Lianne Moyes' "'Canadian Literature Criticism': Between the Poles of the Universal-Particular Antinomy;" and Barbara Godard's "Canadian? Literary? Theory?"

⁵ This article was published in On Canadian Poetry in 1943 and later in Responses and Evaluations: Essays on Canada in 1977.

⁶ These comments suggest that regionalist critics are beginning to have a stronger influence on how regional novels are received, even by nationalist critics. A 1982 article written by Harry Thurston on Richards in Atlantic Insight seems to illustrate this point. In a comment on "central Canadian critics," Richards says "'There's just no two ways about it. They overlook me, they overlook Ray Fraser, they overlook us all . . . They just don't know where the country begins and where it ends'" ("Canada" 50). Before citing several Globe and Mail columnists who praise Richards' novel, Thurston, speaking collectively with Richards, says "But we were wrong this time anyway" (50).

⁷ The Meeting of Time and Space was published as the 1980 NeWest Lecture by the NeWest Institute for Western Canadian Studies in Edmonton.

⁸ This paper was delivered by New during a conference of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. It was published in World Literature Written in English in 1984.

Chapter Two

Theorizing Political Tensions: Nation and Region

The major premise of the preceding chapter is that the contemporary Atlantic-Canadian novel has come under the interpretation of two conflicting value systems, both of which are capable of distorting or misrepresenting it. When the aesthetics of either nationalist or regionalist critics is governed by unitary principles of cultural homogenization or social autonomy, only those aspects of the novels which support these principles are recognized. Other aspects which conflict with these principles are overlooked, and a balanced interpretation of the Atlantic-Canadian novel is compromised.

This study maintains that there is a certain stream of the Atlantic-Canadian novel which offers a dialogic regional alternative to the paradigm based solely on principles of unity. It values plurality, diversity, and equality among the members of any community. Paratactical relationships substitute for heteronomous relationships, and differences among cultures and social groups are respected rather than ignored. It is a paradigm of relations whose theoretical underpinnings can be analyzed using certain theories of discourse, identity politics, and post-colonialism.

For this reason, we need to examine the issues of "voice," "nation," and "region" as they relate to these

theories. Starting with the issue of voice and Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of discourse and narrative, we can construct a methodology for interpreting the Atlantic-Canadian novel as it is represented by Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, and Steffler. This methodology can be developed further using the theories of Laclau and Mouffe presented in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy (1985). They discuss voice and identity in terms of subject positions and political power relations among groups, relations which are at work in the primary novels under study here. With this methodology in place, we can then examine the issues of "nation and region" as they relate to Canada and the Atlantic region.

2.1 Constructing a Bakhtinian Methodology

In Bakhtin's work, the issue of identity leads to the issue of voice: voice represents and signifies identity in the act of communication. Bakhtin's theory of communication is founded on the architectonics of point of view and his concept of transgradience, the genesis of which is found in his early essays written between 1919 and 1924 and collected in Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays (1990).

In "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," communication is explained in terms of the phenomenological relationship between a person and the world or between self and other. This relationship is homologous to the aesthetic

relationship in a novel between the author and hero. In each case, being is a dialogic process of interaction with others that helps define the constituent elements of self. When self interacts with other, it becomes "transgradient" with it. Transgradiance involves absorbing the world from the other's point of view, as with empathy, but it also involves maintaining one's own perspective at the same time. In their book Mikhail Bakhtin (1984), Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist interpret it to be synonymous with "extralocality" (79), with aligning one's point of view with that of another. Through this transposition, self gains epistemological information that it uses to re-evaluate its original perspective. Bakhtin refers to this surplus of information as the "excess of seeing" (Art 22).

In Canada, however, a number of critics view national transgradient re-evaluation as weak, and they criticize the federal government for creating regional disparities and establishing privileged industrial and economic centres in Ontario and Quebec that perpetuate these disparities.¹ There has also been general criticism of the federal government from ethnic and racial minority groups that Canada's multicultural policy is ineffective as a tool for promoting ethnic equality in Canada. Some Atlantic Canadian writers protest the lack of transgradient understanding in relationships between Canadian or European powers and

Atlantic-Canadian minority groups. Novels such as Peter Such's Riverrun (1973), Raymond Fraser's The Struggle Outside (1975), and Sheldon Currie's The Glace Bay Miners' Museum (1995) depict the failure of politically empowered groups to engage in transgradient communication with disenfranchised groups.

In Riverrun Such chronicles the insensibility of European explorers and settlers in their relationship with the Beothuck Indians of Newfoundland, whom they eventually slaughtered. The implication is that had the Europeans simply understood the Beothucks as another race of people, instead of as some inferior primitive species of humans, the Beothucks may not have been exterminated. Fraser deals with a similar problem of understanding in The Struggle Outside. He satirizes political power games played by provincial and federal politicians who have little idea of the devastating effects these games can have on the politically underprivileged in rural areas. Currie, too, deals with this theme, but in a mode that weaves tragedy with comedy. In one scene, Mr. MacDougall explains Ottawa's policy for buying coal from the United States (105). It is here that Currie shows the lack of transgradient communication between the national government and the Atlantic region and between large corporations and the miners, whom they exploit for profit. In all three novels, a dominant and powerful group

refuses to allow the voices of alterity to interfere with its illusions of superiority.

Winfried Siemerling suggests that transgradient communication is also thematically present and problematic in the larger world of the Canadian novel. She explains in Discoveries of the Other: Alterity in the Work of Leonard Cohen, Hubert Aquin, Michael Ondaatje, and Nicole Brossard (1994) that, in the work of the identified authors, self and other create and translate each other in a reciprocal relationship. The problem is that in the fiction, creation and translation are both incomplete and marred by conflict and negation (211). Yet, Siemerling maintains, in these texts the whole process appears "to be the structure of a positive movement toward an unknown other, and of hope" (211). This comment would also apply to the three novels previously mentioned, and one of the tasks of this study is to determine the extent to which relations between characters and ideologies in the Atlantic-Canadian novels under study here involve transgradience as a positive approach to the voices of alterity.

When adopting the other's point of view in transgradience, self also experiences the other's value systems. Bakhtin tells us in The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays that voices and languages are "specific points of view on the world" (291), and each is "a socio-ideological

conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives" (411). He uses the term "emotional-volitional tone" in "Author and Hero" to refer to values associated with any particular point of view, since all points of views are always value oriented and ideologically informed (Art 60, 215-6). The self has to contend with the other's system of values and this contention is always dialogic in nature and always occurs on the boundaries between self and other.

This relates especially to the debate between regionalist and nationalist critics, which can be defined architectonically using this theoretical model. But it seems that both groups have a tendency to close themselves off to the process of transgradience; their value systems have calcified into inflexible views about the other that make negotiations for identity almost impossible. This is the type of condition that Such, Fraser, and Currie criticize in their novels and that Siemerling discusses too in her study of other Canadian authors.

We can determine, at this point, that an important first step in our methodological approach to examining voice in the Atlantic-Canadian novel involves identifying the various ideological voices represented by the authors and the systems of value they communicate. Bakhtin sees each socially significant character as an "ideologue" and his/her

words and language as "ideologemes" (Dialogic 333). Hence, each character's voice must be autonomous and capable of agreement or disagreement with the author's own.

The voices of characters and authors are incorporated in the novel as compositional-stylistic unities. They serve a heteroglossic function, and Bakhtin separates them into five divisions:

- (1) Direct authorial literary-artistic narration (in all its diverse variants);
- (2) Stylization of the various forms of oral everyday narration; (*skaz*);
- (3) Stylization of the various forms of semiliterary (written) everyday narration (the letter, the diary, etc.);
- (4) Various forms of literary but extra-artistic authorial speech (moral, philosophical or scientific statements, oratory, ethnographic descriptions, memoranda and so forth);
- (5) The stylistically individualized speech of characters. (Dialogic 262)

These compositional-stylistic unities, used ambitiously by Nowlan and Richards, are organized in the novel according to a "structured artistic system" which is "subordinated to the higher stylistic unity of the work as a whole" (262). This higher unity is a "superstructure" constructed by authors to encompass the first system of voices. It represents the author's "own intentions and accents, which then becomes dialogically linked with them. Authors encase their own thought in the image of another's language without doing violence to the freedom of that language or to its own

distinctive uniqueness" (409). This helps define the authors' positions in the novel vis-à-vis the characters' as one of equality, not superiority.

Identifying the characters' or heroes' axiological points of view is simply a matter of identifying and analyzing their "emotional volitional reaction" to an object or their world (Art 216). Bakhtin sees the author's voice as more complicated. The axiological perspective of authors and their emotional-volitional reactions are reflected in such things as rhythm, intonation, and their choice of hero, theme, plot, diction, images, and so on (Art 225). The authors' role is to act "as organizer and participant in the dialogue without retaining for themselves the final word" (72). The authors' voices must be alongside those of the characters; they must be double-voiced as in quasi-direct discourse rather than single-voiced as in authoritative and homogenized forms of discourse. Should there be a merger of voices, we would have monologized communication, where the voices of the characters merely echo the authors' voices, and the autonomy of the characters is abandoned.

This may be the case in Hugh MacLennan's Each Man's Son. MacLennan has received some criticism, from Keefer, Sherrill Grace, Chris Gittings, and Alistair MacLeod, for example, for his misrepresentation of voice in this novel. In "Listen to the Voice": Dialogism and the Canadian

Novel," Grace groups MacLennan with several other writers whose characters are "subservient to the author's purposes and monologic, hierarchical, and ideologically centred world view" (123). Keefer complains of MacLennan's treatment of Mr. Camire, a Frenchman whose socialist politics is given short shrift in the novel (Eastern Eyes 148-50). She believes that "All in all, Camire is so inept a radical and so despicable a man he can't help but fail in the tasks MacLennan has set him. Why then did MacLennan choose to include him in his novel . . ." (149).

Gittings, in his article "Canada and Scotland: Conceptualizing 'Postcolonial' Spaces" (1995), states similar concerns. He seems to agree with Alistair MacLeod that MacLennan's characters in Each Man's Son are "'cartoon-like' and simple Highlanders with exaggerated dialects" (143).² Two legitimate questions arise from these discussions and from Bakhtin's proposition. Does MacLennan use Camire, other characters, and the plot to advance his own emotional-volition position without accurately representing the voice of the other? Does he allow his characters to speak forcefully from autonomous positions contrary to his own? The answer to the first is yes and to the second, no, indicating that the novel is leaning away from transgradient communication.

Our second step, then, is to determine whether all

voices in the novel are in true dialogic interaction. All the voices of heteroglossia should collide and interact at their borders and their interaction should generate ideological revisions. Bakhtin notes a difference, though, between simple heteroglossia and dialogized heteroglossia in the novel. To illustrate, he uses the example of a peasant who uses different languages when he goes to church, when he sings songs, when he speaks to his family, and when he speaks with civil officials. If the peasant compartmentalizes each of these languages and does not allow them to interact, they are heteroglossic, but not dialogized. But, if he learns to see one language "through the eyes of another language" (Dialogic 296), as Bakhtin phrases it, the ideological centres of these languages will collide; each language will question the authenticity of the others, and they will be dialogized. They will not be able to exist in equilibrium because their ideologies will be in conflict, and the peasant will have to reorient himself among them. This explains Bakhtin's statement that "The authentic environment of an utterance . . . is dialogized heteroglossia" (Dialogic 272), and "the novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era, that is, all the era's languages that have any claim to being significant; the novel must be a microcosm of heteroglossia" (411).

Bakhtin's demands for dialogized heteroglossia in a novel sound challenging, and few novels can be described as "microcosms of heteroglossia." However, Bernice Morgan may be counted among Atlantic-Canadian writers who show a tendency in their work to dialogize ideological voices. In Random Passage (1992) she presents three points of view from two eras in history and pre-history, and incorporates the significant voices of the fictional present of the novel to show that multiple stories are needed to get close to the truth. One account is simply not enough. Morgan believes that the author's responsibility is to allow as many versions of the truth to surface as possible.

This is why conflicts among Morgan's characters result not so much in a victory for one party or the other as in the revelation that all ideologies have strengths and weaknesses that need to be considered in order to arrive at some version of the truth. Morgan facilitates this idea by switching from one character's perspective to another, thereby making problematic the assertion that one point of view is all that is needed to define reality. Also, characters either write their own responses to the world in their diaries or the author uses limited omniscient narration to foreground their voices. When characters write in diaries they speak as metadiegetic narrators and seem unimpeded at that level by the author's cognitive-ethical

value system. An extended discussion of Random Passage in chapter six will explore further Morgan's use of multiple points of view and writing motifs.

A third step in our methodology stems from Bakhtin's comments in "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel":

The realm of literature and more broadly of culture . . . constitutes the indispensable context of a literary work and of the author's position within it, outside of which it is impossible to understand either the work or the author's intentions reflected in it. (Dialogic 256)

Since the text is an utterance, like any word, it too exists in an environment, the literary environment, and is a link in a chain of other texts that create intertextuality. We are told in The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship that this literary environment is contextualized by a still larger ideological environment, which is further contextualized by the all-encompassing socioeconomic environment (26-27). The third step involves interpreting the major ideological voices in the novel in relation to the sociological and political environments which form the heteroglossic background against which these voices are articulated. As we know, heteroglossia refers to the existence and stratification of the various national and socio-ideological languages represented in the novel (Dialogic 271-72). These voices are always in conflict and may be aligned with either the centripetal or centrifugal

forces at work in society.

The centrifugal forces tend to test and challenge the ideological centre of any language, exposing it as a political construct. Conflicting with these forces are the centripetal forces, which "serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world" (Dialogic 270; Bakhtin's italics). A unitary language tends toward monoglossia, according to Bakhtin, and "gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization" (Dialogic 271).

The dialogic regional novel takes this tendency to decentralize sociopolitical, cultural forces, and literary forces as its speciality. In Tidefall (1953), for example, Thomas Raddall moves away from the canon of British and American works to make a claim for the legitimacy of Canadian history and culture as a source for fiction. The central character Rena Caraday rejects a reprobate sailor for Owen Pascoe, the lighthouse keeper who writes of the exploration age in Canada and of Henry Hudson's voyages. Through Pascoe's research of Canadian history and through other interspersed references to writing and history, Tidefall itself becomes a metafictional voice in Canadian

literature, one which argues that Canada is as rich in history and mythology as are the United States and Britain, and we have already seen how other novels such as Riverrun, The Struggle Outside, and The Glace Bay Miners' Museum also challenge cultural and political forces that grow from inequities perpetrated on the powerless.

In summary, our methodology for approaching language and voice in the novel consists of three interconnected steps. The first step is to identify the important character voices speaking in the artistic system of the novel and the signifying ideological positions they represent. We need to ask how the voices of the main characters orient themselves among the other heteroglossic voices that form the compositional-stylistic unities. This raises two important auxiliary questions. Are the characters' voices autonomous or are they being manipulated as projections of the author's voice? Do the characters' voices reflect their own value-contexts or the author's? We also need to identify the author's own ideological position by examining the image of the author which exists in the superstructure. Bakhtin indicates this can be done by examining the author's tone of transmission of the character's emotional-volitional reaction to the world, the author's rhythm, choice of hero, plot, theme, words, images, and the selection of content and form.

A logical second step, after registering the principal voices in the novel, is to determine the nature of their relationships as being either dialogic or monologic. Dialogic relationships show the characters coming to know their own language as perceived by someone else's system and their own culture as one among many (Dialogic 365, 368). Also, as Bakhtin shows in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, dialogic novels strengthen centrifugal forces by showing that truth is never absolute and singular, but is always relative and constructed from a plurality of perspectives (81).

The third step considers the connection between the novel and its literary and larger ideological environments. This connection seems to be made through the authors' formal-aesthetic content, the choices authors make in the selection of materials for content and the techniques used in its presentation. The authors stake their theoretical positions on these technical choices, which become signifiers in the metafictional language of this literary environment. Each novel, in turn, helps shape the literary environment by becoming an utterance aimed tendentially at readers and critics of the novel.

2.2 Laclau and Mouffe's Theory of Political Agency

It is in the outer realms of the social and political

that Bakhtin's theories become less detailed and, consequently, of less help to us in interpreting the dialogic nature of the Atlantic-Canadian novel. Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, and Steffler saturate their fiction in varying degrees with allusions and references to other books, to magazines and other publications, and to cultural voices that evoke the broader ideological horizons that circumscribe their characters. These characters orient their own positions in relation to these exterior voices in ways best explained by the theories of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. They construct convincing sociological and political definitions of identity and voice as being constituted by multiple elements that are in perpetual conflict with each other. They provide a logical extension of Bakhtin and V. N. Vološinov's statement in Marxism and the Philosophy of Language that "The utterance is a social phenomenon" (82). Their discussions of the three important topics of articulatory practices in unsutured social worlds, the dialectic tension between interiority and exteriority, and the transcendental politics of the state can elucidate the dialogic position these novelists take vis-à-vis national/regional relations.

First, Laclau and Mouffe perceive society in ways that recall Bakhtin's perceptions. They believe that society can never be conceived as a unified, sutured whole, because the

era of universal discourses is over; contemporary societies are no longer bolstered by a single ideological monism that collectively represents all its citizens. This would suggest that Laclau and Mouffe think national culturalism within a nation to be untenable. In Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, they emphasize that society is "a polyphony of voices, each of which constructs its own irreducible discursive identity" (191). For them, as for Bakhtin, it is through the articulation of its discourse that a subject position establishes its identity. They assert that "A discursive structure is an articulatory practice which constitutes and organizes social relations" in a society constituted by the asymmetry of "a growing proliferation of differences" (96). An articulation is "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (105); and "Moments are the differential positions" that stand in contrast to an "element," which is any difference that is not discursively articulated (105).

Laclau and Mouffe have "a self-defining conception of the subject, as an entity maintaining relations of exteriority with the rest of the universe" (94). These relations are always unsettled, though, because external discourses continually interfere with the subject's attempts

to reflect its multiple fragmented positions as a cohesive whole. This explains why we have a national/regional debate in the first place. The side a person takes depends on how the organization of these fragments is conceived:

either that organization is contingent and, therefore, external to the fragments themselves; or else, both the fragments and the organization are necessary moments of a totality which transcends them. It is clear that only the first type of 'organization' can be conceived as an articulation; the second is, strictly speaking, a mediation. (94; Laclau and Mouffe's italics)

It is clear that the organization contingent on external discourses correlates with the model of orchestrated voices developed in the fiction of Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, and Steffler. Correspondingly, the transcendent model is part of nationalists' efforts to totalize the cultural experiences of Canada into a sutured whole. There is resonance here of Bourdieu's idea of competing classificatory schemes and Bakhtin's theory of divergent points of view. It is here, too, that we are close to a definition of the articulation of dialogic regional voices. Contemporary society, we are told, is fragmented by these innumerable subject positions, and they have lead to the "disaggregation of the orthodox paradigm" (75). In much the same way, the fiction of these Atlantic-Canadian novelists disrupts nationalist notions of cultural unity and asserts the presence of plural regional voices.

Second, Laclau and Mouffe find that "all identity is relational" (106), a matter of balancing tensions between perceptions of interiority and exteriority. Adding to this in The Return of the Political (1993), Mouffe declares that "the condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the determination of an 'other' that is going to play the role of a 'constitutive outside'" (2). Defining identity, then, is a process of negotiation between a social group and those against which it struggles to negotiate its identity. Accordingly, these negotiations are never complete, and identity can never be totally fixed. The result is what Mouffe refers to as "'agonistic pluralism,'" a political field determined by multiple conflicting subject positions and their "'pluralism of values'" (Return 4, 8).

What Laclau and Mouffe say about society as a whole can be applied to the social aggregation represented by any nation:

'Society' is not a valid object of discourse. There is no single underlying principle fixing-- and hence constituting--the whole field of differences. The irresoluble interiority/ exteriority tension is the condition of any social practice . . . It is in this terrain, where neither a total interiority nor a total exteriority is possible, that the social is constituted. (Hegemony 111)

It is this "irresoluble interiority/exteriority tension" that really characterizes relations between "nation" and its

regions in Canada. In the Canadian literary environment, a novel becomes an articulation of a subject position engaged in the perpetual negotiation of its identity with exterior social forces that disallow the finality of this articulation. For Atlantic Canada, these forces are sometimes nationalist forces that assume they wield the epistemological power to define truth, identity, and value as they relate to Atlantic Canada.

Finally, Laclau and Mouffe explain that nationalist attempts to erase cultural differences across the regions are untenable. They believe that "the state raises itself to the status of the sole possessor of the truth of the social order, whether in the name of the proletariat or of the nation, and seeks to control all the networks of sociability" (188). They mention earlier that

It is because there are no more assured foundations arising out of a transcendent order . . . that it becomes possible and necessary to unify certain political spaces through hegemonic articulations. But these articulations will always be partial and subject to being contested, as there is no longer a supreme guarantor. (187)

Mouffe adds in The Return of the Political that dissenting voices "show how in every assertion of universality there lies a disavowal of the particular and a refusal of specificity" (13). She believes, generally, that "In a modern democratic society there can no longer be a substantial unity, and division must be recognized as

constitutive" (51).

Overall, we may interpret these statements to mean that nation subordinates region by imposing inequalities that are propagated by institutional dogmas. Under such an antagonistic regime, region has to find the means of subverting this relationship. It can do this by assuming "the character of collective struggles," struggles made possible by "the existence of an external discourse which impedes the stabilization of subordination as difference" (Hegemony 159). So, there is yet another discourse outside nationalist discourse that destabilizes its subjugation of regional discourses.

In Atlantic Canada, the discourses of postcolonialism and poststructuralism serve this destabilizing function. Ursula Kelly, for example, relies heavily on poststructuralist theory in Marketing Place to free cultural Newfoundland from its perceived status as an inferior backwater, while Keefer uses the rhetoric of postcolonialism in Under Eastern Eyes to defend Maritime literature from what she refers to as "the nationalist hegemony-of-the-centre" (23). Both writers are reacting to a conception of nationalism as a monologic paradigm, which treats the Atlantic region with neo-imperialist condescension. In Laclau and Mouffe's terms, this region is a political space, or collection of spaces, whose difference is being erased or

minimized by the unifying strategies of nationalist hegemonic articulation. But rather than retreat to essentialistic cultural notions, the novels under study here argue specifically for an open, changing view of regional cultures. For this reason, we need to move to an examination of theories of nationalism and regionalism in relation to identity politics and postcolonial theory.

2.3 National/Regional Impasses and Resolutions

The following discussion of national and regional relations is centred on three issues: definitions of nationalism as presented by Ernest Renan, Anthony Birch, and Gurutz Jàuregui Bereciartu; problems with nationalist representation of regional identities, explored by Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and Peter Alter; and solutions to the national/regional impasse, offered here primarily by Alter, Bereciartu, and a number of regional theorists. Of particular relevance throughout is the critical commentary of Atlantic-Canadian regional theorists such as David Alexander, Paul Phillips, William Westfall, and Ernest Forbes, who provide specific details to substantiate regionalist claims against what has become known in this debate as internal colonialism. Their references to federal economic policies corroborate charges made in the work of Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, and Steffler against unfair

control by the national government over the body politic of Atlantic Canada.

The first issue of our discussion, a definition of nationalism, is problematic in that there is no consensus among theorists as to what a nation is. Most theorists agree, though, that structuring a nation involves forging a political identity through an ordering of the diverse subject positions inside its borders. It also involves orienting its politics among those of other nations, as Laclau and Mouffe suggest with their comments on external discourses that destabilize the subordinating discourse of nation (Hegemony 159). A nation always has at least three options with respect to cultural and social diversity: it can choose a policy of cultural pluralism, which privileges diversity; it can choose integration, which privileges acculturation and unity; or it can work toward some kind of balance between the two.

In his germinal article "What Is a Nation?" (1882), Ernest Renan seems to suggest that the third possibility is the most acceptable. Nations cannot be based exclusively on race, language, ethnicity, dynasty, religion, or geography because a nation "is a soul, a spiritual principle" (19). This principle is constituted by a common heritage and "the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form"

(19). Cooperation among diverse groups is needed to create a nation, and nations should be in harmony with other nations because "each sounds a note in the great concert of humanity" (20). Loyalty to the nation is not in conflict with loyalty to one's race, ethnicity, region or any other factor in identity politics.

If our fiction is any indicator, this is hardly the case in Canada. Frank Davey analyzes sixteen novels in Post-National Arguments, among them Nights Below Station Street by David Adams Richards, to reveal what their conceptions of Canada as a nation might be. He concludes that

In many of the novels neither the text nor its protagonists inhabit any social geography that can be called 'Canada.' They inhabit a post-national space . . . in which political issues are constructed on non-national (and often ahistorical) ideological grounds: fascism and materialism, aestheticism, liberal humanism, Christian mysticism, feminism, industrial capitalism. (259)

Canada, of course, does exist in other novels that Davey has chosen not to study. If he had chosen Richards' Lives of Short Duration, for example, instead of Nights Below Station Street, he would have had difficulty reaching the same conclusions.

Another conclusion he makes is more relevant here. He declares that "Every one of the sixteen novels communicates mistrust . . . of social and political process" (265). This could explain the seditious nature of Atlantic-Canadian

fiction such as Raymond Fraser's comic-satirical novel The Struggle Outside (1975) and Ray Smith's short story collection Cape Breton Is the Thought-Control Centre of Canada (1989). As we have seen, Fraser's novel is the journal of a revolutionary whose group is fighting against the political status quo in New Brunswick. Its narrator hates all politicians, including federal politicians (37). In Smith's short story, "Cape Breton Is the Thought-Control Centre of Canada," Canada is a national weakling in North America, which is "a large island to the west of the continent of Cape Breton" (72). In their defence of the regional or the local, these fictions reject, as do the primary novels to be examined in this study, a monopolitical national framework.

It is the second option of integration that Anthony H. Birch focuses on in Nationalism and National Integration (1989). When a nation opts for integration, it can choose between two main sociological models:

one maintaining that the assimilation of minorities is an inevitable concomitant of modernization, and therefore by implication desirable, the other maintaining that the process involves exploitation of the minorities by the majority and can appropriately be described as internal colonialism. (11)

He later explains that internal colonialism exists when "the relationships between members of the dominant or core community within a state and members of the minority or

peripheral communities are characterized by exploitation" (67).

Another theorist of nationalism, Gurutz Jàuregui Bereciartu, defines internal colonialism in Decline of the Nation-State (1994) as "an arrangement in which a human population that theoretically enjoys the same civic rights is, nevertheless, divided into two categories: the colonizers and the colonized" (129). He believes that a national economic policy which leaves a particular region underdeveloped can "rend the social fabric of the national formation of the underdeveloped area by reducing human beings to a pliable economic mass, ripping them out of their natural and cultural setting, and provoking massive emigrant movements" (129). The enemies against which the region must struggle to recover its identity are "the monopolistic state and dehumanizing technological society" (129), enemies similiar to those recognized by the four primary writers here and regionalist critics Keefer, Davies, and Kelly.

Bereciartu condemns attempts at identity formation which involve misrepresentation of cultures or intolerance of any kind. He notes that

The demand for one's own identity frequently supposes striking a pose of cultural arrogance, which leads to xenophobia and autarky, and which represents nothing more than the most palpable manifestation of a culture's weakness and precariousness, as well as its incapacity to adapt to and to accept universal cultural values.

(Decline 131)

Bereciartu reminds us that national identity is caught between "standardization," which is associated with universality, and "increased cultural diversity," which is rooted in "cultural particularism" (131).

The work of critics such as David Alexander, Paul Phillips, and William Westfall indicates that Canada and its Atlantic region fall under these definitions of internal colonialism. Alexander makes the point in Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays in Canadian Political Economy (1983) that the "Maritimes did not share equally with other regions in the benefits of the new Dominion. Commercial policy was on balance less favourable to the Maritimes than to the Central Provinces" (36). Meanwhile, Phillips develops a similar idea in Regional Disparities (1982):

Regional disparities in Canada are inextricably bound up with an historic national economic policy that encouraged the concentration of industrial production, albeit subsidiary and derivative production, in the heartland of central Canada, while relegating to the hinterland regions the role of natural resource extraction for uncertain and volatile export markets. (4)

As William Westfall makes clear in "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature" (1980), this centralist dominance of the Atlantic region's economy extended to the domain of literature:

A strong tradition of local and regional writing has existed (outside of Toronto) for almost as

long as people have written about Canada. The dominant position of national schools in Canadian scholarship, however, has obscured this body of literature and history. (4)

These comments, made in 1980, describe a condition in Canada that could be defined in Birch's and Bereciartu's terms as internal colonialism. Comments made in chapter one by W. H. New and George Elliott Clarke indicate that this may still be the case in the 1990s.³

The perceived problem with nationalism brings us to the second issue, the question of representation of identity or voice. Can the nation adequately represent the multiple and different voices which constitute its population? Benedict Anderson, E. J. Hobsbawm, Peter Alter, and R. P. Draper are among those critics who suggest it can not. Anderson comments in Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (1983) that "official nationalism was from the start a conscious, self-protective *policy*, intimately linked to the preservation of imperial-dynastic interests" (145; Anderson's Italics). Assertions like this leave little hope for the representation of regional voices.

Hobsbawm's comments indicate he would concur with Anderson. In Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality (1992), he says "official ideologies of states and movements are not guides to what it is in the minds of even the most loyal citizens or supporters" (11). In

addition, the exclusivity of nationalism affects those outside the nation as well as those inside. He believes that nationalism "by definition excludes from its purview all who do not belong to its own 'nation', i.e. the vast majority of the human race" (176).

Alter's views on nationalism take on even more strident tones than Anderson's or Hobsbaw'n's. Writing in Nationalism (1989), he believes nationalism to be "undisguised political egoism" which is "exclusive in its dedication to the elevated nation and only too ready to ignore the interests of other groups, be it within the nation or a neighbouring nation" (118).

This is one of the complaints of Canadian critics such as Gary Boire and Frank Davey. In "Canadian (Tw)ink: Surviving the Whiteouts," Boire accuses modernist texts, in their interpretations of our national identity, of denying Canada's aboriginal population an existence in our history. For our modernist writers, "the vast, snowy whiteness of Canada was a blank canvas in need of paint, a blank page in need of ink" (3). He is puzzled by the "curious one-sidedness of the cultural view developed in Canadian modernist writing" and recognizes that it "tends either to marginalize, subordinate, or altogether exclude native peoples from the voice of Canadian identity" (5). Davey comes to similar conclusions about the negation of Canada's

natives by national policies in "Mapping Anglophone-Canadian Literary Conflict: Multiculturalism and After" (1994). He notes that "Aboriginal people . . . were mentioned neither in the 1969 Official Languages Act as a founding people, nor in the 1971 White Paper on Multiculturalism, and are specifically excluded from the Multiculturalism Act" of 1989 (126).

Alter, Boire, and Davey imply that cultural exclusivity develops as a negative characteristic of nationalism. Other nationalist and regionalist theorists would agree with this implication. In his introduction to The Literature of Region and Nation (1989), Draper attacks the nationalist's model of political organization which is based on conformity and integration, and believes any lack of respect for it is justified: "there is too much energy and variety out there in the regions, and too little assurance of a God-given role at the metropolitan heart, to make such respect any longer viable" (2). More importantly, he suggests that "nationalism tends to generate an aggressiveness which deforms the culture it seeks to protect" (5).

The relevance here of Draper's ideas to Atlantic-Canadian fiction is important. This deformation of culture can include the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of a region's literature by the nation. It can also refer to a region's own distortion of its literature, as with Atlantic-

Canadian literature, when it assumes the authority of national status, when it becomes ultra-regionalist or sub-nationalist in its conception of its own identity. Donna Bennett alludes to this problem in an endnote in her article "Conflicted Vision: A Consideration of Canon and Genre in English-Canadian Literature" (1991). She believes that one of the reasons Maritime writing is relatively absent from the English-Canadian canon is a mismatch of aesthetics between nation and region. Ironically, the realist fiction of writers such as Buckler and Richards is compatible with national canonized fiction, but

This kind of realism remains relatively unpopular in Maritime anthologies and Maritime publishers' lists, which continue to show as canonical to the region a somewhat ornate style, an idealized realism, and a tendency to accept moral and formula writing . . . as 'literary.' This divergence in basic aesthetics and cultural perspectives has kept Maritime writers a marginalized group in terms of the whole of Canadian literature. (225-26)

This may explain why writers such as Fraser, Herb Curtis, Kerslake, Smith, and others might be excluded from the Maritime canon, but it does not explain why they are still excluded from the national canon, especially if the national canon favours fiction which is not "formula writing."

Most of the theorists discussed so far denigrate any paradigm of political relations which involves relations of subordination or which proclaims that identity, either

national or regional, can be completely autonomous and occlusive. Most of them imply that the acceptable and workable model is one which balances the tensions between national unity and regional sovereignty and works towards interdependence with other regions or nations. And this brings us to the third issue in our discussion, the possible solutions to the national/regional impasse. These theorists point to either balancing tensions between nation and region or allowing the voice of region to sound outside the encompassing presence of nation.

Alter, for example, suggests that "the key to the solution lies in striking a balance between the demands of regions or national minorities for political, economic and social equality and the need to preserve the integrity and cohesion of the nation-state" (Nationalism 98). Bereciartu believes we are already in a state of transformation from the supremacy of the nation-state to the ascendancy of the interdependent political enterprise (Decline 149). This transformation assumes the form of an identity crisis or a "crisis of legitimation" for the nation. It is precipitated by the lack of an interdependent relationship with other nations and by divisive struggles with intranational groups demanding their own autonomy (149). Resolving this crisis will put us into the age of new regionalism and new internationalism, or the "post-national state," as Davey

calls it (Post-National 266).

A number of regional theorists support this idea of a new era in nation-region politics, including those who contribute to Regionalism Reconsidered: New Approaches to the Field (1994). Peter Caccavari recommends a co-existence between nation and region in which regional loyalties are softened to allow for a more solid connection with nation (121-22). Rosa Sarabia discusses the "'universalization' of the region," a process which allows the region to express universal concepts and values without mediation by the nation (140). Draper, too, discusses this new relationship between nation and region. He sees the new world "evolving a new regionalism which transcends the limitations of the past" (Literature 8).

Bereciartu believes that it is federalism that can bring about this detente between nation and region. He claims that "federalism, as the philosophy of diversity and heterogeneity, is relevant within the grand project of the transformation of contemporary technological society" (166). Birch, however, has serious criticisms of the federal system, especially the Canadian federal system. He believes the problems stem from segregated cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups, from economic disparity among the regions, and from indistinct political parties (Nationalism and National 179). These problems can result in poor social

integration, which "is supplemented by multicultural attitudes that somewhat divide anglophone Canadians and by the almost unbridgeable gulf between the white population and the indigenous peoples. Canadian society is clearly characterized by cultural pluralism" (179). The problem, then, is not really federalism, but ineffective federalism that cannot syncretize multiple cultures into a network of interdependent groups; it has failed to bring about the "fusion" that Renan sees as imperative in consolidating a nation.

What Birch says about Canada is partly corroborated by what Ernest Forbes says about the Maritime region. In Aspects of Maritime Regionalism, 1867-1927 (1983), he quotes a number of public declarations by irate Maritimers that the Maritimes is a distinct region (3). But then he adds that this impression of distinctiveness is not shared by all. An important reason for this is that "Loyalties to nation, local community, province, ethnic group, or class offered other, sometimes competing identities, among which that of the region frequently became blurred" (3). Forbes seems to be suggesting that this mixture of loyalties adulterates patriotic feelings of sub-nationalism that we find in other regions, such as Quebec. This may be the case today, where the Maritime region is still an imaginary collective that has, in the terms of Laclau and Mouffe, failed to articulate

itself as a unified regional discourse. The "conflicting pressures towards unity and division" that Forbes mentions as still existing in the Maritimes keep that region from developing an articulatory practice that will produce political results (3).

But progress is being made in constructing a voice with political force. Atlantic-Canadian regionalists have adopted postcolonial theory to help develop a discourse that could effect these political results. It is paradoxical, though, that they begin with the centre-margin configuration of postcolonialism only to reject it later in favour of relationships of equality. The region is constructed as a colony which is being treated in a neocolonialist manner by imperialist political and cultural forces in Ottawa and Toronto. As Chris Gittings remarks in his essay "Canada and Scotland: Conceptualizing 'Postcolonial' Spaces," "Centre-periphery discourses posited by postcolonial theory are not the exclusive phenomena of an empire-colony paradigm; they are also found within empire and colony in the work of [Alistair] MacLeod, where Toronto is centre to the Cape Breton periphery" (154).

We must remember, too, that within the dialogic paradigm, region, too, can assume the character of an autonomous state and can be as imperialistic and unitary in principle as any nation. Gittings astutely recognizes "The

paradoxical role that Scottish and Canadian descendants of white, European invader-settler cultures play as both agents and subjects of imperialism" ("Canada and Scotland" 139). Arun P. Mukherjee reminds us in "Canadian Nationalism, Canadian Literature, and Racial Minority Women" that this is true of ethnicity and race in Canada: "To all intents and purposes, the category 'regional' has been as exclusionary of Aboriginal and racial minority writers as the category 'Canadian'" (87). Any of the provincial capitals can be an imperial centre to outlying rural areas with less political power.

This leads to a dual construct of a nation or a region that depicts it simultaneously as both imperialistic and colonial. To understand this aspect of regionalist theory, we need to understand postcolonial theory. So, what the authors of The Empire Writes Back and Homi Bhabha say about post-colonial theory using Britain and its colonies as a model, however divergent their theories may be, is relevant to an understanding of Canada and its regions, especially the Atlantic region and its literature.

2.4 Conscripting Postcolonial Theory

The theories of post-coloniality presented by Ashcroft et al. overlap and extend those of the nationalist and regionalist critics we have just discussed, as well as the

ideas of Bakhtin and Laclau and Mouffe. In The Empire Writes Back we see how imperial powers exercise hegemonic control over their colonies in a number of ways that relate to Bakhtin's conception of language as power and ideology or as a point of view on the world. The most important of these is the establishment of a set of values for judging literature which are considered absolute and inherent in great literature. Ashcroft et al. explain that "Language is power because words construct reality. The assumption by the powerless is that words are the signifiers of a pre-given reality and a truth which is only located at the centre" (89). The implication here is that the colonies are so distanced from this centre they do not have the same access to its truths. The empire constructs, not only the idea of absolute standards and values, but also subject positions in relation to these constructions. It thereby comes to occupy a social and cultural centre, and the colonies are relegated to marginal status.

In the case of the British empire it means "the naturalizing of constructed values" (3) which privileges the centre and denies the margin. This hegemonic strategy works by "both denying value to the post-colonial experience itself, as 'unworthy' of literature, and preventing post-colonial texts from engaging with that experience" (88). The result is "a geometric structure in which the centre, the

metropolitan source of standard language, stands as the focus of order, while the periphery, which utilizes the variants, the 'edges' of language, remains a tissue of disorder" (88). With this hierarchy of values in place, the empire is able to define the subject position of the colony or region as inferior to it, because it has the power to ascribe meaning and institute values.

The task of the suppressed is to wrest this power from the oppressor. Ashcroft et al. make clear that "post-colonial writing [can] define itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized" (39). The two steps necessary to accomplish this include the abrogation or "rejection of the metropolitan power over the means of communication" and "the appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the centre" (38). This is done through the "seizure and control of the means of interpretation and communication" (97).

Accordingly, the Atlantic region as colony must see the constructed nature of nationalist values; values must be seen, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith suggests in Contingencies of Value, as "the product of the dynamics of a system" (15). Similarly, Ashcroft et al. suggest that "control is always manifested by the imposed authority of a system of writing," so the Atlantic-Canadian fiction has to develop writing

strategies that liberate it from the debilitating hierarchical structures of the empire (79; original italics); it has to destabilize and deconstruct the centre/margin configuration and offer an alternative paradigm that authenticates its own existence and identity. And this is what the novels of Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, and Steffler attempt to do.

According to Ashcroft et al., the new paradigm draws on theories which incorporate a "hybridized and syncretic view of the modern world" (37), which relies on "a multiplicity of relationships" and perspectives (100-101). They explain that

The syncretic is validated by the disappearance of the 'centre', and with no 'centre' the marginal becomes the formative constituent of reality. Discourses of marginality . . . intersect in a view of reality which supersedes the geometric distinction of centre and margin and replaces it with a sense of the complex, interweaving, and syncretic accretion of experience. (104)

This point of view on the world and reality, with its preference for multiplicity and difference, is coordinate with Bakhtin's concept of dialogism. Hierarchical frameworks should be obliterated and replaced by a rich environment where meaning and values are derived from the interaction and collision of discourses. No one discourse maintains ascendancy, and all subject positions have the potential to articulate their discourses.

For Homi Bhabha, the negotiations for identity between nation and its interior others come about because of the ambivalence of the idea on which nation rests. In his introduction to Nation and Narration (1990), he states that

It is an ambivalence that emerges from a growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the 'origins' of nation as a sign of the 'modernity' of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality. (1)

The nation articulates a "Janus-faced discourse," according to Bhabha, the site of which is the symbolic border where the tensions are generated in the process of establishing identity (3). The border is the liminal space where meaning and value are negotiated with the centrifugal and marginal other and where the authority of the centre is questioned and undermined. He explains, in "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," that in this interstitial space nation creates ideologies which construct its people as double subjects:

The people are not simply historical events or parts of a patriotic body politic. They are also a complex rhetorical strategy of social reference where the claim to be representative provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address. We then have a contested cultural territory where the people must be thought in a double-time; the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy . . . [and] also the 'subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people. . . . (297)

What is interesting in Bhabha's theory is that it is the nation itself which opens the way to counter-discourses; the nation is built on ambiguities that allow its authority and authenticity to be challenged by those who are contained within it.

This is what we see in Atlantic-Canadian literature. Atlantic-Canadian dialogic voices are challenging the homogenizing authority of national culturalism, which tries to erase signifying codes of cultural difference and objectify the region's identity within what Bhabha calls a "nationalist pedagogy" (297). The nationalist formula for the inscription of Atlantic-Canadian identity disallows the plural and dynamic nature of its subject positions within Canada. The dialogic regional novelists have to narrate their own local identities against nationalist master narratives. The contestation, though, is always active and continuous, as Bakhtin and Laclau and Mouffe have pointed out. Bhabha indicates as much when he states that "The signs of cultural difference cannot then be unitary or individual forms of identity because their continual implication in other symbolic systems always leaves them 'incomplete' or open to cultural translation" (313).

This is true for any identity, national or regional. In Location of Culture Bhabha elaborates on his theory of identity as being negotiated on the borders of self and

other, the place he calls the "Third Space" (37). It also involves a process similar to Bakhtin's process of transgradience. Neither nation nor region can or should absolutely fix its identity; the other, which is beyond self's borders, always destabilizes self-definitions and pulls it away from its home, makes it aware of the world outside that also shapes its identity. Bhabha refers to the contact between boundaries as a bridge across which self experiences "the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world--the unhomeliness--that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (9). The "unhomely" is characteristic of post-colonial fictions "that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of transhistorical sites" (9).

In particular, novels such as Eriksdottir, Random Passage, and Riverrun exhibit this tendency to challenge the homeliness of the present by establishing the eras of the Vikings and Beothucks and the pre-history of Newfoundland as transhistorical sites of meaning. These novels recast history and myth into new narratives that demand reinterpretations of home, of Canada, and of Atlantic Canada. This is the intervention of the temporal "beyond" and the process of "presencing" that Bhabha mentions; any present sense of home is modified when the historiography which gives it identity is changed. Home becomes "bridged"

with the larger world and becomes a different home. Bhabha calls this the literature of the "new internationalism," and it is also "the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees" (Location 5). It is "the world-in-the home" (11; Bhabha's italics), and the process of infusing the novel with international cultural and political voices is the "'worlding' of literature" (12).

Bhabha sees this new literature as "an emergent, prefigurative category that is concerned with a form of cultural dissensus and alterity, where non-consensual terms of affiliation may be established on the grounds of historical trauma" (12). It would be a literature advancing the cause of the underprivileged:

The unemployed, semi-skilled and unskilled, part-time workers, male and female, the low paid, black people, underclasses: these signs of the fragmentation of class and cultural consensus represent both the historical experience of contemporary social divisions, and a structure of heterogeneity upon which to construct a theoretical and political alternative. (Location 28)

This literature of alterity is a counter-discourse to the canonized literature of the status quo. As such, it may be recognized, in the terms of Laclau and Mouffe, as an

"articulatory practice" that is intentionally political (Hegemony 96); it is meant to represent voice, the identity of those who feel silenced by nationalist hegemonic politics.

Similarities between the post-colonial paradigm and Bakhtin's dialogic paradigm of relations become obvious in the three conclusions at the end of The Empire Writes Back: post-colonial literature "undermines any project for literary studies in english which is postulated on a single culture masquerading as the originating centre" (196); it radically reduces the English canon "within a new paradigm of international english studies" (196); and it will revitalize literary studies with "the perception that all texts are traversed by the kinds of complexities which the study of post-colonial literatures reveals" (197; original italics).

With simple changes in references, these conclusions may stand as directives for the Atlantic-Canadian dialogic regional novel. For example, one of Alden Nowlan's major projects in Various Persons is debunking the semantic authority of national ideologies, while Steffler unmasks the pretentious nature of British culture in Afterlife. In terms of the canon, the Atlantic-Canadian dialogic novelists create works of fiction that strain against

institutionalized literary conventions; they experiment with referential language and linear narratives to create richly textured prose and techniques that incorporate multiple "language worldviews," to use Bakhtin's term (Problems 184). In this way they "internationalize" voice. They also privilege "complexities" in relations and show their crosscurrents in heteroglossia that simulates natural encounters in real life.

The cumulative product of these and other writing strategies is a polyphonic discourse meant to counter monistic nationalist concepts, especially cultural and literary nationalism. The dialogic regional voice reveals what Marjorie Pryse, in discussing American fiction in Regionalism Reconsidered, calls "an implicit pedagogy that teaches some readers how to approach regional characters differently than they are represented in 'classic' American fiction, particularly in 'local color'" (48). Pryse explains that literary regionalism "features an empathic approach to regional characters that enfranchises their stories and cultural perceptions" because "regionalism denotes a particular view of American culture, a view from the perspective of marginalized persons, as well as a consciousness of difference" (48; original italics). It is to the dialogic regional voice that we must now turn to

examine how it becomes a pedagogy of dialogism.

Notes

¹ See Regional Disparities (1982), by Paul Phillips, Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays in Canadian Political Economy (1983) by David Alexander, "Atlantic Regional Underdevelopment and Socialism," by Bruce Archibald, in Essays on the Left (1971), and articles by William Westfall, Garth Stevenson, David Alexander, and Patricia Marchak in Journal of Canadian Studies 15.2 (1980). These sources make the case that Atlantic Canada's resources have been exploited by corporate and government groups, whose power base is located in Ontario, and that the Atlantic region has been intentionally underdeveloped in order to stabilize that power base.

² MacLeod's quotation is from "The Writings of Hugh MacLennan" in Brick 44 (1992): 72-77.

³ See Clarke's "East Coast Writing" and New's "Reading 1995."

Chapter Three

"Writing the World:"ⁱ Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien

Alden Nowlan and his critics have frequently engaged in the debate between regionalists and nationalists over the capacity of a region's literature to communicate universal values and visions. The question of regionalism in Nowlan's work troubles reviewers, such as Jesse Hill Ford, Milton Wilson, Michael Brian Oliver, Keath Fraser, and Michael O. Nowlan, because Nowlan is a literary figure who represents Atlantic Canada and his works are its cultural products. They believe that nationalist assessments of his work use culture-centred criteria which are prejudiced against "local colour," especially Atlantic-Canadian local colour. This recalls the statement by Ashcroft et al. that "One of the most persistent prejudices underlying the production of the texts of the metropolitan canon is that only certain categories of experience are capable of being rendered as 'literature'" (Empire 88). Regionalist defences of Nowlan's work strive to abrogate the perceived authority of nationalist critics² to determine what is authentic literature and what is not.³

One example is Jesse Hill Ford's discussion of Nowlan's work in a special issue of The Fiddlehead devoted to his work in 1969. Concerning the notoriety of the term "local colour," she surmises that "The modern reviewer will

sometimes regard 'local colour' as the surest epithet in his pouch of opprobrious stones. Something about anything 'local' robs a tale of the authority that big city stories are supposed to possess" (41). Ford's comments are a defensive move in the conflict over "cultural nobility": she is protecting an Atlantic-Canadian cultural commodity against a self-proclaimed urban authority that seeks to deny it a genuine value.⁴

The strategy being employed by Ford's "modern reviewer" is the use of regionalism as a negative term to insinuate inferiority and parochialism. The residual effect of this is a suspicion of the term, even when it is used in a neutral or positive way by other critics. This may explain Milton Wilson's guarded approach to Nowlan in "Recent Canadian Verse" (1971), where he refers to him as a regional poet, but adds that "even a Maritime critic is going to be cautious about drawing regional conclusions here" (203).

The strategy of the regionalist critic, on the other hand, is to assert the authenticity of the local in fiction and, in addition, to assert the consubstantial nature of the regional and the universal or mythical; diverse regional experiences constitute the universal.

Other examples of this strategy can be found in defensive comments on Nowlan's work by Don Gutteridge, Michael O. Nowlan, and Michael Brian Oliver. Gutteridge

writes in his review of Various Persons (1974) that: "Nowlan has often been labelled a regional writer; and he is, in one sense. . . . But this book is more intense than that--it is a psychological study of growing up, of incipient middle-agedness, and much more significantly, an almost mythical rendering of a boy's *home-ground*" (45; original italics).

Keath Fraser's comments in his article "Notes on Alden Nowlan" (1970) embody the same language. He mentions the term "universal regionalism" in association with Nowlan's poems (44) and praises Nowlan's "regional qualities," which "serve to remind a country often reluctant to acknowledge them, of the perspective of its heritage and the roots of its contemporaneity" (51).

Michael O. Nowlan and Michael Brian Oliver also accuse nationalist critics of underrating Nowlan's work. In the first sentence of his article "The Presence of Ice: The Early Poetry of Alden Nowlan" (1976), Oliver declares that "Alden Nowlan is no longer considered by even the least perceptive critic, to be a 'regional' writer" (10). His comments on Nowlan's "universal appeal" (10) are a defence against those critics "from Upper Canada" who "label him a regionalist and a freak" (211). But Oliver's comment about Nowlan's regional label proves not to be true, since Michael O. Nowlan has to defend Nowlan against the same indifferent

Canada in a review of Nowlan's Smoked Glass (1977).

Michael Nowlan states adamantly that Alden Nowlan "no longer relies on the soil or the localism of his earlier work. He transcends to a universal level. . . . He can no longer be called regional" (66). After haranguing the publishers, Clarke, Irwin, for undermarketing the book and for referring to the Saint John Telegraph-Journal as the Telegraph-Herald, Michael Nowlan says "Alden Nowlan is deserving of the best this nation can offer a fine poet. It is time the nation and his publisher performed better for him" (66). And again in 1986, we see L. King-Edwards write in a review of Nowlan's I Might Not Tell Everybody This that "Nowlan's publishers have been concerned that his poetry suffers from a regional tag" (16).

Nowlan himself speaks on the issue of regionalism and nationalism a number of times. While he is critical of nationalist conceptions of Atlantic-Canadian society and culture, he is also aware of the possibility of their truth. Both nation and region are indictable for certain cultural protectionist measures, while both also have sacred qualities. This oscillation from one viewpoint to another indicates that his position is dialogized; it allows for both/and options and for the collision of their ideological positions. This is one important reason for including Various Persons in this study: it breaks the binarism of

nation/region that sometimes limits interpretations of Atlantic-Canadian novels to a defense of one position or the other. We can also detect Nowlan's privileging of plurivocity and multiple perspectives in The Wanton Troopers and his collections of short stories, Miracle at Indian River and Will Ye Let the Mummers In?.

Nowlan's work as a whole can best be understood using Bakhtin's theories of dialogic communication and architectonics of point of view. They allow us to see how his central characters constantly struggle against monologic paradigms of relations constructed by ideologies such as nationalism, Christianity, and capitalism that place them in relations of subordination. As a dialogic regional voice, Nowlan insists that these hierarchical paradigms be dismantled, especially the nationalist cultural paradigm with its self-legitimizing system of literary values.

3.1 Nowlan's Metafictional Memoir

If the first step in applying our methodology to Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien is to identify its voices and the value systems they represent, the first voice we must consider is that of the author. Nowlan's voice is refracted through those of his characters, and it is located in the aesthetic elements of the novel, in its "superstructure" and "artistic system." We can also hear its

enunciations in his choice of content, hero, tone, plot, and theme. Nowlan's priority in making these choices is always the double-voicing of his discourse with those of his characters.⁵ Through the confrontation of regional and national discourses, as well as other oppositions, Nowlan challenges the right of any political body or ideology to assert its power over the life of an individual or group.

Beginning on the aesthetic level, Nowlan's voice is found in his choice of the realistic novel which is framed by a metafictional narrative that undermines that tradition. Because of this, Nowlan's aesthetics in Various Persons has been often misunderstood by some critics and reviewers who have trouble understanding the importance of the novel's form in relation to its content. Starting with the subtitle, they interpret A Fictional Memoir simply as a weak attempt by Nowlan to mask the novel's autobiographical elements as fiction. One reviewer notes, anonymously, that

On its title page the book is described as 'a fictional memoir,' and this definition would appear to be Nowlan's. Certainly this work is nakedly autobiographical, and the fictional devices used by the author do not disguise the fact; nor do they seem--to the reader--to have reshaped experience imaginatively enough to make this book a true novel. ("Brief Mentions" 66)

Another reviewer, Fraser Sutherland, is troubled that "An ambiguity exists whether 'memoir' refers to the fragments of autobiography O'Brien carries around in a briefcase, or in

his mind--or to Nowlan's own recollections" ("Lurking" 120).

Other critics focus on the "looseness" of the novel's form or on its "episodic" structure. Francis Mansbridge, for example, charges that "its effect is less of a unified whole than a series of sketches of varying degrees of success," and that the links between the chapters "are not sufficient to fuse the novel into an organic whole" (83). Judith Grant expresses much the same opinion in The Quill and Quire: "As a novel, it doesn't work. The pieces that bridge the gaps between the stories suffer from an awkward relationship between an unnecessary narrator and the central character" (27). Grant McGregor expresses similar concerns: "as a novel, it lacks a sense of unity which would have drawn Nowlan's 'various persons' together" (113).

Only a few of the other critics note that the title and form of the novel actually complement its themes. Glenn Clever, for example, suggests that: "just as the search was intermittent and jerkily paced, with half-clues here and half-answers there, so the book presents [Kevin O'Brien's] life, in an impressionistic pastiche of memory, action, conversation, scenes--all the rag-tags that make up any of our lives" (36). Also, Stephen Scobie astutely observes that although the incidents described in the novel are loosely connected, "this very lack of connections is, as the title suggests, Nowlan's main theme" (6). When we examine the

superstructural elements of this novel through Bakhtin's theories of discourse and double-voicing, we see that the comments of the latter critics are more cogent, and the novel itself can be recognized as the articulation of a dialogic regional voice.

The novel's title and preface introduce us to aesthetic choices that immediately bring the author's voice into a zone of dialogical contact with Kevin's. The main title, Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien, is Nowlan's extrafictional title, but it is stylized by Kevin's voice, since he speaks of himself in the novel in the third person as a way of objectifying himself as a character. Also, the subtitle, A Fictional Memoir, refers not just to the book as Nowlan's fictionalized autobiography, but also to the manuscripts Kevin, the character, carries with him in his briefcase and to the encompassing text narrated by Kevin as posited author.

The preface is also double-voiced. Nowlan uses it to reinforce Kevin's status as the posited author, thereby diminishing his own. He does this by foregrounding the problematics of Kevin's epistemology. Kevin has no stable perception of himself or his world because he has no fundamental hermeneutic by which to interpret and order his empirical or spiritual experiences. He, like Nowlan, has to author himself into being using the principles of

multiplicity and diversity that he sees operating in the world around him. Consequently, the product of his authorship is a vision of himself as various characters who, although fairly stable in some ways, change somewhat each time he remembers them.

The preface also establishes the interrogative nature of these voices and of the novel's tone and style. Kevin speaks in the first sentence to say, "Perhaps I should begin this book with a page containing nothing except a question mark" (1). His quest for answers to that vague, hypothetical question demands that the novel be stylistically digressive. Consequently, the superstructure of the novel itself relies less on a formal armature to control character and plot development than on a framework of tenuously connected chapters, each of which is constructed from numerous anecdotes and stories which function as "metadiegetic" narratives.⁶ This arrangement easily accommodates the polyphony of voices that composes Kevin's world and allows him to weave meaningful interconnections among the most important ideologues in the book. It is a structural device that creates a web of intertextual references that forms Nowlan's microcosm of heteroglossia.

These premises are also reflected in the artistic system of the novel, which is metafictional in its commentary on life and the writing process. It allows for

the representation of multiple intertextual voices that speak autonomously from various transhistorical sites. Most of these voices represent the world of published communication, especially writing and literature. Many of the socially important voices are authors, characters, or subjects of books and magazines or are characters in television or radio programs.'

The function of these references is to show that the authoring of self is a process of establishing connections with others. Incorporated texts represent the discourses of others against which Kevin negotiates his identity. Nowlan is engaging in what Bhabha refers to as "the act of writing the world, of taking the measure of its dwelling" (Location 12), and it is here that Nowlan goes beyond many of his predecessors and contemporaries.

Understood in these terms, the criticism of the structural elements of Various Persons by Sutherland, Grant, and McGregor seems short-sighted. In this novel, the digressive form complements Nowlan's themes.⁸ Nowlan moves away from the strictly linear narrative and its teleological imperatives to the more open form of the episodic, self-reflective narrative, which provides a more effective vehicle for his philosophical statements. In this regard, Various Persons signals an early change in direction in Atlantic-Canadian fiction toward metafiction that has not

received much attention.

Keefer, for example, whose critical discussion of Various Persons is the most extensive, limits her comments on form in Various Persons to the narrator's shifts in pronoun from "I" to "he" (Under Eastern Eyes 169). She does this without exploring how Nowlan's experimenting with narrative point of view could be related to her observations that Lockhartville is "a world of absolute misery and closure" (167) and that in the finest stories in Miracle at Indian River (1968) and Will Ye Let the Mummers In? (1984) we can "find a sensitive and open consciousness pitted against the crude, closed mentality of place" (166). Because Nowlan's fictions are offered as examples of "hard" realism, as differentiated from the "soft" realism of writers before him, such as Thomas Raddall, Ernest Buckler, and Charles Bruce, the structural features of Various Persons are given short shrift (166).

On the social level, Nowlan's dialogic regional voice engages the rural themes of his literary predecessors, including Raddall, MacLennan, Buckler, and Bruce. Of central importance to them are the relational paradigms that govern the individual's role in the larger social world represented by community, region, or the larger political structures of nation. In Atlantic-Canadian fiction, these paradigms are shown to operate according to relations of oppression,

which, according to Laclau and Mouffe, are "those relations of subordination which have transformed themselves into sites of antagonisms" (Hegemony 153-54). As dialogic regional voices, these writers respond to the hegemonic relations seen to operate in ideologies such as capitalism, Christianity, and nationalism. As Laclau and Mouffe suggest,

it is only from the moment when the democratic discourse becomes available to articulate the different forms of resistance to subordination that the conditions will exist to make possible the struggle against different types of inequality. (154)

Raddall's response to relations of subordination in The Nymph and the Lamp is a rejection of ruling social and religious institutions in order to rebuild society from scratch. His characters feel that the principles of capitalism, Marxism, and Christianity have been abused by self-interested practitioners who are to be found in the small rural town as well as in the city. Because there is no sanctuary, they leave their home communities, as Kevin O'Brien does in Various Persons, and, eventually, mainstream society itself.

Through Isabel Jardine, one of the central characters, Raddall critiques Scotch Presbyterian and Calvinist readings of the Bible, which are foisted on congregations as aphoristic truths. She thinks that "There seemed to be something wrong, if not with the texts at any rate with the

preachers' interpretation of them" (258). And the young soldiers who returned from World War One "looked upon the preacher and Mr. Markham and the other tut-tutting elders as pious frauds or at best a flock of dignified ostriches with their heads plunged deep in the red valley soil" (258).

Systems of economic relations are also scrutinized. Mr. Markham is the epitome of good capitalism. As a local lumber merchant whose markets are overseas, he has to depend on British demands for his products to survive. His Marxist counterpart, Mr. Brockhurst, speaks of the situation as a "colonial economy. . . . It's been forced upon us by circumstances over which so far we've had no control" (270). But Brockhurst's Marxist theories are an ersatz alternative to Markham's capitalism, and Isabel rejects both when she leaves for her desolate paradise on the island of Marina. On the boat out she thinks that she is leaving behind the illusions of the land, and

With it went all those other illusions: the scrabble for cash that could not buy security, the frantic pleasures that could not give content, the pulpit-thumpings that could not summon virtue . . . the lavatory scrawls that were not literature . . . the statesmanship that was only politics, the peace that led only toward more bloody war, the whole brave new world of '21 that was only old evil with a mad new face. (322)

Raddall's argument is that any network of social infrastructures, rural or urban, can provide the individual only with illusory security and happiness. The solution for

Raddall is to start over by constructing solid and honest relationships with others, even if it means retreating to isolation.

It is interesting that MacLennan also offers escape for Daniel Ainslie in Each Man's Son and that Buckler shows David Canaan on the road to Halifax to escape the constricting influences of home on his psyche. Home in these novels, as in Various Persons, are the sites of relations of subordination that turn them into dystopias. But where Raddall and MacLennan suggest that escape is the only answer, Buckler suggests that there is potential for individual growth within the community.

Various Persons and The Mountain and the Valley have much in common. Both novels wrestle with the issue of language as a phenomenological medium, since language can be used dialogically as a bridge to the outer world and other communities or monologically as a bulwark against them. David Canaan has the same problems with communication and language that Kevin O'Brien has: his inner language cannot be translated into the spoken language of his community, and this ineffability registers as a barrier inhibiting his contact with the outside world. We are told of this early in the opening chapter when he is looking through a window at the landscape: "Detail came clearly enough to David's sight; but it was as if another glass, beyond the glass of the

window pane, covered everything, made touch between any two things impossible" (14). The only way David is able to touch them is through language. He thinks that "There was only one way to possess anything: to say it exactly. Then it would be outside you, captured and conquered" (195; original italics). To do this he has to create that "shockingly bright phrase in the very language of meaning" (195). And this is his problem throughout the novel: he cannot get that second spoken language under his control.

Conversely, Kevin does have some success with his writing. He has written his memoirs, which he carries with him in his briefcase, and the novel itself is his 'fictional memoir.' Throughout, his voice is developed in association with metaphors that rely heavily on writing. His self-perception, for example, is based on the relationship between his authorial self and his characterological selves. Kevin observes that "we live the first rough drafts of our lives before we're thirteen years old and everything after that--youth, manhood, middle age, old age, senility--is a series of revised versions of the same basic text" (23). But the product of one's relationships with these other selves is not an insight into the order of the world. Instead, there is just the observation that "the most anyone can expect from life is to be granted the ability to contemplate

without bitterness one's own essential absurdity" (5).

The absurdity that Kevin mentions comes from the unfinalizability and indeterminacy of life itself.' He is writing his memoirs in an attempt to give order and meaning to his life:

But though the plot may be fixed the pattern is constantly changing. The childhood Kevin remembers at twenty-five is different from the childhood he remembered at twenty. The childhood that he will remember should he happen to be alive twenty years from now will be something else again. (23)

It is part of Nowlan's artistic system that Kevin deal with these selves as an author who occupies his own dialogical position with respect to himself as a variety of characters. Accordingly, Kevin's memoirs become an elaborate framework which shows him interacting with and making choices between monological and dialogical ways of viewing the world, whether they be communal and regional or national. On the other hand, David is less successful in his struggles with the monological forces operating in his home community and region.

David Williams aptly expresses David's problem in Confessional Fictions: A Portrait of the Artist in the Canadian Novel: "the world is entirely enclosed in him, to the point of solipsism. The question is whether his language would ever get beyond this kind of self-reference in its pretence of referring to the world" (165). Williams thinks

the central problem in the novel can be summed up by two questions: "Does the artist exist to speak for his community? Or does the community serve to gratify the heroic fantasy of the artist?" (170). These questions relate to the relational paradigm represented by the levelled concentric circles of Ellen's rug, which is made of rags belonging to members of her family. Like David, she is an artist attempting to communicate with her family and the community. She has limited success, and her accomplishment is signified in the geometric pattern of her rug. She is at the centre and the other members of her family surround and support her. Yet, this paradigm is limited to her and her family; it does not extend into the community or beyond, and, therefore, it is not fully dialogic. More importantly, it does not work for everyone, especially David.

David's problem, like Kevin's when he is living in Lockhartville, is that he lives isolated in his mind and is unwilling or incapable of anatomizing himself in the community. When he is with Toby, his sister's friend, he thinks that "What he'd been missing all his life had been a reflection of himself anywhere" (142). He finds that reflection momentarily in Toby, but it is fleeting. In the last chapter we find him thinking that "Inside was nothing but one great white naked eye of self-consciousness, with only its own looking to look at. The frozen landscape made

no echo inside him. There was no tendril of interaction" (281). It is at this point that he begins to understand that dialogic interaction with others is paramount to creating an identity for himself. In the next paragraph, "as he looked at the frozen landscape it was as if the outline of the frozen landscape *became* his consciousness: that inside and outside were not two things, but one--the bare shape of what his eyes saw" (281; original italics). Yet, he never gets beyond the vision of this syncretic merger of interior and exterior worlds, as Kevin does. As he heads toward the mountain top, his access to the world and his own identity through language is granted too late.

He has his chance to cross the bridge into the world of others, literally, when he hitches a ride to "Newbridge" on his way to Halifax. But, like Kevin's attempted escape to Boston, David's escape is aborted. The couple who pick him up have a son who looks just like him, and they "were *communicating* with [David]. They were all talking together as if they were all alike [italics in original]" (169). Buckler, though, does not let him go on to experience the "unhomely moment" that Bhabha describes (Location 11). Instead, there is a collision of rural and urban languages, where David is pinioned in "a no man's land" (170). He has the couple stop the car so he can get out: "It was like

times he'd been sick to his stomach: if the others would only just leave him alone, so he could go off by himself where they wouldn't see" (170). He walks to another bridge, where he "began to sob. He sobbed because he could neither leave nor stay. He sobbed because he was neither one thing nor the other" (171).

Although the concentric circle paradigm points the way to communication and integration with the community, its dialogics are too narrowly circumscribed by that community. Even as it represents the unities of family and community, at the end of the novel there is no family left and no real affirmation of rural values. Keefer comes to much the same conclusion about family and communal values after considering this novel along with Frank Parker Day's Rockbound (1928), Sir Andrew Nacphail's The Master's Wife (1939), Raddall's The Nymph and the Lamp (1950), MacLennan's Each Man's Son (1951), and Richards' The Coming of Winter (1974). She maintains that these novels show "an inevitable progression from a necessary solidarity to the fragmentation or dissipation of the ideal of community" (Under Eastern Eyes 55). The only exception to this progression, in Keefer's opinion, is Bruce's The Channel Shore (1954). She reasons that

The paradigm which The Channel Shore creates is a dialectical one, in which the primacy of blood ties and the closed family unit is opposed by

events and actions which reveal shared human desires, needs, and responsibilities as the only redeeming and enduring basis for communal life.
(55)

In Bakhtinian terms, Keefer is referring to a dialogic paradigm of relations, and the difference between the "closed" and the "shared" is the difference between the monologic and the dialogic. When seen in this way, though, The Channel Shore is not really an exception to the other novels at all. Although it does establish the community as a potential site for individual growth, for the most part it still refuses to establish any border zone for negotiating its identity with the larger contextualizing value systems of the outside world.¹⁰ It becomes as self-enclosed as Entremont and Lockhartville and resembles the autonomous nation state in its bid for cultural unity.

Bruce refers directly to the Channel Shore, on which Currie Head is located, as "a little nation" (291). Viewed from one perspective it could be "a place to be born in, to grow your teeth in, and to get to hell away from" (205). At first, the iron grip of Christianity and family ties dictate to Grant Marshall the decisions he should make in his life. Under the influence of James Marshall, Grant's grandfather and the community's religious patriarch, Grant reluctantly decides to forsake his true love, Anna, for James' promise of land in the community. It is Anna, though, who can make

it possible for him to think of the "hard facts of relationship and religion and family loyalty [as only] a shadow moving with the sun" (105). Ironically, she moves to Halifax and is killed by a street car. If leaving is not the answer for Grant, than staying is.

Thinking to himself in jumbled syntax, Grant makes up his mind that blood ties do not matter: "The thing that matters--hadn't you learned that this is the feel of fairness, affection, kindness, good nature? Between person and person? Hadn't you tried to avoid possession, to treat your children as people, not merely kin?" (232). In metafictional terms that resonate later in Kevin's writing in Various Persons, Grant muses that "nobody's a copy of his father, good or bad. All kinds of things get scribbled in, from other people, other generations. Or edited out" (346).

Bruce's vision is dialogic, but, like Buckler's, it is limited to the dialogics of community. The focus of these two novels is really on what Bhabha would call the "sovereignty" of community and the "universalism of human culture" rather than on the negotiations that occur on any cultural or political borders.¹¹ They are like other regional novels which, as Stanley Atherton observes, are not "paradigms of the predicament of man in the contemporary global village" ("Fighting" 127).¹²

Various Persons brings us closer to these global

paradigms than any of its predecessors. Aesthetically, it is a transitional novel located on the border between metafiction and realism, a place where form and subject matter are used jointly as part of Nowlan's democratic discourse in the "struggle against different types of inequality" (Laclau and Mouffe 154). Socially, this novel is definitively situated on the border between the community as sovereign nation and the outside world as a centrifugal force that acts to deconstruct it. Kevin O'Brien has lived in Lockhartville, moved to Raddall's "brave new world," and is now crossing the border again in the ongoing process of transgradience. While the people of Lockhartville weave their own paradigms of concentric circles, other characters, such as Kevin, Kathleen, and Laura, move across its boundaries in an unhomely fashion. They negotiate their identities not just within the closed circles of the community, but outside in the world of Canadian and American societies that Isabel Jardine and Carney reject and David Canaan cannot reach.

In the early part of the novel, Nowlan depicts Kevin undergoing this process of negotiation with a number of profound influences on him that arise from the war. As a school child he is so influenced by the mythic heroism of war that he joins the Junior Commandos, a group of boys from his school who pretend they are elite soldiers protecting

Lockhartville from the enemy. Ironically, they physically abuse a young boy, who they pretend is a spy for the Germans. More importantly, Kevin indulges in daydreams of himself as a supreme dictator called the Conqueror. One daydream opens in a melodramatic way: "The Conqueror was standing amongst his paladins in a vast room with pillars and chandeliers. On a table with a marble top there lay spread out a map of the country which he, the Conqueror, had lately defeated" (17). The Conqueror divides his conquered nation with no regard for its citizens. In fact, he makes laws which make it impossible for them to advance in any way that might pose a threat to his kingdom. In speaking of his conquered territory, Kevin as the Conqueror decides that

The few cities it possesses will be levelled and it will be made a country of farms whose fields and herds will provide us with food and leather. Fortunately, a large part of the adult population is illiterate. We will make it an offence, punishable by death, to teach a child to read and write. Within fifty years these people will be as ignorant and content as their livestock. It will be a nation of human cows. (17)

Could we read this as a parable relevant to Canadian economic and cultural policies towards Atlantic Canada, especially since Nowlan later has Kevin identify himself as a slave? He confesses, "I was born of slaves . . . and because the brand of slavery is burnt into my flesh I have been prey to dreams in which I could be omnipotent" (117). Is it possibly that Nowlan is satirizing the tendentious

agendas of national politicians who manage the region in a neo-colonialist fashion?¹³

What undermines these daydreams at this point is their construction as perceptions of a child; they are the products of child's play and as such become caricatures of the real monarchies and empires beyond Kevin's vision. Kevin's description of himself as a child playing with the figures of royalty is suffused with parodic connotations that undermine any impression that these figures can hold supreme ultimate authority over anyone. For example,

He had made kings and queens and their soldiers and subjects, using scissors and pages torn from exercise books, and he had clothed them with crayon and housed them in palaces and fortresses made from cardboard boxes imprinted with names such as Schwartz Peanut Butter and Kraft Pure Orange Marmalade. (38)

It is part of Nowlan's artistic system that the monologic delusions of grandeur of the Conqueror and sovereign hierarchies be further dialogized by other more sobering visions of the world. He deconstructs the myth of the war hero when Kevin is apprised of the fact that most of the plane crashes at the flying school were the fault of pilots who were "madly reckless" (34). And in a conversation with his great-uncle about the statue of a soldier who died in the South African War, Kevin is told that "They put that up for George Bailey, his family did; I was there when he got it; it wouldn't have happened if he hadn't been a bloody

fool, and a show-off'" (34).

As he gets older, Kevin no longer relies on the monological paradigm of thinking that led him to the Junior Commandos and the fetishism of heroes and dictators. He now tries to exorcise that desire from his mind: "I am squeezing the slave from my ego and need no longer play at being lord of the universe" (117). He further acknowledges his shifting focus from the monologic to the dialogic perspective when he comments on writers such as Horatio Alger, Rupert Brooke, Bernard Shaw, Dostoevsky, and Kafka: "They were all of them windows through which to seek a clearer and broader view of the universe in which he found himself" (86). The other voices in the novel represent either ideologies which are developed from one fixed perspective and appear static or ideologies developed from multiple perspectives that work transgradiently to appreciate other world views, as Kevin's does.

Among the voices founded on a single perspective in Lockhartville are those of Miss Noseworthy, Granddad, Judd, and Macdonald, all residents of Lockhartville, and Sandy's mother, who lives in Halifax. The voices of Kevin, Kathleen, and Laura react to these monological perspectives in various ways that disclose the spuriousness of their value systems and their weaknesses as world views. Nowlan's pedagogy of dialogism, though, does not forcefully denigrate another's

point of view. Instead it contextualizes it within the heteroglot voices in the novel, which destabilize it by revealing its underlying system of values as self-serving and biased.

Lockhartville itself becomes a collective symbol for all monological voices in the novel, including those that are regional and national. Its name suggests that anyone born there is locked into the ethos of the region and is committed to speaking its language and upholding its customs for life.¹⁴ Kevin suggests as much when he comments that "In the truest sense of all, Lockhartville is not a real place, but a verbal convenience, a quick, easy and perhaps lazy way of denoting a certain set of experiences that possess a unity more easily sensed than defined" (4). Buckler uses the same representationalist strategy in his fictional memoir Ox Bells and Fireflies: "I'll call the village 'Norstead,'" the boy 'I.' They stand for many" (3). But both writers run the risk of being reductivists when they allow the ethos of one community to represent the ethos of the entire region. This is most evident in their disparate images of rural Nova Scotia; where Nowlan is ruthlessly unsentimental in his presentation, Buckler is dreamy-eyed and effusive. It is Nowlan's close scrutiny of this ethos, though, that distances him from writers such as Buckler and Bruce.

Nowlan shows that Lockhartville adopts certain national

policies as its own, such as the policy of conscription and the ingestion of all propaganda that depicts Canada in the role of paladin of Western justice. At the same time, the unity, as we come to see, is the unity of a self-enclosed world that treats everything outside of itself as the voices of alterity. Other neighbouring communities, the Canadian pilots at the airport training for the war in Europe, and the police, ironically, are recognized as alien and are not to be trusted, even though they are part of the very nation they are defending in the war. The ambivalent perception of nation both as an alien power and as a part of selfhood does not seem to trouble the citizens of Lockhartville. Like Bakhtin's peasant, who is capable of embracing opposing principles, they are content to fight as Canadians in the war overseas while mistrusting its political agencies at home. The languages of patriotism and separatism are compartmentalized; their centres do not meet to dialogize each other.

The linguistic element of the conflicts between Lockhartville and the voices of alterity is evident in the references to the adjacent community of Frenchman's Cross, another discursive world separated from Lockhartville by an "imaginary border" (5). Lockhartville's animosity toward the French is evidenced when one of Kevin's cousins refers to Bob D'Entremont, a resident of Frenchman's Cove, as a "frog

bastard" (142). Another example occurs when Ross Cranston's father humorously accepts the fact that his son married a Portuguese woman, and thinks "it would of been worse if she'd of been French. The Portuguese know their place" (25).

Nowlan makes clear through these references that Lockhartville organizes social relations with outsiders according to a hierarchy of relationships which positions itself at the top. He does the same thing in a number of his short stories, including "The Glass Roses" in Miracle at Indian River, a collection which contains several Kevin O'Brien stories.¹⁵ In this story, the encultured local values of professional pulp-cutters are pitied against the sensitivities of a foreigner, Leka, a Ukrainian who made grenades for the Germans during the war. The pulp-cutters, represented by the father of the protagonist, Steven, maintain closed, bigoted attitudes towards outsiders, attitudes centred around an inflexible cult of masculinity and a work ethic. Like Kevin's cousins and Ross Cranston, Stephen's father is prejudiced toward other linguistic and ethnic groups. He apprises Stephen of his theory that "Them Wops and Bohunks and Polacks has gotta lotta funny ideas. They ain't our kinda people. You gotta watch them'" (62).

Judged against these authoritative values, Leka's habits of physical affection and story telling, including the story of European cities, magnificent cathedrals, and

his mother's fragile glass roses, are scorned as weaknesses. The men wink at each other when Leka crosses himself before eating his dinner (Miracle 60), and Steven is embarrassed when Leka apologizes for giving officious advice, since "In his world, men did not tender apologies" (57). Intimidated by the subtle taunts and aggressive strength of the other men, Leka symbolically loses his ability to speak coherent English in conversation with them. Steven notices that "In talking with the others, the Polack garbled his sentences as though his mouth were full of cotton wool" (53). When alone with Steven, though, he regains his own voice and speaks emotionally of his family's demise during the war.

Nowlan evokes here, as he does in Various Persons, the evils of German nationalism during World War Two, this time through Leka's war stories and the story of the glass roses. Leka's sensitivities are symbolized by the fragility of the glass roses, ornaments belonging to his mother in Europe. They are destroyed when bombs are dropped in Tarnopol during World War Two, ironically, by the Americans and British. Nowlan is implying here that the allied countries, Canada included, are as prejudiced towards other races and cultures as the Germans were. After all, Leka does respond to the intolerance of the pulp-cutters by commenting that "Sometimes I think this country does not like people" (55).

In Various Persons, the pilots at the airport fare no

better as outsiders than do Leka or the French. When they rush to help the other townspeople extinguish a house fire at Judd's place, they find themselves linguistically ostracized:

the airport men laughed a good deal and because of their laughter the millhands curse and bellow as though the fire were worse than it is; they also call Judd and Leah O'Brien by their first names as often as possible to show that they are friends, that they belong here, that it isn't a goddamn joke to them, the O'Brien's getting burnt out. The farmers, most of them, are silent. (70)

The police, too, are categorized as outsiders. Kevin tells us that the people of Lockhartville

looked upon the police much as the people of a country that was conquered and annexed in their grandfathers' time might be expected to look upon an occupying army. In Lockhartville when mention was made of the state it was always in the third person. So the police were the agents of an alien power. (125)

The conception of the nation here is of a hegemonic, imperialistic body politic that ironically threatens the sanctity of this colonial community that it is supposed to protect. This is ironic, particularly since Judd wears a pair of suspenders "that bore the word 'Police' on their clasps as though designed for small boys playing cops and robbers" (59-60) and habitually reads Police Gazette and True Detective (39).

The ambivalence towards nation here surfaces also in Nowlan's non-fictional commentary on nationalism. In an

interview with the editor of the Fiddlehead in 1969, he proclaims himself to be not only a nationalist, but a pluri-nationalist: "I'm a Canadian nationalist, a New Brunswick nationalist, a Nova Scotia nationalist, an Irish nationalist--and an English nationalist, except for when they bother the Irish" (10). He recognizes the multifaceted nature of his own politics of identity, and he gives them all free reign. Yet, he also criticizes Canadian nationalism when it becomes exploitative. In one of his columns in the Atlantic Advocate, he protests that the Atlantic Canadian region has become the national whipping boy: "We perform the same function in Canada that the South performs in the United States" ("National" 71). He also criticizes Toronto film producers for searching Atlantic culture for only those things that fulfil their preconceived notions of the regions. Nowlan recognizes this ambivalence when he says "our critics are sometimes right, even if it's usually for the wrong reasons" (71). He explains his dual vision this way:

In real life, it often happens that almost everything that is said on both sides of a question is essentially true. In any discussion of the social, economic and cultural life of the Atlantic region it's less a matter of distinguishing truth from falsehood than of weighing benefits against liabilities. ("National" 71).

Here Nowlan locates himself in what Bhabha refers to as the

"Third Space" (Location 37), the interstice between self and other, the borderline that has to be transgressed in the process of negotiating identity. What he censures in Various Persons is the failure of others to step into this third space and consider other perspectives on the world besides their own.

A closer examination of the voices of Miss Noseworthy, Granddad, Judd, and Macdonald will help show how Lockhartville develops its monologic view of the outside world as an alien, neo-colonial force. As we examine these voices, we need to ask if they recognize the linguistic and cultural plurality of the world as centrifugal forces that decentre their own ideologies. Is there a tension between interiority and exteriority that Laclau and Mouffe insist should exist between self and other or between an individual and society (Laclau and Mouffe 111)?

Miss Noseworthy is one of Kevin's teachers when he is attending school during the war. She introduces him to a world divided according to the absolutes of good and evil, of self and other, where the heroic self/allies are opposed to the evil other/Nazis. She enthusiastically relates to her students a story from a magazine entitled Liberty in which Hitler is being tortured physically and mentally by his captors after the war. Yet, neither she nor her students realize that the people inflicting this inhumane punishment

are themselves being inhumane. Her total immersion in an ideology that vilifies Hitler prevents her from viewing the actions of the captors in an objective light. Therefore, her monological view is just as pernicious as Hitler's.

Instead of having Kevin point this out, Nowlan dialogizes her story with an anecdote Kevin tells about himself as a child of six. One night he ends his prayers by saying "`God bless everybody. Except the Germans, Amen'" (30). As an adult he explains that this made his mother laugh, "which is what I had intended, for I felt no malice toward the Germans, but only wanted to please" (30). The child Kevin plays with Miss Noseworthy's view of the Germans in a carnivalesque way that emphasizes its ethical shortsightedness. Her view is considered only one among many, and eventually Kevin passes over it for other views.

This scene is reminiscent of the classroom scene in The Wanton Troopers, which also illustrates Kevin's refusal to accept one set of ideas as authoritarian. He is supposed to respond verbally to Miss Roache's prompts in classroom rituals, but "Kevin never joined in such speech chants. He thought the meaningless sing-song sounded idiotic. . . . It was as if they were reading words in a language they could not understand" (15). Interestingly, these words are those of the national anthem and the "Lord's Prayer," credos that epitomize Canadian nationalism and Christianity.

Setting aside nationalism, Nowlan concentrates in this scene on impugning traditional readings of the Bible that overlook the very concepts of communication that define Christianity. For example, Miss Roache reads a passage from the Bible that is supposed to emphasize the importance of effective communication:

`he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto man, but unto God, for no man understandth him Therefore, if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.'¹⁶ (16-17)

She continues with "`Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice ye be children, but in understanding be men...but if there be no interpreter let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God..." (17). This passage reflects Bakhtin's theory of language and communication: languages contain ideologies, ways of viewing the world, that can be meaningful to others only when they are able to interpret the codes of that language. This is possible when they willingly displace their own central ideologies to receive and translate those communicated to them.

For Kevin, and for Nowlan, the problem is the intransigence of the languages embodied by authoritarian systems. They are ways of interpreting the world that refuse to compromise their positions to allow for the validity of

other interpretations. In The Wanton Troopers, they eventually confuse Kevin, and he starts to interpret the semiotics of the real world according to the moral codes of the Bible: "And when, one night near the end of October, Kaye went jacklighting deer, tripped on a windfall and shot off his big toe, Kevin was convinced that this was God's way of punishing him" (108). Even the landscape becomes Biblical for him: "The creek became the River Jordan. . . . In the sawdust desert behind the mill were the lands of the Hittles," and "The grain field across the road was the field of Boaz" (110).

Other hierarchical systems in Various Persons are also associated with Miss Noseworthy's voice and the voice of the educational status quo. The map on her classroom wall "that purported to show how land was divided between nobles and serfs under the feudal system" (10) symbolizes the simple hierarchical divisions which result from monological views of humanity. They are always constructed by the politically and economically powerful who wish to author the world as a reflection of their power. In the Middle Ages, it is the feudal lords who are the conquerors. In the era of the 1930s, it is the Germans who are trying to reconstruct the world according to their own view of themselves as racially superior to the rest of humanity. Their language of racial supremacy is what Laclau and Mouffe would refer to as a

"discursive structure" or an "articulatory practice which constitutes and organizes social relations" (Laclau and Mouffe 96). The Germans' new world map will show lands divided according to a scale based on national and racial purity.¹⁷ But through Miss Noseworthy's teaching of the federally sanctioned curriculum, Kevin becomes aware that there is a United Nations which is supposed to guarantee equality and safety for the nations of the world, and that any aggressiveness by a nation such as Germany will be dealt with by the collective forces of other nations. These benign world powers symbolize the forces of exteriority that Laclau and Mouffe say impede the "stabilization of subordination as difference" (Laclau and Mouffe[159]).

Miss Noseworthy's map and World War Two recall other wars that involve national contestations over hierarchies that suppress races and regions. These include conflicts involving the British against the Irish (11) and the Vikings against the Irish (12). The voice of Kevin's grandfather intersects Miss Noseworthy's voice here. He supports a nationalist ideology that recognizes the Irish legacy in Canada as sacrosanct.

Granddad is staunchly Irish, and his world view is predicated on defending his Irish heritage from anything that would defile its image. The impression of his grandson Patrick going to war dressed in a Glengarry bonnet and a

kilt is enough to evoke a vituperative response that recasts Patrick as "An Irishman dressed up like a bloody Jock going off to fight for a black-arsed usurping whore of a Hanoverian king!" (11). Granddad sees Patrick as an Irish-Canadian who is endangered by the "bloody Huns," and the "bloody Limeys," who are the "bloody bastards that shot Jimmy Connolly" (16).

These imprecations are aimed at British political and cultural oppression, which undercuts Irish independence. The hierarchy of empire and colonies set up by the British positions the Irish as inferiors who can be exploited, even as soldiers in time of war. This heteronomous relationship is just another example of the hierarchical matrix represented by Miss Noseworthy's map of the feudal world. It presents a master code of social and cultural ranking which positions one on a certain fixed scale. There is no room for social manoeuvring, and one's social status is determined at birth and governed by inviolable protocols of distinction. Granddad's strategy of resistance is to verbally abuse that hierarchy.

Nowlan uses the same strategy as Granddad in his column in the Atlantic Advocate, where he constructs his own counter-discourse to Canadian nationalists' criticism of Atlantic Canada. In "For a Confederation of Equals," he maligns The Toronto Star, The Toronto Sun, and Maclean's for

their demeaning treatment of Atlantic Canadian premiers. The problem is that "Toronto has always been contemptuous of the rest of Canada, 'The Regions', as they are referred to by what we laughingly call our 'national' radio and television network, the CBC" (86). He is accusing the national media of refusing to negotiate identity; they are neo-imperialist in their interests and decline a cross-cultural exchange of views with the Atlantic region. As the title of his column suggests, Nowlan's ideal paradigm of relations is one which promotes equality among groups, and he wants the centrist Torontonians-cum-nationalist critics to open up to this paradigm, too.

Judd, Kevin's father, is also verbally aggressive against hierarchies that author him as a member of a crude sub-culture. He can do nothing but hate any cultural, social, or political system that denigrates his way of life, and, in hating, he himself becomes defensively monologic in his outlook. After a failed trip out west, he retreats to Lockhartville with a closed-minded mentality of his own and what Harry Bruce refers to as "birthplace bigotry" (Cameron 113). He interprets the outside world according to a set of beliefs and behavioral etiquette based on the values of utility, empiricism, and masculinity. When Kevin first meets his father after several years, both are consciously aware of the required standard of behaviour:

It's as if we both of us knew that such meetings were subject to an elaborate etiquette, and were each afraid of making a fool of himself by attempting to perform the ceremonies. It's possible we'll never once address each other by name. In sentence after sentence the name will be replaced by a pause, like a row of elliptical dots. (40)

This partly explains Judd's attitude to his own relatives who now live outside Lockhartville.

He has little respect for his sister, Kathleen, whose life in Halifax is out of sync with life in Lockhartville. Judd warns Kevin that "`She's crazy as the birds . . . As odd as the hills. I wouldn't pay no attention to her if I was you'" (97). He is even more contemptuous of his daughter and her friend when they visit him from Montreal. He describes Stephanie as having "`this goddamn purple grease on her eyes'" that "Made her look like a goddamn corpse" (65). And her friend is a "`goddamn fool. . . . He had hair down over his ears, and he was wearin' them Christless sandals. Like a woman'" (66). He despises their language as much as he disapproves of their style and fashion: "`They kept callin' each other `darling', he said. And he repeated the word, spitting it out as if it were a nauseating object that he had put in his mouth by mistake: `Darling!'" (66).

While Judd is contemptuous of the customs of outsiders, other people in Lockhartville are xenophobic in their attitudes towards socialism and communism. Hugh Macdonald,

for example, absolutely fears and hates the voice of communism. He is a government representative for the department of agriculture who encourages Kevin to continue his education. But when Kevin becomes playfully involved with a communist newspaper, the RCMP question a number of townspeople in an attempt to incriminate him. Macdonald believes that "the very foundations of our way of life are threatened by the international Communist conspiracy" (124). Judd, who has also been questioned, is of the same mind and upbraids Kevin by telling him "people like us should keep our mouths shut and our arses down" (125).

Hetherington, Kevin's boss at the saw mill, is also virulent in his reaction to Kevin's involvement with the communists: "My God, if it was up to me, I'd stand you in front of a firing squad, the whole damn bunch of you Communists" (126). Unlike Raddall and MacLennan, who reject communism outright, Nowlan evinces support for it by Kevin and Morgan, the cook at the mill.¹⁹ Morgan is an ardent communist who is one of the "four freaks," along with Kevin, Hardscrabble, and Bible Billy Bond (113). He tries to proselytize Kevin with the communist paper Daily Worker and pamphlets with titles such as The Mistakes of Moses and One Thousand Absurdities in the Bible (113). Through Morgan, Nowlan evokes the insurrectionary politics associated with the American trial of Sacco and Vanzetti.¹⁹ Morgan recalls

that

When they killed those two men I knew I'd been a fool. I'll tell you about Sacco and Vanzetti some day. They were good men. Working men. And the capitalists murdered them in cold blood. Oh, let me tell you, there's nothing they won't do to keep their money and their power. (113)

Nowlan also questions the inhumane and totalitarian nature of capitalist enterprises in The Wanton Troopers. He has the spinster Sarah Minard and Kevin's mother repeat their conviction that people in Lockhartville are living corpses who are like the oxen enslaved and worked to death by the mill owners. Recalling their words, Kevin thinks "And it was true that there was an uncanny, indefinable resemblance between these resting oxen and men let off from their work at the mill. The oxen did not appear to know that they were no longer yoked to the log boat" (93). The living corpses are controlled by men like the store owner Biff Mason, who Kevin equates with "slyness and greed" (141), and by Ernie Masters, a banker from the larger town of Larchmont. Nowlan uses Masters' name as a characternym for his relationship with Kevin and other small town locals. Kevin notices that "Without saying a word, the man was telling him that he was doing him a great honour in treating him as an equal when, after all, he could break him like a dry twig any time he wished" (126).

Other monological voices are heard outside of

Lockhartville and adhere to different hierarchies for various reasons. Sandy's mother in Halifax, for example, subscribes to the hierarchy of socioeconomic class divisions. She evicts Kevin from her house one day because he does not fit with the class image of her daughter, who attends a private girls' school and wears its uniform as a sign of her social prestige. He remembers that,

the force of her convictions was so overpowering that I felt that I had, in fact, done something of which I ought to be ashamed. . . . Moreover, I sensed that Sandy and the others were now viewing me through quite different eyes . . . and then instinctively they had united behind the mother and against me. (102)

When Sandy's mother appears and speaks "with that cold, self-congratulatory politeness peculiar to certain middle-class mothers," she imposes a monologic paradigm of relations on the children which debases Kevin's stature as an equal. She is playing what Bourdieu calls "the game of distinction" (Distinction 57), where "differences in cultural capital mark the differences between the classes" (69). Kevin's presence decertifies the social ranking of her family, which relies on a semiotics of cultural and social codes that includes her daughter's school uniform as a signifier of class.

In this scene, Nowlan is trying to unravel the ideology of class divisions which misrepresents people in defining them solely according to the criterion of wealth. Nowlan

makes clear that Sandy's mother is engaging in a process of segregation that, according to Bourdieu, fulfils "a social function of legitimating social differences" (Distinction 7). The German hierarchy based on racial and national criteria serves the same function. And so does nationalist devaluations of Atlantic-Canadian literature when they are based on a "hierarchy of legitimacies" (Distinction 88) that socially rank the Atlantic region near the bottom of the scale.²⁰

All such scenes in this book can be read as parables in which the proletariat are forced to play to their disadvantage the game of distinction with the bourgeoisie. Nowlan, though, wants to change the hierarchical paradigms which organize the rules of these games. Lockhartville as a collective of monological discourses is destabilized by the continuing intrusion of other voices of alterity from the world outside its borders. Kevin, the narrator, tells us that "Perhaps Kevin's is the last generation to be so enveloped in the atmosphere of one house and one neighbourhood that, however remote, it always remains *home*" (85; original italics). The implication here is that contemporary society is moving towards a view of home that Bhabha refers to as the "unhomeliness--that is the condition of extraterritorial and cross-cultural initiations"

(Location 9). A tension develops between home as a centripetal force and the outside world as an extraterritorial, centrifugal force. It is expressed in a quotation that Kevin reads from Oscar Handlin's book The Uprooted: "'Always the start was the village....This was the fixed point by which he knew his position in the world and his relationship with all humanity....No man, for instance, could live alone in the village'" (138). The self is always social; it cannot function as an entity isolated from the larger world of languages and ideologies. It is this assumption that Raddall, MacLennan, Buckler, and Bruce consider but refuse to bring to the fore in their novels, but which Nowlan uses as his central thesis. Nowlan allows the culturally radical voices of Kathleen and Laura, as well as the multiple voices represented by all the texts incorporated into the novel, to transgress Lockhartville's imaginary borders.

Kathleen, for example, is an aberration in Lockhartville and leaves to find her niche in the outside world. Even her style of writing seems to impart a sense of the metafictional with its unorthodox form. Kevin describes how

She writes from the bottom to the top of the page as well as from left to right, as was often done in the eighteenth century, the lines of script criss-crossing, and refers to persons unknown to me with a third person pronoun and no further

identification. (98)

Her radical individuality is emphasized when Kevin explains that "Kathleen adhered to no pattern at all" (101). Yet, she does have an exaggerated sense of loyalty to certain cultural mores that seem to have developed from her life in Lockhartville. Like Nowlan and Kevin, she too has ambivalent feelings about home. This explains why she adopted her husband's surname and will probably be buried next to him, why she harassed her lover Giovanni Rocca after he left her, why she refused to eat the French, English, German, and Italian food she cooked when she was a servant for the upper-class Bannisters, and why she swears fidelity to her class roots (103).

Laura Trenholm proves to be the voice of protest against Lockhartville's patriarchal subordination of woman. She describes to Kevin what her situation there will be with her husband in Lockhartville: "We're going to live here in Dracula's Castle. That's my lord and master standing over there between the three-legged table and the easy chair that looks as if it were moulting" (92). When her husband is at work, she feels her time spent alone is "like being in prison, in solitary confinement'" (92). These references associate Lockhartville with the feudal world of Miss Noseworthy's map. This time the hierarchy is applied to gender, and it codifies the wife as a domestic slave.

Laura's strategy of resistance, like that of so many characters in Atlantic-Canadian fiction, is to escape to the city where, supposedly, it is easier to dodge gender stereotypes.

Throughout the novel the voices that contest the hierarchies underpinning the social life of Lockhartville, such as Kevin's, Kathleen's, and Laura's, have no effect when they are articulated in Lockhartville. The voices of monologism located there, such as those of Miss Noseworthy, Judd, Granddad, and Macdonald, refuse to participate in the process of negotiating identities. On the one hand, these characters adhere to traditional rural life styles as a defence against the changes associated with urban cultures they believe are detrimental to their own culture. On the other hand, they believe in the larger national and international, political and religious systems on which their regional systems are based. Nowlan's project in this novel is to show how the rigid boundaries that exclude other voices in the process of negotiating identity have to be more permeable. Lockhartville has to open up to the possibility of "cultural hybridity" that, in Bhabha's terms, "entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Location 4).

Within the novel itself, and in his other fiction, Nowlan's voice is clearly oriented towards dialogism.

Various Persons can be characterized by its "plurality of equally authoritative ideological positions and an extreme heterogeneity of material," the same qualities that Bakhtin admired in Dostoevsky's work (Problems 18). It is a broad exposition of voices drawn from the worlds of literature, history, philosophy, science, and politics. As we encounter these voices, it becomes obvious that this novel is a "microcosm of heteroglossia" (Dialogic 411) which subordinates plot to "the task of coordinating and exposing languages to each other" (Dialogic 365).

Notes

¹ Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994) 12.

² It should be noted that, while E. K. Brown, Northrop Frye, W. J. Keith, and others have been cited as representatives of the "perceived authority" of Canadian literature, many regionalist critics use nondescript references to nationalist critics. This tendency to vagueness can lead sceptical readers to dismiss claims against literary imperialism. But the number of regional critics making these claims, the consistency of their arguments over the decades, the blatant prejudice of Brown and others against literary regionalism, and the criticism of nationalism by writers such as those under study here cannot be dismissed as unfounded paranoia.

³ Ashcroft et al. say that "Clearly, the dominance of the centre and its imprimatur on experience must be abrogated before the experience of the 'periphery' can be fully validated" (88). The comments of many of the regionalist critics of Nowlan's work seem to be systematically aimed at discrediting this imprimatur.

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu explains cultural nobility in Distinction as "the stake in a struggle which has gone on unceasingly . . . between groups differing in their ideas of culture and of the legitimate relation to culture and to works of art, and therefore differing in the conditions of acquisition of which these dispositions are the product" (2). He elaborates on this term in "The Titles of Cultural Nobility," the second section of chapter one (18-62).

⁵ Bakhtin suggests in Speech Genres that any interpretation of a novel must start with "understanding the work as the author himself understood it" (144). He makes other comments in The Dialogic Imagination (314), Freudianism (225), and Art and Answerability (225) on locating the author's voice in the superstructure and artistic systems of the novel.

⁶ For a definition of metadiegetic narrative, see page 228 in Gérard Genette's Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method.

⁷ The following examples indicate the number and diversity of genres Nowlan incorporates within his text: signs (6); magazines, such as Liberty (16); references to the works of literary figures, such as Shakespeare, Tennyson (9), Charles Dickens (28), and Robert Graves (79); school textbooks, such as The Story of Britain and Canada (10); popular philosophy, such as Kahlil Gibran's The Prophet (91); hand-written notes (11); radio programs, such as Little Orphan Annie (11); television shows, such as Bonanza (51); movies, such as I Was a Teenaged Werewolf (51);

cartoons (26); comics (72); paintings (26); cookbooks (33); telegrams (39); biographies (51); children's stories, such as Jack and the Beanstalk (42); inscriptions (50); songs, hymns, waltzes, ballads, (53, 61, 73); plays (86); obituaries (104); pamphlets, such as "The Mistakes of Moses and One Thousand Absurdities in the Bible (113); and letters to the editor, such as those written to the editors of Free Press Weekly and Family Herald (122).

⁹ Bakhtin devotes his essay "Discourse in the Novel" to the very idea of analyzing the formal aspects of the novel in relation to its content. He asserts at the beginning of the essay that "the study of verbal art can and must overcome the divorce between an abstract 'formal' approach and an equally abstract 'ideological' approach. Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon" (Dialogic 259).

⁹ Bakhtin believes that the "new artistic position of the author with regard to the hero in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is . . . one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero" (Problems 63). Nowlan takes a similar position in relation to his construction of Kevin's character.

¹⁰ It is E. D. Blodgett's idea that "Border in the Canadian sense is the zone of negotiation. It is where origin originates" ("History" 10).

¹¹ Bhabha uses these terms in referring to a proposed study of world literature: "The centre of such a study would neither be the 'sovereignty' of national cultures, nor the universalism of human culture, but a focus on those 'freak social and cultural displacements' that Morrison and Gordimer represent in their 'unhomely' fictions" (Location 12).

¹² Atherton examines Horwood's Tomorrow Will Be Sunday, Richards' The Coming of Winter, Blood Ties, and Lives of Short Duration, along with several novels by writers in other regions of Canada.

¹³ See Alexander's Atlantic Canada and Confederation (36), Phillips' Regional Disparities (4), and Westfall's "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature" (4), which discuss the theory of the exploitation of the Atlantic region by the Canadian government.

¹⁴ There is a real community of Lockhartville in Nova Scotia that is located near Windsor, which is close to Nowlan's boyhood home of Stanley.

¹⁵ For examples, see also "Prisoner of War" in Will Ye Let the Mummers In? and "The Foreigner" in Miracle at Indian River.

¹⁶ This passage, from I Corinthians, Chapter 14, verse 10, which Nowlan decides to omit, is particularly relevant to Bakhtin and his own philosophy: "There, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification."

¹⁷ Bhabha refers to the idea of racial or cultural purity as the "myth of historical origination." Racial discourse is syncretized with the discourse of sexuality to strengthen colonial power, and both are a part of "a process of *functional overdetermination*" (Location 74).

¹⁸ Both Mr. Brockhurst in The Nymph and the Lamp and Mr. Camire in Each Man's Son represent the voice of socialism. While one is rejected as a pedantic bore, the other is killed with a poker.

¹⁹ Sacco and Vanzetti were Italian immigrants who were accused of robbery and murder in Massachusetts in 1920. Although most of the evidence in their trial was contradictory and circumstantial, they were executed in 1927. The socialists adopted them as martyrs and used their case in arguments against the intolerance of the American government towards radical and anarchist politics. The Sacco-Vanzetti case figures prominently in The Big Money, the third part of John Dos Passos' U.S.A. trilogy.

²⁰ See Bourdieu's idea of "a *socially ranked geographical space*" and how its distance from cultural and economic centres can affect the value of its cultural commodities (114-25).

Chapter Four

Searching for Language¹: Middlewatch and Penumbra

The inclusion of Susan Kerslake in this study can be problematic for those who hold purist or essentialist views of Atlantic-Canadian literature, since Kerslake was born in Chicago and immigrated to Canada in 1966 to settle in Halifax. Her novels, though, have been written and set in Atlantic Canada and offer regional perspectives that vary little from those of Nowlan, Richards, or other writers native to the area. She has also been embraced as a Canadian writer, with reviews and articles on her work appearing in numerous mainstream Canadian periodicals, journals, and magazines. She has also been included in such national publications as John Moss's A Reader's Guide to the Canadian Novel, which notes enthusiastically that she was voted by jurists selected by the Canadian Book Information Centre as one of the best writers in Canada under the age of forty-five during 1986 (191).

More importantly, Kerslake writes with a sensibility comparable to that of many other perceptive Atlantic-Canadian writers; her work shows she is able to "render the mood, the personality of a place," a quality that Fraser Sutherland insists in "Home Truths" unites all Maritime writers (102). As Sutherland implies, the question of status is a complicated one, since writers including Charles Bruce,

Hugh MacLennan, Ray Smith, and Ray Fraser at the centre of the Atlantic-Canadian canon have lived for considerable lengths of time outside the region (102). Is Bruce, who has lived most of his life outside the region, more of a Maritime writer than Kerslake, who has lived most of her life within the region? The question is unimportant if both writers find the authentic character of the place and portray it accurately in their writing. It is on the basis of this criterion that Kerslake's work is discussed here as an Atlantic-Canadian regional voice.

Through her novels Middlewatch (1976) and Penumbra (1984), Kerslake calls for responsive change to hierarchical relationships that abuse people and cripple their psyches, just as Nowlan, Raddall, Buckler, and Bruce do in their novels.² Her characters, Morgan, Sibbi, and Jason in Middlewatch, and Sarah and the narrator of Penumbra, are distanced from "filiative" or "affiliative" relationships that make possible the writing of their own life narratives. They seem in much the same predicament as Kevin O'Brien, Matthew Carney, David Canaan, and Grant Marshall, struggling to stabilize their lives against the loss of familial or social ties that are severed by forces related to the advancement of nationalism and capitalism.³

A central problem for her characters is the penetrating negativity of culture that Edward Said apperceives in The

World, the Text, and the Critic:

This means that culture is a system of discriminations and evaluations . . . for a particular class in the State able to identify with it; and it also means that culture is a system of exclusions legislated from above but enacted throughout its polity, by which such things as anarchy, disorder, irrationality, inferiority, bad taste, and immorality are identified, then deposited outside the culture and kept there by the power of the State and its institutions. (11)

Because most of Kerslake's characters are exiled in various ways, Said's discussion of "filiative and affiliative" relationships can be of particular relevance to us in conjunction with Bakhtin's theories of language and dialogism.

Said discerns a three-step process of transformation that starts with the "failure of the generative impulse," which is "portrayed in such a way as to stand for a general condition afflicting society and culture together, to say nothing of individual men and women" (16). An example from Kerslake would be Fiona Reeves' barrenness and Sarah's multiple miscarriages in Penumbra. A second step is suggested by Said's rhetorical question, "is there some other way by which men and women can create social bonds between each other that would substitute for those ties that connect members of the same family across generations" (17). He suggests that people often turn for alternatives to "institutions, associations, and communities," which provide

relations of affiliation to compensate for the loss of vital filiative relations (17). We see an example of this in the relationship that develops between Morgan and the people of Samphire's Cove in Middlewatch.

A third step involves the investment of affiliative relations with the same authority that consolidates filiative relations. But Said explains that the relations between an individual and society or culture reduce the status of the individual in the face of "transhuman rules and theories" that result in the "loss of the subject" and "the loss as well of the procreative, generational urge authorizing filiative relationships" (20). The differential is explained thus: "The filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and of 'life,' whereas affiliation belongs exclusively to culture and society" (20). This third step helps us interpret the socio-political context of the loss of identity suffered by many of Kerslake's characters in both Middlewatch and Penumbra.

One thesis developed by Kerslake in her novels is that characters require both relations of filiation and affiliation in order to consolidate their sense of identity, which is always managed through language. There is in Middlewatch and Penumbra the same inexorable assertion pronounced in novels by Raddall, Bruce, Buckler, and Nowlan that language is a constitutive and generative element of

the human psyche, that "To be means to communicate dialogically" (Problems 252).⁴ It operates metonymically to signify subjectivity, and Kerslake shows how the disruption of socially ordered codes by those unable to cope with reality can lead to the silencing of their voices and alienation.

What differentiates Kerslake from most other Atlantic-Canadian writers is her imagistic and impressionistic uses of language to effectively represent the authentic voices of her characters. To read Middlewatch, for example, is to encounter the periodic fracturing of conventional syntax into stranded phrases that still have semantic value in a semiotics of images and symbols. To read Penumbra is to experience the hybridization of the languages of realism and myth in ways that give her characters archetypal significance. In both novels, Kerslake's poetic prose positions her on aesthetic borders, just as her characters are positioned on social, cultural, and psychological borders. Their redemption as social agents is achieved through the creation of their own individual stories, which are transmitted through the medium of Kerslake's quasi-direct discourse. These double-voiced stories function as dialogic counternarratives to the cultural homogenization of nationalism and capitalism.

4.1 Middlewatch's Semiotics of Life

In Middlewatch, author and character voices intersect in sentence structure, diction, and imagery that evoke the character's frame of mind and point of view. When Morgan is the centre of consciousness in a scene, the sentence structure is conventionally ordered to reflect his formal, controlled mode of perception. In contrast, when Sibbi is the centre of consciousness, sense-impressions are captured in truncated sentences and isolated phrases and words. It is a disjunctive syntax that correlates with her disrupted senses of cognition and perception. This is a device that functions dialogically: one consciousness, the author's, represents the world through the perception of another.³ Some critics, however, have a problem linking this aesthetic element with the psychical and social aspects of this novel.

Amor Vincit Omnia compliments Kerslake on her "beautifully precise" descriptions of nature, but believes that "sometimes the details are simply too much; they are piled on too lavishly" (136). Citing the opening description of the crimson geranium, Omnia speculates that it "doesn't seem to have any discernible narrative function. It is an image described for its own sake, as in imagist poetry" (136). A closer reading of this opening scene, though, in the context of the symbolic imagery that Kerslake develops, does reveal a narrative function:

The crimson geranium. Fretted edges casting shadow pools on the softer colour of petals beneath. Dew-fed in the window-box. Apart and shining in the dumb confused cabin that says so much to him and nothing to her. It is hot in the one room now, but the sweat on the wood walls is the remnant of night cold, melted frost in the middle of summer.
(5)

The image of the geranium has meaning when read as a symbolic representation of Sibbi herself, especially in her subordinate relationship with her brother, Jason. He holds her apart from his own life and reduces her to silence, just as the plant in this scene is described as being apart and held incommunicado by the upheaval created by Jason. Whereas Morgan can still make sense of the wreckage in the room as a rape scene, it signifies nothing to Sibbi because, through her rape, she has lost her identity and language, which enables perception. In this way, the organic atrophy of the plant, indicated by its fretted edges, is made analogous to Sibbi's psychical and social degeneration under Jason's oppressive stolidity.

Support for this reading can be found in two references to Sibbi and the geranium during her recuperation. The first occurs early in the novel:

At dawn, Sibbi woke and looked out the window beside and above her bed. The geranium was dead, she saw, and in its place slender alders groped in the early light, rubbing their leaves in the first promise of warmth. (19)

When she recuperates more fully from her catatonia, she

returns to the cabin, where the narrator describes how "She took the flowerpot from the windowsill and threw it on the floor. She took the dirt and dry roots and crumbled them in her hands. To dust" (130). This is part of the story of Sibbi's spiritual and emotional death and rebirth written through a definitive semiotics of natural images and symbols. Morgan's story is similarly depicted through organic symbols and images, but his narrative is more directly connected with Kerslake's interpretation of socially grounded monologic and dialogic paradigms of relations.

Keith Maillard arrives at similar conclusions in his article "'Middlewatch' as Magic Realism." His thesis is that beneath the "realistic surface narrative" are mythic, symbolic, and allegorical levels of meaning (13, 19) that interact in ways to produce the novel's best features: "the magical shimmer of the writing, the resonance, the sheer importance of what was being said in such a quiet way" (10). There is also the mutual support of language and structure in developing narrative meaning (11). These qualities result partly from Kerslake's "elliptical presentation," which Maillard believes causes most of the problems reviewers have with the novel (14).

Maillard uses the opening geranium scene as an example to illustrate how Kerslake's elliptical narrative works.

Objecting to Papp Carrington's interpretation of the imagery as meaningless beyond the realm of art, Maillard explains, "The crimson geranium is not an image like something William Carlos Williams would use; it is a symbolist device" used in conjunction with other images to suggest that "Only by the full recognition of the death of her old self can [Sibbi] begin to live again" (14). Maillard also acknowledges that Sibbi "is associated with growing plants throughout the book," an acknowledgement of the ecosystemic nature of Kerslake's dialogics.⁶

Other critics, while noting the connection of Kerslake's anomalous use of language and narrative structure with her characters' psychic states, do not register Middlewatch as a novel with any social import. Chaviva Hosek, for instance, offers a number of incisive comments in her review of Middlewatch, including observations on Kerslake's use of metaphoric language, her dual intertwining narratives of past and present, and her use of allegorical names to create archetypal characters (134-36). But she stops just short of expressing the social implications of the novel:

The names of the characters and the peculiar pressure of detail in the novel encourage us to think of it as allegory or fable. . . . Jason stands for the purely materialistic in human life, while the gypsy stands for uncomplicated sexuality. Neither is sufficient, so the book

moves Sibbi to Morgan who has a dimension of spirituality missing from the other male characters. The girl's movement from one male figure to another shows the transformation of the child to an adult and symbolizes the process of coming to wholeness. It is not clear what point Kerslake is trying to make by putting all these figures at the fringe of the community. (135)

Hosek comes tantalizingly close to answering her own question when she refers to Morgan's attempts to bring Sibbi "back to some contact with reality and with the human community" and to Middlewatch as a novel engaged with "the process of making the child human" (134). Kerslake's characters are on the fringe of the community because the infrastructure of its institutions is depicted as inimical to the individual human spirit; neither Morgan nor Jason nor the gypsies are willing to trust their lives to the incomprehensible vagaries of political life in the public sphere. We have thematic resonances here from The Nymph and the Lamp and The Mountain and the Valley but, unlike Raddall and Buckler, Kerslake brings her characters out of the dark realm of self-exile to promises of integration with that "human community," just as Nowlan does.

Lewis B. Horne sees Kerslake as writing in the "traditional manner" (97), rather than in the mythical or allegorical, and limits his comments on the social elements in Middlewatch to his observation that "the region is remote, the references to the world outside general, the

area defined not by province but by the natural world it is a part of" (97-98). Although there is nothing inaccurate about Horne's comments, we must remember that Morgan is from the city, presumably a university graduate, and that he is a representative of its political and social worlds. Other manifestations of the outside world intrude in the menacing presence of the regional asylum, in Mr. Weaver and the world of academe, in the artistic community represented by Gerard Manley Hopkins and his poetry, and in the macrocosm of regional society itself represented by Samphire's Cove.

This problem of vague political and geographical references irritates other reviewers also. John Parr notices that "We see very little of human interchange in this novel, the main emphasis being on the sinking into and emergence from the rustic environment" (167). It is also the identity of this environment that troubles Marian Engel:

The book purports to take place on the Atlantic Coast . . . but I cannot place it. . . . To inveigh against a piece of good writing on the grounds of nationalism would be ridiculous. . . . But without a sense of time or place, the story flies apart. (43)

And Brian Bartlett sees a "problem of evasiveness" and a "haziness of environment--the townspeople are insignificant" (44).

Two other reviewers make related comments about Kerslake's setting. Anthony Appenzell, in linking

Middlewatch with Symphonie Pastorale by Gide and Le Grand Meaulnes by Alain Fournier, remarks that Middlewatch is "the kind of novel one might expect to come out of Québec rather than out of the Maritimes, but welcome nevertheless" (73). Similarly, Irma McDonough recommends that "Canada seems too tender a place for the archetypal forces that play so strongly in the author's range of sensibility" (138). Maillard's response to Hosek's version of the question of locale is that

Kerslake's setting corresponds to the Maritimes in much the [same] way Sheila Watson's Double Hook country corresponds to the Cariboo in British Columbia and for similar reasons: no effort is made to establish an exact locale or time because such specificity would limit the possibilities of mythic resonance. (13)

While this seems plausible, the comments of Appenzell and McDonald lean toward a stereotypical view of Atlantic-Canadian literature (and Canadian literature generally) that constructs it as part of a geo-social regional hierarchy capable of producing only one type of standardized cultural product, one which is anomalous to literatures of other political regions. It is this evaluation of regional literature on the basis of geographic and cultural stereotypes that so irks Nowlan and compels other Atlantic-Canadian writers to speak as dialogic regional voices in their fiction.

The key to interpreting Middlewatch lies in accurately

interpreting its socio-political aspects in relation to those that are aesthetic and psychical. Kerslake's social world may be vague, but it does have a function. As Pierre Bourdieu points out, "The world produced by artistic 'creation' is not only 'another nature' but a 'counter-nature'" (491). In Middlewatch, the dialogizing regional ethos of Samphire's Cove counters metropolitan political authority and functions as a paradigmatic model of social organization that borrows from the ecosystemic workings of the natural world. Interestingly, it is a rejection that we similarly find in Percy Janes' House of Hate (1970) and Paul Bowdring's The Roncesvalles Pass (1989), two Newfoundland novels that also deal with the dilemma of choosing between the Scylla of the isolated community and the Charybdis of the metropolis. As such, they warrant brief discussion.

In House of Hate, we see a family destroyed by a combination of puritanical values and mindless materialism, which the central character sees as inherent in his community. It is a place of "grinding materialistic horror" that incapacitates nearly every member of Juju's family while it intensifies the tyrannical nature of his father, Saul (140). In dealing with the antimonies of escape from family, Juju immerses himself in Canadian life by moving to Montreal, joining the Navy, attending the University of Toronto to complete an Arts degree, and travelling to other

places around the world (140). He is in some ways, then, like Morgan, and like Morgan his affiliative relationships prove unfruitful. He returns home with the thought that "in these exotic places I had been seeking to prove to myself my passionate childhood conviction that all the world was not like Milltown" (262).

Finally, Juju thinks that, despite the cultures he has experienced,

this whole world was essentially a Milltown in which I should find no home nor any place of refuge this side of the grave. At such times I felt the hard, clear crystal of my sanity sinking and dissolving into chaos. (262)

Yet, he decides that the outside world is the only alternative to the self-destructive "human darkness and chaos that Milltown really was" (265). At the end of the novel, he dismisses Milltown altogether and leaves for good: "So for the last time I took the westbound express and struck out blindly across the world in my urgent and frantic and hopeless hunt for love" (320). It seems that for Janes' character, as for Kerslake's and Nowlan's, there is no remedy for ruptured filial relationships at home and no substitute for them in affiliative relationships abroad. Any place, rural or urban, that casts human relationships in an oppressive mold is an abhorrence. Juju, Morgan, and Kevin O'Brien are characters for whom home is the site of various forms of indomitable corporate and familial monoglossia.

Their only hope is that somewhere in the world outside there may be a sanctuary that will allow them to develop a dialogic corrective for their ailing psyches.

The same situation prevails in Paul Bowdring's The Roncesvalles Pass (1989), another novel that portrays the failure of capitalism to make either the metropolis or the isolated wilderness places of meaningful dialogic possibilities. This portrayal is partly accomplished through the character of Josephine O'Reilly, who trades her slavish job in a restaurant in Port aux Basques for the glorious possibilities she envisions at Eaton's or The Bay in Toronto. But, she is fated to become one of the "children of exile" in the city, someone who eventually develops "a face dimmed by an inexpressible sadness" (131-32).

Bowdring deconstructs the myths of urban and rural utopian society through his use of references to art, music, and language. He makes references, for example, to "a dirgelike, 'Dada-approved' version of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem, 'Pied Beauty,'" (54) and to paintings that regularly depict two solitary or diminished figures in a shadowy landscape, such as *The Nostalgia of the Infinite*, by Giorgio de Chirico (70). The comments of Hugh, the narrator, on this painting recall Lukács' solitary political orphans, two of whom could be Morgan and Sibbi:

The height and solidity of the buildings made the dwarfed figures seem as transient and insubstantial as the shadows they cast. They were at one and the same time the centre of this silent universe and an unlikely part of it. (70)

These figures undergo an artistic metamorphosis into characters in Bowdring's novel. We meet Francis "Wats" Watson, for example, an eccentric bohemian poet struggling with his conflicting feelings for his Atlantic-Canadian island home. The narrator describes Watson's dilemma using imagery and phrasing close to Kerslake's in both Middlewatch and Penumbra:

Always an island, and he seems to be edging closer to home; though he no longer talks about 'our island home,' as he used to call it, always in that ambivalent tone of his, at once sarcastic and sincere, filled with an odd mixture of disdain and longing. (125)

Like Janes and Bowdring, Kerslake implies in this novel that urban life can be injurious to the human spirit because it often prohibits meaningful relations among its citizens. It produces people, like Morgan, who are prototypes of the "solitary, asocial" human being that Georg Lukács associates with the fiction of modernist writers (20). On the train out, Morgan thinks that in the city he came from,

he had never thought about all the people around him, as one grain of sand isn't aware of another on a beach, but out here with the desperation of seeking one's own kind, he saw all the faces, took a gesture or a look away with him to last to the next stop. And the more he became aware of the faces the less he could remember his own. This was loneliness. Nothing to identify him. (24)

Kerslake reinforces the association of the urban centre with the motif of lost identity by showing that Morgan "couldn't read for the sight of his own reflection in the window that had turned into a mirror when the lights came on" (24). And neither can he write: "Under the steady hooves of the wheels, Morgan began a letter to his old teacher, but it was too shaky to write: Dear Mr. Weaver: I am going to the ends of the earth, the end of the line . . ." (24).

His alienating experiences in the city deprive Morgan of his authentic voice or "cadence," as Dennis Lee refers to it in "Cadence, Country, Silence: Writing in Colonial Space" (152). His escape to the country is an attempt to recover that same authenticity of voice that Lee associates with postcolonial space and which lies "Beneath the words our absentee masters have given us" and under the "silence" we encounter when we try to speak about ourselves using these words (166). It is in this sense, also, that Morgan's quest is the search for language at the centre of Söderlind's study.

Kerslake's choice of the name "Weaver" builds on the metaphor that identity formation involves the act of inscription, where people co-author their life-stories using the surplus of seeing that another point of view can provide.⁷ This interlocation of self with other is part of the act of "seeking one's own kind" (24); it suggests the

dialogic paradigm of relations, and Kerslake associates it with border settings, but suggests the larger social worlds of the rural town and urban centre have to adopt it too. The image of separated grains of sand suggests a monologic paradigm, and Kerslake locates it either in the city or in the wilderness. While Morgan is estranged from the human community in the city, Sibbi and Jason are isolated in their cabin outside of Samphire's Cove. Kerslake uses Jason's eventual breakdown to illustrate the detrimental effects of living reclusively under monological assumptions that the human community has to be avoided.

The co-authors of Morgan's rebirth into the human community are the townspeople of Samphire's Cove and Sibbi, who respectively reflect Morgan's social and psychic selves. Samphire's Cove is the antithesis of the city. Its name immediately locates the natural world as the site of the regenerative process, since the samphire is a herb with medicinal powers. According to Arthur Adamson, this connecting of the regional community with the rejuvenating powers of nature through metaphor is characteristic of much Canadian regional fiction. In his article "Identity through Metaphor: An Approach to the Question of Regionalism in Canadian Literature," he theorizes that "Metaphor relates man to the world in which he lives" (87), and that

The content of Canadian myth or the metaphoric

paradigm of our present-day literature is the confrontation of the individual with a society which attempts to force itself as a stereotyped structure on nature. As this society grows more rigid, it closes off all possibilities of organic regeneration and so becomes sterile and dead. (92)

For Adamson, "Culture, then, must be in intimate relationship with the land, the land as a correspondence to inner vision, as *numen*" (88; Adamson's emphasis).

This cultural theory seems borne out in Kerslake's metaphoric references to Morgan and Sibbi as plants and lakes. At one point Morgan tells Sibbi that "human beings have something like a tap-root inside them that goes way down, out of all we know, beyond ourselves as we are now, it remembers us from before, before we were present and accountable" (86). The plant with its tap-root system becomes for Kerslake the quintessential dialogic model for the way we must function in society. Our growth depends on our interaction with our social environment, from which we develop the memories that compose our life-stories. When Sibbi is in Jason's care, she is denied the nurturing interaction with others that would allow her to grow as a social being. As a result, she wilts and suffers a spiritual death that is marked by the death of the geranium in the deserted cabin.

As a regional community, Samphire's Cove is able to co-author Morgan's social rebirth into the human community

because it has achieved a reasonable balance between ordered, centripetal social forces and anarchic centrifugal primal forces. This may be why Samphire's Cove is realized as an ambiguous place, "fenced for security," but also open in many ways to the presence of alterity (8). For example, when Jason comes to ask the townspeople to encourage the gypsies to move away, they refuse. One of them tells Morgan, "Now the gypsies're no harm, they don't stay long and bring a little colour . . . It isn't true they steal children" (12). This is quite a contrast to the xenophobic tendencies of Judd in Various Persons and the pulp-cutters in "The Glass Roses" in Miracle at Indian River. Like Nowlan, Kerslake moves away from cultural exclusivity towards egalitarianism.

The townspeople profoundly affect him, and he responds in kind through his role as teacher. It is important that the site of psychic and social rehabilitation for Morgan and Sibbi is the community schoolhouse, appropriately situated on the edge of the community, at the edge of a bluff between the land and the sea. It occupies a liminal space between the entropic natural world and the protected order of communal life, which has the potential to destroy other characters such as David Canaan and Kevin O'Brien when it is founded on monological principles. In relation to the fisherman and their children,

Morgan had a different relationship with the world, not better, not worse. He would try to give these children a vision out of his world, out of his experience, as they were to give him a vision out of theirs. (30)

He ponders, later, that he "felt so much more real among these children, who recognized him, reacted to him, allowed him his being" (87). Here, the dialogic paradigm is made obvious in terms that echo the phrase "difference on equal terms" (Ashcroft et al. 36).

Other appropriate references are made to Morgan's affiliative relations with Samphire's Cove when he is there during the Christmas and New Year holidays. Kerslake makes the point that Morgan is now influenced by a number of forces, those that are social and personal and spatial and temporal. Walking alone through the village on Christmas Eve, he thinks of the "The landwash: being between the forces," those of the socially ordered landscape and those of the primordially chaotic seascape (115). He is also on temporal borders, "Looking forward into another country, forward" (115). It is significant that "Other" here is conceptualized in terms of geographical and political space, since "country" can refer to a place other than Nova Scotia or Canada, as well as to a natural geography. Also, there is a dialogic exchange between them, this time in the form of water flowing naturally from one entity to another. Morgan feels that "He was a lake fed by overhead rains and

underground springs" (115) and that he "in turn fed many rivers. Saw some of himself flowing outward. He watched pieces of himself going on but it seemed he could never be with a single person" (116). Here, Kerslake is proposing that affiliative relationships alone are not enough; there must also be personal filiative contact with another to fully develop one's sense of identity.

This use of ecosystemic images to illustrate a dialogic regional paradigm of relations occurs also in Donna Smyth's Quilt, another Atlantic-Canadian novel that is thematically close to both Middlewatch and Penumbra, one that merits brief discussion here. Smyth, like Kerslake, is from outside the region, from Victoria, British Columbia, but she also has a spiritual affinity with Nova Scotia that enables her to write convincingly of its rural character.

In Quilt, Sam Sanford, the female protagonist, sees the elm trees on her farm as existing within a network of relations with other elements in the natural world:

And the elms rustled and moved overhead full of elm life after a hundred years, crammed from the inner bark to the secret core, pith and heart of tree where sap-life flowed between the earth and sky in the shape of a tree. And the elm leaves muttered and sighed, shadow and sun, leafy interfringe woven. (17-18)

The tree bridges the earth and sky in a circuitry of life-preserving energies that models the dialogics of social life inscribed in this novel. Relevant to this point is Jeanne

Delbaere's comment on Middlewatch that "Both the microstructure and the macrostructure of the book mirror the rich and mysterious reciprocity between the human psyche and the psyche of nature" (81). This comment can be applied with equal force to Quilt (81), a novel which also validates Adamson's thesis on the necessary connection between the human psyche and the numen in nature.⁴

Descriptions of the local swimming hole also manifest the reciprocity discerned by Delbaere; Smyth uses it to show that human relationships are interconnected like the leaves of Sam's elms. As a metonym for the community of Dayspring, it is a place where life can be ambivalently rewarding and tragic. Children and teenagers frolic there, but it has a steep bank like a canyon with sinister rocks at the bottom, and

a large hole in the rocks where the water gushed and ran, splashed and swirled, cold and black where the hole was as if it was deep as a pit And the green slime grew on the rocks so you had to be careful or you could fall and break a leg and then topple into the river. Drown and be dead forever till they found your body at the bridge by the garage. (22)

Smyth's natural world exhibits the same dualities of tumultuousness and tranquillity that characterize Kerslake's hurricanes and blissful summer skies in Samphire's Cove. Like the swimming hole, the community of Dayspring has both pleasant and abominable qualities, with its rustic scenery

serving as a setting for abusive marital relationships, workers' despair over lives lost in industrial accidents, and women's struggles against their subordination under a patriarchal social regime. In her comments on Quilt in Under Eastern Eyes, Keefer, alluding as well to Buckler's Ox Bells and Fireflies, observes that "Smyth's Dayspring is a Norstead on which the foreign forces of Welfare, the Shopping Mall and Television have encroached," and that "for the idyll to survive as an authentic and valid genre it must deconstruct itself, work against its traditional premises and strategies" (209, 210). In this task, Smyth seems more exuberant than Kerslake.

Smyth's dialogized impression of the rural community deconstructs when it works against the stereotypical image of idyllic regional communities established by exploitive commercial interests represented by the photographer from Halifax. He buys the land adjacent to the pool and tries to claim it as his own, using it as a scenic backdrop for photos of engaged couples he brings from the city. From his perspective, the swimming hole is "a romantic pool. He called it his 'environmental studio'" (22). When he tries to prevent the children from swimming there, Sam "pointed out to the photographer fellow that nobody owned the river. That river belonged to everyone in Dayspring" (23).

This is a socialist defence of cultural property

against the distorting hermeneutics of capitalism, one parallel with regional remonstrations against nationalist misreadings of Atlantic-Canadian literature. Sam does not want Dayspring translated by the photographer into a romanticized rural Eden that can then be marketed to consumers outside the community. Smyth, here, is protesting against what Ian McKay identifies as the "liberal antimodernism" of

urban cultural producers, [who], pursuing their own interests and expressing their own view of things, constructed the Folk of the countryside as the romantic antithesis to everything they disliked about modern urban and industrial life.
(xv, 4)

McKay refers to the enterprise of people such as Smyth's photographer as the "aesthetic colonization of the country by the city," whereby the people of the countryside or Folk were constructed according to "the antimodernist Myth of the Golden Age" (9, 15).

McKay goes on to describe how this process of cultural translation involved "the politics of cultural selection" and was encouraged by the state in order to accelerate the growth of tourism in Nova Scotia (39, 33). Consequently, "alternative voices--particularly those rooted in a counter-hegemonic working-class movement--had been stilted," while the general population of Folk became "exotic Others" (100, 108). In a comment that suggests the dialogic/monologic

tensions in the writing of regional writers such as Smyth and Kerslake, McKay points out that "The construction of the rural 'Other' in the interests of the tourist gaze is antithetical to seeing both rural and urban citizens as equals in a common project of citizenship" (41). And while he cites Frank Parker Day's Rockbound and the works of Thomas Raddall as texts that promote an essentialist view of rural Nova Scotia, he praises Nowlan's Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien as a resistance narrative that deconstructs an urban imaging of rural Folk through the framework of "Innocence" (244, 308).

The important point made here in McKay's comments and in Smyth's scene with the photographer is that the oppositions between aesthetic norms or paradigms of relations are not necessarily limited to region and nation; they are also intraprovincial, intraregional, and are fought along lines of class divisions, as we have seen in Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien. In the case of Smyth and Kerslake, the romantic view of the urban cultural producers is resisted by the realism of the natural world. These two writers show that the success of any community is dependent on the degree to which it adopts as its own the dialogic, ecosystemic model of relations inherent in the workings of nature. In Smyth's fiction, the oppositions between the monologic and the dialogic become manifest in references to

the quilt as a symbol of equal citizenship.

Smyth's quilt is made by the women of Dayspring at Sam Sanford's house. It is made, like Ellen's in The Mountain and the Valley and Morgan's in Middlewatch (16), from pieces of clothing that signify the identities of their owners. But unlike Ellen's quilt, Morgan's and Sam's represent the entire community rather than one family, and they are, therefore, more openly inclusive. Sam's quilt

was white and blue and green. Part was made out of a tablecloth Sam had saved for years in a trunk. . . . Hazel had had some blue stuff and the wedding dress, her mother's one. . . . Jeannie'd brought some dark green from the lining of her old coat and some more blue from a dress. The other women had brought this and that, each piece identifiable by the owner until it became part of the design.
(48)

The design is called Morning Star, and Smyth uses it to evoke the conventional associations of woman with the moon and shadow and man with the sun and light, as Kerslake does in Middlewatch and Penumbra. She also uses it to emphasize the simultaneous co-existence of moon and sun and the generative impulses of rebirth symbolized by their meeting during the dawn. To Sam, the name is "like a poem" (18), and Smyth develops the narrative allusions to show how making the quilt is an articulation of feminist historiography:

As the design became clear, so did all the stories, the bits of family history. . . . They'd told each other these stories, all the time working and stitching. Watching how it fit together, becoming something other than the pieces

they held in their hands. (49)

The quilt is a feminist counternarrative that protests against the patriarchal system responsible for gender discrimination against women (33, 57, 78).¹⁰ But it is also a rural counternarrative against government institutions when they adopt totalitarian attitudes towards people. Even though institutions such as hospitals and doctors (28, 38), asylums (77), the police (51), capitalism (96), the justice system (74), and churches (19) provide invaluable services when they function according to their civic mandates, they can also destroy individuals when they become aggressively authoritarian.¹¹

Both the quilt and the swimming hole are cultural objects in a struggle between two antithetical axiologies, one founded on the complexities of real human relationships and the natural world and the other on the superficialities of romanticism and commercialism. And when a capitalist system of values appropriates regional culture, there is an immediate loss of that culture's intrinsic historiographic value. Smyth's position seems to be that regional communities have to reject any romanticizing discourse that translates their total culture into commodified stereotypical images. This may be why Smyth has Ralph, a mill worker disillusioned by Scott Paper's exploitative presence in his region, commit suicide near the Tourist

Centre, an event which strikes the women making the quilt with dramatic force: "The quilt fell away from them as though someone had torn it from their hands. Or the hands dropped lifeless from the quilt" (120).

This tragedy delays the completion of the quilt, and Smyth intimates in the last line that it may never be finished: "The quilt wasn't finished and wouldn't be finished now till tomorrow or the next day" (121). For Smyth, the "unfinalizability" of being and communicating seems to preclude artistic closure;²² other stories might be added to Sam's quilt and other quilts may be started to communicate the history of Dayspring. This can continue as long as the reification of its narratives by any narrowly prescribed aesthetics is held at bay.

In Ralph's case, control of his narrative fell to the monologism of government bureaucracy and capitalism as soon as he became dependent on Scott Paper and social services for his livelihood: we know that he "hated social workers almost more than cops" (13); "he hated the government. . . . They always found you out, always snooping, that was the government. . . . Always out to get the small guy, never got the bigshots" (38); and he blames Scott Paper for the accident in which his father lost his hand: "And it was just the two of them and his Dad drove all the way to the hospital 'cause Ralph was too little and had to hold on the

hand, trying to hold on the hand with the blood spurting. No use" (96).

Where Smyth leaves her novel with the rural narrative of the quilt only partially written, Kerslake leads us on to a more positive moment. She demonstrates through Sibbi and Morgan's relationship that affiliative relationships alone can nurture only the social consciousness. She suggests there is another aspect of the psyche that is inherently primordial and filiative in nature, and it, too, can live only in interpersonal, dialogic contact with another human being. She makes quite clear, as Smyth does with Ralph, that if there is no contact at this level, if there is no success in the search for language, there is no voice.¹³

What allows or disallows this connection is the accessibility of the characters to their own personal histories. Smyth shows Ralph cut off from his personal history in Dayspring in the same way Morgan is cut off from his in the city. His memories and stories of the city are repressed into secrets and mysteries. It is in his transgradient relationship with Sibbi, in his co-authoring of her story, that he can fully recover these memories and create his own life-story.

Sibbi has been dominated by her brother Jason, whom Kerslake presents as an example of someone unable to recuperate from the loss of filiative contact with another.

After his mother dies giving birth to Sibbi, he begins to lose contact with his own stories of "a thousand shipwrecks under the spars of the boughs and the starry black sky" and with her "songs" (49). He tells Sibbi stories while he is part of the social world (57), but when he becomes a recluse in the hills near Samphire's Cove, all his stories are lost. He becomes introverted, "toneless," and xenophobic (97). Finally, he "broke apart" and destroyed "everything he would have to leave behind," including Sibbi (127). Sibbi is left in a state resembling aphasia, without even a sense of self. Morgan explains to the school children that "she's lost, because she's forgotten. It's as if you were suddenly in a new house with new people all round you, only they all seemed to know you, but you couldn't remember any of them" (44).

Kerslake describes Sibbi's recovery, and Morgan's, in terms of the semiotics of memory and stories, where they encode and decode memories as signs, which are created through touch, feeling, and sound. It is much the same process that Nowlan is concerned with in Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien when Kevin reads from one of his old notebooks that "we are creating ourselves continually" (86). While at first Sibbi sees only "shapes" that are "meaningless," she eventually discerns Morgan's presence and remembers him when he is absent from the schoolhouse. She

registers him in her consciousness as a sign of her own existence. Reciprocally, Morgan is discovering himself in his attempts to find Sibbi. As she begins to recover her memories, Morgan begins to recall "the bone-splintering loneliness of his childhood" (119). With Sibbi's recovery during the winter, Morgan becomes "an easy and comfortable memory" for her (132).

Their final emergence into the dialogics of memory and story occurs at the point of land where they first met. After walking into the water, she holds her hands in the air, and "Morgan saw the timid line of the horizon between her fingers" (133). What she sees is rendered into a prophetic story that she shares with Morgan. As she turns from the sea,

Her mouth was open, smiling: gentle, real, connecting. And her eyes were open. She was looking for someone. He wondered what she had found behind the tears, beyond the horizon. . . . Morgan slid his fingers around hers. She shook away, then reached again toward him, looked into his face. He put his hand under hers, gently, as if it were a fragile bird. But it was quite steady, offered as a solid thing, a story. (133)

To interpret this scene according to the paradigm of dialogic relations would be to interpret what Sibbi sees beyond the horizon as the "human community," as mentioned by Chaviva Hosek in her review of Middlewatch and as symbolized by Donna Smyth's community quilt. Kerslake is offering to the larger social world, which lies beyond the local

horizon, a paradigm of relations that works according to the same principles of transgradience that structures Morgan and Sibbi's relationship. Sibbi is reaching toward the broader world of social heteroglossia as the leaves of the pear tree in Gerard Manley Hopkins' sonnet "Spring" reach up to their supernal horizon. In this respect, Kerslake creates a more harmonious vision of the human community than does Smyth.

Morgan reads "Spring" to Sibbi when he first meets her at this same place, the place that represents the real "ends of the earth" (24). It is a poem of burgeoning natural life, epitomized by the pear tree as it reaches its leaves toward a horizon of "descending blue; that blue is all in a rush / with richness" (7-8). Hopkins warns, though, that this Edenic world will "cloud . . . and sour with sinning" in a seasonal cycle of death and rebirth (12). This we have seen in Quilt and in the violence of Sibbi's rape. Having taken her characters through symbolic death, though, Kerslake now allows them this interdependent rebirth.

4.2 Penumbra's Political Geographies

Kerslake takes up this theme of dialogic relations again in Penumbra, a novel which John Moss praises for "the diffuse beauty of its prose, for its stunning elliptical structure, its elusive brooding moodiness, and its sinuous imagery in which concrete and abstract, literal and

figurative are bound in disconcerting harmonies" (191). Moss claims that in this novel "there is no movement, only a heightening of awareness" (192). But three sentences later, he declares the novel "moves towards wholeness, towards fulfilment of a vision" (192). At the end of his critique, he admits, "Even without fully comprehending what it is [Kerslake] shares, it is enough. We are struck by her generosity, though we do not, perhaps, understand the gift" (192).

Moss's unsettled responses to Penumbra may have resulted from the very qualities he praises, qualities similar to the ones Keefer catalogues in her discussion of the work of both Nancy Bauer and Kerslake:

the spiralling movement of their narratives, the refusal of linearity, their sense of language as something with which one may joke, play, or which one may scrape like matches against rough, dark walls are recognizably new qualities in Maritime fiction. (258)

For Keefer, Penumbra is "an extraordinarily complex and difficult novel," and its resistance to the linear and perfected narrative structures of novels such as The Mountain and the Valley places it in the category of the postmodern (258).

These aesthetic qualities help the novel to function as a counternarrative to imposing social norms that regulate Atlantic-Canadian fiction. It critiques both the sterile,

ritualistic social life in the metropolis, represented by the whaling town on the mainland, and the solipsistic, regressive life of isolated rural regions, represented by life on the island of Lune. Kerslake, and other Atlantic-Canadian novelists, seem to be aware of the same dangers that Edward W. Soja enumerates in Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory, "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" (6).¹⁴ Using archetypal images to exaggerate their predominant characteristics, Penumbra develops an ideological tension between the metropolis and the isolated rural area, both of which are ambiguously construed as anathema and sanctuary for the individual. Characters want to be part of the cosmopolitan social world, but they are dubious of its ability to provide solace for the soul. Similarly, they want to remain in isolation from it, but cannot tolerate the absence of comforting others. In Middlewatch, the same tension was played out between the city and the wilderness cabin owned by Jason and Sibbi. The difference in Penumbra is the removal of an intermediary rural community, such as Samphire's Cove, leaving the narrator in Kerslake's second novel stranded in the void.

On her boat ride to the island from a trip to the town, the unnamed narrator muses that she "saw the fearful distance one ribbon of water can separate. There on the mainland appeared the creatures who were living in a world they understood, could support them. A medium at times hostile but understood" (24). It is hostile because its creatures can be obsessively devoted to presumptuous, genteel rituals and systems of social etiquette that exclude nonconformists such as the narrator. The ladies who drink tea at her aunt's boarding house take "most of the afternoon to dress" and they exhibit pretentious and artificial upper-class mannerisms as signs of social elitism (67). On her trip back to the island, the narrator muses on "The world of these ladies where hope had rusted and the skin of memory had scales" (69). This is the world Morgan leaves, a place that inhibits the transformation of memories into stories.

The narrator discovers this herself when she writes a letter in an attempt to capture the memories of the heady time she spent with a sailor who became her lover. In her room at her aunt's boarding house, she writes under penumbral candle light, "a letter around these memories, remembered in the same silence, by a self underneath the surface" (71). But in the stark light of the next morning "it was impossible to translate" (71). The codes of the subconscious language of the island prove to be

indecipherable in town, and we have another reenactment of the Corinthians' parable of the barbarians in Nowlan's The Wanton Troopers (16-17).

The town is hostile also because it forsakes those who cannot understand the medium of its social laws and patterns, the distraught and insane who are either coercively sedated and hidden at home or who are unceremoniously removed to the sanatorium on Lune. Fiona Reeves, for example, is marked as a disgrace by the town when she becomes unsightly in her distress at not being able to have children. Though William, her husband, criticizes the townspeople for "standing around without even the decency to turn away from you," he diffidently follows the doctor's advice and sedates her with laudanum (89). He isolates Fiona until, like Sibbi, she loses even her memories of language that once bound her to another:

She had to call on her past to greet him because that is where the pattern was--of smiles. In her memory of early days and nights and promises. He had not looked on her in that long. Now the distance was too great and though she opened her mouth, the words sank into another frequency. (88)

Unable to live without these memories of connection, she commits suicide by taking an overdose of opium.

Kerslake provides other examples of characters who are banished from society because they are unable to access the language frequency used in the public domain. These include

Hebel, Coffin, Grew, and Serenna, and Mercy.¹⁵ Mercy, for example, is a mysterious child who speaks to her mother on the first night after she is born. Her language is spoken from the border realm of the penumbra, "a place of incomplete shadow and those within can see but a portion of the source in their lives. Often they cannot find their way. It was there that Mercy did abide" (55). Like the other "lunies" (45), she cannot reach that state of equable rapprochement between the hidden subconscious and the naked social consciousness, between mysterious nature and emphatic civilization. She is like the other lunies who

had lost the paths of escape. When they lost sight they sank. There was no rest or solace and soon, down in that alien green, a phantasmagoria, duplicities and the evil genius. Creatures that hunkered and shuffled. (40)

Her value as a guide to the phantasmagoria of the subconscious is discarded by her father who thinks, as Mercy is being taken to the asylum on Lune, that

He felt he was losing something that made him examine himself--a mirror of places that had come out in his child, places he should have to see now and again. A probe into parts that should be exposed to daylight lest they ferment. (62)

But Peter ignores this feeling, and as Mercy is being driven away, he is seen "absently cleaning his nails with the folded receipt" (63).

As counternarrative, Penumbra theorizes the distance between the excommunicated phantasmagoria of the psyche and

the effete patterns of social life lived in the town. The narrator's musings about this suggest there must be a link between the two that forms a matrix for human relationships:

The rules of this world were hard enough. We barely knew enough to stand aright. Had just enough trust in the laws to extend a hand into the blind grasp of another. Darkness was a mountain and without understanding the true nature of shadow, we let its shape over us every night. How must it then be when water burned, when the crow turned white, when the earth was hollow and its surface shifty? (41)

At the end of Middlewatch, Kerslake shows us the hand passing into the grasp of another and the offering of its dialogic story to society as a model for replication. In Penumbra, the social world is for the narrator the site of false dialogism; in town, for example, other cultures are represented only through the simulacra of artifacts brought back by whalers on their transoceanic voyages. And the socially structured hierarchy guarded by the ladies who gather for tea appears redoubtably artificial and pompous in the narrator's view.

Yet, the narrator describes the town as a bedazzling place where "the voyagers call and bring back spoils from all the reaches of the world, distances and places I could scarcely comprehend" (23). And it is a place her mother cannot do without. Muma tries to explain to Pupa that she needs someone to talk with, "to listen to. Someone new, a stranger. A friend. I need to share'" (13). Her stories

become visible to the narrator when she notices that "sweat wrote sagas on her body. For a moment I thought I was going to anticipate my whole life in what I saw there" (133).

These sagas are also regenerated in the items Muma keeps in her trunk in her room. They are "soft things" which she shakes "into the air so the memories could come out" (122). These memories have their nascence in the town, and when the family is moved there at the end of the novel, Muma is endowed with the powers of creative narration as she tells her stories to her son: "'Once upon a time,' began Muma, shielding Colin, her body drawn around his. 'Once upon a time there was a little boy who wanted to go to sea to hunt whales'" (142). The narrator comments that "Muma was telling a true story. I wondered if she knew it" (143).

The narrator, too, has a similar longing that she thinks will be satisfied by social life on the mainland:

It had most of all to do with shadows coming out of the half-light and seeing real poverty in the faces of the lunies and the way they tried to bend their hands around things they couldn't understand. So I thought I wanted to go to see people walking around with a place to go and things to do. (45)

As in Middlewatch, these people live in a "world" the narrator envisions when she looks at the "horizon" through her window (125). It is also envisioned in dreams of escape that whirl around her like the leaves of Hopkins' pear tree. While playing with Colin on the shore, she is beneath a "sky

full of leaves" and "beneath a cloud of leaves," not fully trusting the hand of hope that the dreams offer her (125). She thinks further of the "ships," "rescues," "Leaps," "flights," "bridges," "ladders," "getaways," "tunnels," the various modes of "escape" that can take her away from the repression of the island (125-26).

However, the metropolis is still a dubious place and the dreams for her are

inch worms creeping until my scalp cringed.
Listening for what they would say, the language of
hope. I didn't know whether to believe it or not.
Whether to try to anticipate my whole life, or
not. (126)

At this point in the novel, the narrator's epistemological crisis resembles David's in The Mountain and the Valley when he realizes that there was no reflection of himself in the outside world (142). And in language similar to Buckler's, the narrator confesses "I needed someone to mirror me in their eyes" (126).¹⁶

But if the metropolis offers only the illusion of integration into the human community, the island as psyche offers nothing at all. The narrator refers to it as "an unwritten song" (26), and writing is impossible there because stories can be created only in the medium of truly dialogized heteroglossia. It is a place epitomized by Pupa, who at first seems to be the quintessential representative of dialogism:

John said he could go most anywhere from here because that was his own perception--of his home as a place to go out from, and of the world, which was at the ends of all the roads that ran out of town. He took the lost man in beside him and they went off to find some more directions. (81)

He is also described as having "one foot in the sanity of light and laughter and one in the shadowy world of transmogrification" (85).

Pupa's problem is that he slowly wanders away from the open roads of the world and becomes obsessed with his empathy for the insane, especially with Hebel. Initially, Pupa is capable of transgradient relationships with his patients and, in one scene, demonstrates to Grew, a newly arrived patient, what could stand as a physical demonstration of Bakhtin's concept of the architectonics of point of view:

Pupa put his hands on Grew, then tilted the chair back on one leg. He turned Grew all around so he could see the whole room because it would be awful not to know what was behind your head.

Pupa told him where he was, who we all were, why he was here. (118)

He empathizes with the blind and protects the insane, all while keeping that one foot firmly planted in the territory of the self. But gradually, Pupa loses the sense of exteriority that secures his own point of view in the world. He begins to see himself as Hebel constructs him: an archetypal figure in a mythical world where the quest for the symbolic self is paramount. Eventually, Hebel subverts

Pupa, and they are "finally unable to take a step without the other's soul for balance" (130). The narrator explains that "Pupa and Hebel had got all locked together and couldn't see out. But inside it was perfect" (140). The loss of Pupa's independent identity is signalled also by the narrator's observation that "the circle of his brow had exploded. The lines had been flung out like a rage" (136).

The family is disintegrating, and its breakup is inversely proportional to the development of the narrator's involvement with the dialogic world away from the island. In her review of Penumbra, Nanette Norris correctly observes that "the father had 'islanded' his family through the myths he had constructed of his own strength and infallibility" (139). The narrator's escape comes through her maturation, which begins with her affair with the young sailor. Norris suggests that with "maturation comes increasing contact with the outside world. With this contact comes a certain distance between herself and her family" (138).

But if Kerslake makes clear that the mainland is a sanctuary for Muma or Colin, she also indicates it is less so for the narrator. When they are taken from the island, the "charred silhouette of people" standing on the pier when they arrive stare down at them with "a cold gleaming curiosity" (141). Other images of wood crumbling to powder, of Colin being unaware of the danger of the sun, of the

family being "secluded," while "The outside turned away and whispered its holy words," all combine to form a resolute rejection by the narrator of the metropolis as the site of dialogized heteroglossia (142).

Like Watson and Hugh in The Roncesvalles Pass, Juju in House of Hate, and Morgan in Penumbra, the narrator in Penumbra is an exiled traveller in search of a dialogic landscape where her language and stories can connect her with others. All of these characters battle with what Homi Bhabha calls "The myth of historical origination--racial purity, cultural priority," which when "produced in relation to the colonial stereotype functions to 'normalize' the multiple beliefs and split subjects that constitute colonial discourse as a consequence of its process of disavowal" (Location 74). The positioning of the Atlantic-Canadian fictional character in the empty interstitial spaces between state and wilderness suggests a rejection of both of these sites as fertile ground for creating life-stories. The only possibility which seems to exist for many of these characters is a continued search for a dialogized space that would allow them to legitimate the idea of multiple identities expressed through variegated forms and stories.

The narrator in Penumbra approaches this revelation herself when she realizes that her own stories cannot be given to her by Pupa; they must be created through her own

processes of selection. In answer to her question "How were the moments picked that would remain as memory," she thinks "I will have to remember in my own way after all" (143). These memoried stories will validate her life and stand in counterpoint to the emasculating presence of the songs of the dead. On the last pages of the novel she thinks "you do need someone to believe in you. Otherwise it's as if this is all an interruption, time sighing, a verse in the song of the dead men. And when the chorus is sounded after each verse it is the hissing of insects" (144).

Kerslake's dialogic approach to human relationships forms the theoretical core of both Penumbra and Middlewatch. These novels assert that subjectivity is a social concept, that, as Bakhtin suggests, "it is only in a life perceived in the category of the other" that self can become valid (Art 59; original italics). Her characters come to realize that neither the false dialogism of the metropolis nor the monologism of the insular family can serve as other for the creation of their stories. The tension between them unsettles the autonomy of both.

In his comments on Raymond Williams' book The Country and the City, Said suggests that "for every critical system grinding on there are events, heterogeneous and unorthodox social configurations, human beings and texts disputing the

possibility of a sovereign methodology of system" (23).

Kerslake's novels, and other Atlantic-Canadian works like them, are among these texts: they confront reigning monological systems with countervailing ideologies that are based on a dialogic conception of society.

Notes

¹ Kerslake's novels are similar in some ways to those Sylvia Söderlind analyzes in Margin/Alias: Language and Colonization in Canadian and Québécois Fiction; they engage issues relating to alterity, identity, and with the "search for a language in which to express its specificity" (6).

² Susan Kerslake's novels seem to be a reaction against what Lynette Hunter refers to in Outsider Notes: Feminist Approaches to Nation State Ideology, Writers/Readers, and Publishing (1996) as "the nation state's need for a fixed, stable subject: the private individual defined as isolated, not immediately responsive, and without community" (15). Hunter explains that "The rhetoric of the nation state structures its ethos simultaneously to build a norm as an artificial construction, and then to forget that it is artificial. . . . The result when successful is a commodification of desire and a retarding of responsive change" (15-16).

³ Matthew Carney, a main character in The Nymph and the Lamp, leaves his Newfoundland home, after his parents die, to search for happiness elsewhere. For him, home is a problematic term, and roots are illusions. He thinks you "invent one place and someone there to think about, to convince yourself you've got roots like everyone else" (50). Eventually, he retreats to a barren island to start a new community with others. Grant Marshall, the central character in The Channel Shore, is also without parents. He too struggles with the idea of roots, but decides to stay in his home community to become a "new pioneer" (70).

⁴ This statement develops from Bakhtin's theory of addressivity and the lack of a true alibi for escaping it. See Art and Answerability (205-6), Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (236), and Speech Genres and Other Late Essays (95).

⁵ In Art and Answerability, Bakhtin proposes that "Aesthetic consciousness . . . is a consciousness of a consciousness: the author's (the I's) consciousness of the hero's (the other's) consciousness" (89). The author views the character not as an object but as a "subjectively lived unity" (89; Bakhtin's emphasis).

⁶ See Dennis Seager's relevant discussion of ecosystemic theories of narrative in the work of Bakhtin and Gregory Bateson in Stories within Stories: An Ecosystemic Theory of Metadiegetic Narrative, especially the latter part of chapter one, involving analog and digital modes of language and thinking.

⁷ Bakhtin proposes that "Just like the spatial form of a human being's outward existence, the aesthetically valid

temporal form of his inner life develops from the excess inherent in my temporal seeing of another soul--from an excess which contains within itself all the moments that enter into the transgredient consummation of the whole of another's inner life" (Art 103; Bakhtin's emphasis).

⁹ After discussing several Canadian novels in his article, Adamson concludes that "Art unites the minute particular of metaphor with the organic totality of cosmic life" (98). The dialogic model of relations used by many of the regional writers under discussion here takes the human community as a collective avatar for this cosmic organic totality.

⁹ McKay's use of the term "tourist gaze" may be glossed by Bourdieu's use of the term "pure gaze," which he defines as "a historical invention linked to the emergence of an autonomous field of artistic production, that is a field capable of imposing its own norms on both the production and the consumption of its products" (3). We could include with the field of production evoked by McKay's "tourist gaze" other fields indicated by the terms "urban gaze" or "national gaze," particularly in relation to Quilt. These would also be compatible with Hunter's theories which suggest a field of national production.

¹⁰ Krishna Sarbadhikary's article "Weaving a 'Multicoloured Quilt': Marlene Nourbese Philip's Vision of Change" makes use of the quilt/community metaphor. Sarbadhikary discusses how Philip's writing contests social and political ideologies that distort Canadian cultural life by reducing its plurality to the various categories contained in an European imperialist view of Canada. As the title implies, relational paradigms, represented metaphorically by the figure of the quilt, must shift from monochromatic visions of nation to the full spectrum of a multicoloured community.

¹¹ As Said indicates, "For if it is true that culture is, on the one hand, a positive doctrine of the best that is thought and known, it is also on the other a differentially negative doctrine of all that is not best" (11-12). He agrees with Michel Foucault that culture can be perceived "as an institutionalized process by which what is considered appropriate to it is kept appropriate" and by which "certain alterities, certain Others, have been kept silent, outside or--in the case of his [Foucault's] study of penal discipline and sexual repression--domesticated for use inside the culture" (12).

¹² Bakhtin uses this term in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics in a discussion of author/hero relations. Their relationship is "one that affirms the independence, internal

freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero" (63). Bakhtin uses the term throughout his work. See Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson's explanation of the term in Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics (36-49).

¹³ Another interesting character who fails to make this interpersonal contact is Saxby Nowlan in Raddall's Tidefall. He confuses social with interpersonal connections, thinking that by marrying an upper-middle class woman he can attain happiness. Raddall has him go down with his ship feeling "a wild and bitter protest against the injustice, not of this alone, but of life and women and the world" (223).

¹⁴ In chapter four, "Urban and Regional Debates: the First Round," Soja specifically describes how a coalition of capitalist and nationalist forces worked in tandem during the first half of the twentieth century to organize urban geography. He explains how finance capital significantly shaped "urban space, in conjunction not only with industrial capital but increasingly with the other key agency of regulation and spatial restructuring, the state. This coalition of capital and state worked effectively to replan the city as a consumption machine, transforming luxuries into necessities" (101). This urban expansion "intensified residential segregation, social fragmentation, and the occupational segmentation of the working class" (102). It is against these problems that authors such as Kerslake aim the ideological thrust of their novels.

¹⁵ Kerslake's premise here coincides with Bakhtin's contention that "Only polyglossia fully frees consciousness from the tyranny of its own language and its own myth of language" (Dialogic 61). When these characters drift away from common languages into the frequencies of their own mysterious idiolects, they become exiles from the polyglot social world of the mainland.

¹⁶ Buckler's sentence is "What he'd been missing all his life had been a reflection of himself anywhere" (142).

Chapter Five

David Adams Richards and the Politics of Representation

From The Coming of Winter (1974) to Hope in the Desperate Hour (1996), David Adams Richards focuses on the same problems for Atlantic Canada envisioned by Nowlan, Kerslake, Smyth, and others: exploitative capitalism, centrist politico-economic politics, and discriminating social institutions and their representatives. He speaks as a dialogic regional voice from a border zone between the extremes of nationalism and regionalism in an attempt to deconstruct tendentious political, social, and cultural hierarchies that disadvantage or misrepresent Atlantic Canada. He articulates a discourse of identity transformation that can be explained partly through Ian Angus' comments on theoretical discourse in Canada in A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality, and Wilderness (1997).

In his critique of Canada: Theoretical Discourse/Discours Théoriques (1994), Angus discusses the issue of national and regional identities (209-26). His thesis is that Canadian theoretical discourse polarizes left-nationalism and postmodernism, both of which tend toward caricature, a problem common to all politics of identity (222). He emphasizes the relativity of identity formation by suggesting that

any social identity as articulated by an active voice must base itself on a social position as already given within a wider discourse, but nevertheless intends to transform that discourse as a whole through its articulation. Thus it must claim to 'sum up' the social position in question and 'project it forward' into a new situation. Any such summing up is inherently controversial. It sums up, not in an empirical sense, but in a political one. This duality in social identities give [sic] rise to an extensive politics of representation (222-23; Angus' emphasis)

Interpretations of Richards' fiction have also been coloured by the discourses Angus describes and involve polarization, controversy, and a tendency toward hyperbole, if not caricature.

The wider discourse that Angus refers to is, in Richards' case, the bifurcated discourses of regionalist and nationalist identity politics, which construct conflicting subject positions for Atlantic Canada. As we have seen at the beginning of this study, there is at one extreme the regionalist representation of the region as a distinct cultural community adorned with a filigree of moral virtues and humanitarian politics. At the other extreme is the nationalist representation of Atlantic Canada as an unsavoury marginal community populated by the regressive and morally degenerate working class. A significant number of critics and writers who comment on Richards' novels do so by making reference to one or the other of these critical polarities and, often, they underestimate the humanism at

the heart of his writing. Before proceeding to a discussion of the national-regional tensions in Richards' work, it is necessary first to examine these opposing positions and clarify Richards' responses to them.

5.1 Critical Oppositions and Richards' Responses

Richards has expressed little respect for nationalist critics of his work who unfairly denigrate Atlantic Canada along with his novels. Reference to a number of negative or ambivalent reviews that distort certain aspects of his fiction may reveal the source of his indignation. In these reviews, his technical skills as a writer are praised, but his characters and their environment are conceived of as social dross, sloven figures who lack any redeeming qualities. Reviews by James Doyle, John Moss, and Donna Pennee are indicative of this type of critical response.

Doyle's reviews, for example, although applauding Richards' writing talents, create an impression of the Miramichi region as a totally depressed, degenerate area inhabited by characters who are eternally doomed and who have no compensatory virtues. In "Tales of Death and Darkness," a review of Dancers at Night, Doyle is relentless in his use of negative adjectives to describe the fictional environment Richards creates in his short stories, although he suggests that Richards himself is relentless in his focus

on such despair. Phrases such as "desolate and gloomy" (169), "depression and despair" (170), "dark and shabby" (170), "oldness characterized by the fatigue and indifference of a spirit-crushing despair" (170), "desolate atmosphere" (170), and "vacuous dreariness" (170) make the reader wonder in which infernal area of the country Richards lives. Doyle's final evaluation is that this book is "cheerless reading" and portrays "a grim dance of death, a conglomeration of almost ritualistic actions or movements, without progress, without meaning, ending in lonely extinction," a "nightmare life in death" (171).

Had Doyle chosen so, he could have explored the redeeming qualities of Richards' central characters and his own comment near the end of his review that Dancers at Night offers "abundant imaginative rewards" (171). There certainly is despair in these stories, but so too is there the stubborn sense of individuality of its characters, their resistance against dehumanizing poverty and condescending institutions and their representatives. Take Janie Bell in "A Rural Place" as an example. She escapes from the staid routine of a senior citizens' home to return to a place imbued with memories for her. Doyle himself admits, awkwardly, that in a comparison with the work of Margaret Laurence, "Richards shows to considerable advantage" (169). And what about the men Janie observes working on the bridge?

Richards' narrator describes how they "danced in the afternoon light jumping from timber to timber as the sills groaned under weight and commotion--and laughter. Always laughter" (Dancers 15).

Doyle reaches similar conclusions about Lives of Short Duration as he does about Dancers at Night. In "Shock: Recognition," he again praises Richards' technical versatility, but denigrates his characters and their social environment. He does see Richards' fictional society as a reflection of North American society and believes it is closer to the "Canadian reality than either the traditional True North self-glorification or the more recent self-pitying Victim/Survival syndrome which have so far dominated English-Canadian fiction" (130). Yet, he suggests that the region evinces a "sense of exotic exclusiveness" that can be understood only by people from the area (128), which is a "backwoods and small town society" (129). His tone becomes clear in his descriptions of Richards' characters, whom he blackens as "alcoholics and violence-prone derelicts":

His women, unlike some of the rather idealized female characters in Blood Ties, seem especially crude: George Terri's ex-wife Elizabeth is a self-centred, destructive bitch; their daughter Lois is a foul-mouthed, over-sexed slattern. (129)¹

Old Simon is simply a "relic of the past," and "the lives of his grandsons, Little Simon and Packet, are dominated by alcohol, drugs, and the suicidal pursuit of excitement"

(129-30). Richards reacts to this sort of disparagement in Lives in the Hamilton bar scene, in which a man talks with Packet:

you Maritimers, he said, think a hell of a lot differently than we do. Now I don't mean that you yourself are backward, but the region itself has backward sorts of ideas, and I certainly was wondering, what do you think of cities like Hamilton? (225; Richards' emphasis)

The point here is not that Doyle construes the Miramichi as a society with problems, but that he refuses to allow Richards' characters more than a glimpse of their own humanity, the very quality that Richards himself insists stands at the centre of his corpus. For example, Richards comments in "David Adams Richards: 'He Must Be a Social Realist Regionalist'" that "you can't depict my novels as being something other than humanity itself" (158). Also, in an interview with Ellison Robertson in "Motivations of Great Duration" (1996), he reacts to misguided interpretations of his work by suggesting that

It's a contrived misunderstanding, a calculated misunderstanding of what I'm trying to do. . . . I think it serves some critics' and writers' purpose to say that I'm doing something that I'm not doing. . . . There has been a certain maligning of intent, a maligning of what my intent was, and I've suffered from that in the Maritimes and outside the Maritimes. (20-21)

He also reacts in the same interview to criticism of Hope in the Desperate Hour and the issue of nationalists'

misinterpretations of his fiction:

I think sometimes critics have been rather flippant with my work and think that I only write about the Miramichi and these small towns and these small people, that this couldn't have anything to do with them, who live in Ontario or Ottawa or wherever. I'm saying in this book that it has everything to do with them, and that the characters are in fact their own mirror image on so many occasions. (23; Richards' emphasis)

Richards' voice is dialogic here. On the personal and individual level, he obliterates the borders between his rural and urban characters to make them all equally human. According to Richards, it is the critics themselves who seem intent on ranking characters primarily according to criteria based on social geography and class.

This point is corroborated by Douglas Glover, who in "Violent River" offers a concise overview of Richards' work that counters much of what Doyle says. Glover sees Richards as "a passionate moralist (not moralizer, not social critic) who delights in making precise and minute ethical distinctions" (10-11). He recognizes the unattractive qualities of Richards' characters, but does not berate them as Doyle does. Glover realizes that "beneath the surface they have souls of essential goodness, yearning to be free, to express themselves in decent, loving acts, in generosity" ("Violent" 11). He adds that,

For Richards, this contrast between the flesh and the spirit, the outer and the inner, is

everything. It's the root of both his tragic vision and his comic insight. And this is what most critics miss--it is a theme that is universal. ("Violent" 11)³

Another critic who misses this point is John Moss. He critically pulverizes Richards' characters until they become "lives so mean and unregenerate they seem less than human. . . . They are at the bottom, filthy, indolent, and ugly" (A Reader's Guide 295). For Moss, the reason we should read Richards is the same reason we should read Faulkner and Gogol, "Not because their visions are elevating but because they are so finely rendered" (297). In other words, Richards is valuable only because of his technical adeptness in developing narrative texture.

With Donna Pennee's review of Nights below Station Street, we move closer to a critique of regionalism as a factor in literary evaluation. Pennee believes that the "mythos of regionalism" is responsible for "the soon-to-be-mythic proportions of [Richards'] local reputation" (41). She is irritated that

the enthusiastic reception of Richards's work would seem to partake of the assumption, which is too often false, that because his fiction concerns, and unflinchingly presents, the lives of real down-and-outers, or because it is regional, that it is authentic. The obverse is that there are inauthenticities perpetrated by the ivory tower (which the novel points to several times), and by self-conscious fictions, too. . . . But stepping out of the tower and onto the banks of the Miramichi does not, as Richards seems to think, guarantee authenticity. (44)

Pennee is absolutely right here in her condemnation of regionalism as a touchstone for literary quality and authenticity, but she is not correct to suggest that Richards' reputation has grown solely or mostly because of regional favouritism. Even critics such as Doyle and Moss, who look disparagingly on Richards' fictional society, have some regard for his narrative craftsmanship. And although academics come under fire in Richards' fiction, the real targets are the condescension and arrogance with which some of them treat others whom they consider inferior. Richards' gripe is with people, whether they are academics or non-academics or from the city or the town, who construct artificial hierarchies that give them an unfair advantage over others. On the whole, and despite acknowledging that "All discourse is encultured--the academic and the socially real" (44; Pennee's emphasis), Penne's criticism of Nights Below Station Street seems to be more a defense of her own academic and urban social position than a clear-eyed interpretation of a work of Canadian fiction.

The criticisms offered in these reviews result from a rigorous scoping out of social positions, something Ian Angus warns against in his analysis of identity formation:

Today, the dangers of the politics of identity are all too evident. 'Identity' is a relational term: a group self is defined in distinction from an other group. The politics of identity thus

contains within itself the permanent possibility of degenerating into exclusion, scapegoating, and violence. (4)

Obsessive attention to social positions and their representations, regional as well as national, can lead to "tribalism," which makes liberal use of distortion and obfuscation (4, 15). Lawrence Mathews makes several points relevant to this issue of nationalist and regionalist interpretations of Richards' work and its repercussions for his literary reputation.

In "David Adams Richards and His Works," the most comprehensive study of Richards' work thus far, Mathews notes that

The chances of a strongly positive review are higher if the reviewer is a Maritimer and/or is writing for the Fiddlehead; the chances are lower if the reviewer is a Toronto journalist or an academic with no ties to the New Brunswick literary community. (194)

He comments earlier that the Miramichi, from the perspective of "the mainstream central-Canadian press," is a "backwater" (188), and that reviews of Richards' work by William French, Douglas Fetherling, Stephen Godfrey, and Val Ross "reveal a great deal about central-Canadian assumptions about class and region but not, necessarily, much else" (189). Other critics, such as Fred Cogswell, Janice Kulyk Keefer, and Linda Hutcheon, place Richards in "a tradition of writing that in some way reflects or interprets region" (190). But

this depiction of Richards' work also invites "condescension" (193). Mathews' opinion is that Richards' work is best understood

not as the voice of a region or the product of someone competing with a Nobel Prize-winning ghost but as the expression of a unique literary sensibility whose primary aim is to speak in an artistically compelling way about the human condition. (193)

Among the critics who read Richards' work primarily through region are Jo Anne Claus, Douglas Fetherling, Malcolm Ross, and Frances MacDonald, who seem to aver the cultural sovereignty of Atlantic Canada. They have referred to Richards as the spokesman for the Maritimes or for the people of the Miramichi. Often, this designation constructs the area as a distinct, autonomous subnation that is touted as being morally and culturally superior to its central, urban counterpart.

In "David Adams Richards: The Man behind the Name" (1975), Jo Anne Claus believes that what makes The Coming of Winter a Maritime novel is "the attitudes of the people toward their jobs, toward the land, and toward each other. They are a community that understands itself by an intuition that can't be communicated in words" (26). She sees Richards as a "writer who wants to capture the totality of the Maritime experience" (28). Then there is Douglas Fetherling, who refers to Richards and Alden Nowlan in "Ordinary People

(1986) as the spokesmen "for the forgotten of New Brunswick" (58). Malcolm Ross depicts a more discernable Atlantic region, and attempts in "Fort, Fog, and Fiddlehead: Some New Atlantic Writing" (1974) to locate "the birth-mark, finger-print and blood-type of the literature of this single and singular region" (117). He asserts that "the indelible Maritime mark" (120) can be found in such things as the "particularism of place" (119) and "homeliness of tone" (120).

A stronger example of regional border construction occurs in Frances MacDonald's brief article on Richards in The Antigonish Review. In "War of the Worlds: David Adams Richards and Modern Times" (1996), MacDonald examines Richards' fiction in terms of a demarcation between two worlds: the rural "people on the roadway" and the bureaucrats and power mongers in the urban centre (17).⁴ She remarks on a rigid "division between those who have retained a rural perception of the world, and those who have acquired an urban perception of the world" (19), a topic central to Hope in the Desperate Hour. They differ in several ways: one group works harder and possesses more integrity and dignity than the other group (20); one group has little education, while the other group is university-educated, but has "no capacity for critical thought" (20-21); and one group, the "Urban people," sees the animal world as alien, while the

other group, comprised of "Rural people," has an affinity for the animal world (21-22). According to MacDonald, Richards "is a firm defender of rural life against the metropolitan disdain that permits and fosters the mentality of the plantation, so widely shared by those who live here and by those who profit from our resources" (21).

Richards seems to contradict his own philosophical tenets when he comments in an interview with Ellison Robertson that MacDonald "says everything I'd like to say and haven't been able to" ("Motivations" 24). This statement begs the question of Richards' shifting position vis-à-vis extreme regionalism. Is he a regional sovereigntist like Claus, Ross, and others or just a dialogic rhetorician countervailing political centrist ideology? Christopher Armstrong and Herb Wyile discuss Richards' role as a representative of Maritime society in a recent article and seem to discount the former label. They assert that "This celebration of his 'representation' of the region, his providing access to a marginal world, raises a number of problems, not the least of which is the difficulty of reconciling such a view with Richards' writing" (4). But they also seem to discount the second label when they say that his latest three novels "appear to foreclose the possibility of redressing what he takes to be a neglect of Maritime writers through a politics grounded in the

affirmation of a marginalized identity" (4-5). This statement seems incongruous with their later statement that "In the final volume of the trilogy, For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down, the confrontation of the socially empowered and the socially marginalized assumes centre state" (10). It also contradicts their belief that "An increasingly significant element in Richards' writing . . . is a relatively overt response to his critical reception . . . which reflects the influence of considerations of region and class in assessments of his work" (15). On the one hand, they affirm in Richards' trilogy "a response to the way Richards has been positioned in a cultural economy stratified particularly in terms of region and class" (17) and on the other hand they seem to assume, like Frank Davey in his reading of Nights below Station Street, that Richards' work is somehow post-national, that it deals with social power without dealing directly with politics. To the contrary, Richards does engage in an affirmative politics in his fiction.

To answer effectively the question of Richards' endorsement of MacDonald's article, we need to realize that Richards' critique of the national-regional binary shows that neither extreme is legitimate. His real target is not necessarily everyone living in the metropolis but only those from country or city who assume supercilious social and

moral attitudes towards others. In "Motivations," his comments on For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down mark a distinction between political or social divisions and personal or communal divisions: there is one thing "about betrayal, whether you're in the academic community or you're in the work-a-day world of a small bar, people can get betrayed" ("Motivations" 19). Again, in reference to a Mi'kmaq reserve and the university community in Hope in the Desperate Hour, Richards asserts that "because of vain self-motives, at times, both of these worlds are absolutely identical" (18).

Writing from a dialogic point of view, Richards focuses, like Nowlan and Kerslake, on the humanism that he considers the sine qua non of communal existence. Unfortunately, it is overlooked by the large political and economic power structures that, in Richards' view, invest in discriminatory hierarchies that pit communities and regions against each other. To foreground this problem, he directs readers' attention to his characters, who are consistently depicted as the wounded prey of human and political predators. In Road to the Stilt House, the narrator explains that "That was how the innocent got even--by showing their wounds" (117). This, also, is what Richards does with subtlety in all of his fiction.

5.2 Richards' Regional Voices and Hierarchical Resistance

Richards' important fiction begins after the publication of two chapbooks, One Step Inside (1970), a collection of poems and short stories, and Small Heroics (1972), a collection of poems. The philosophical heart of his major fiction arises out of his foreward to One Step Inside, where he states that a poet should "dedicate his work to revealing man's emotions, humanity, or the lack of both" (7). This dedication motivates all his subsequent writing, including his first novel, The Coming of Winter (1974). The reputation he established with this book grew with his second novel, Blood Ties (1976) and his book of short stories, Dancers at Night (1978). He then wins acclaim with Lives of Short Duration (1981), which he followed with Road to the Stilt House (1985), the trilogy Nights below Station Street (1988), Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace (1990), and For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down (1993), and, his most recent novel, Hope in the Desperate Hour (1996).

One way to organize these texts for discussion purposes is to divide them chronologically into two groups. The first comprises Richards' early work from The Coming of Winter to Road to the Stilt House, from which Lives of Short Duration stands out as an exemplary and pivotal novel. It would be reasonable, then, to use it as the centre of a discussion that relies on references to the other early novels for

support. The second group naturally includes the trilogy and Hope in the Desperate Hour, all of which continue Richards' dedication to exploring the humanity of his characters.

A central feature of Lives is an assault on discriminatory hierarchies constructed by political and economic power structures. It is carried out through dialogized heteroglossia, represented here through the interaction and confrontation of a plurality of voices and languages, each with its own ideology and value system. As in Nowlan's Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien, all perspectives are considered variations on the truth, and their dialogic interaction results in the decentering of authoritative political, cultural, and religious dogmas.

Through this process, Richards constructs another identity for Atlantic Canada that contests the nationalist and regionalist versions embedded in the general social discourse referred to by Angus.

But his rural world is not an idyllic place permeated with an aura of tranquillity and populated by quaint folk who have a mystical communion with nature, as we see sometimes in Buckler's Ox Bells and Fireflies. Neither is it a backward society doomed by perpetual poverty and violence and comprised of moronic country bumpkins, as depicted in certain Canadian clones of American movies.⁵ Richards' fictional world is first of all a world of human beings

coping with changes generated by twentieth-century capitalism and technology and the cultural hierarchies they create. They are flawed individuals, like individuals everywhere else, whose weaknesses are exposed and sometimes forgiven when they redeem themselves through selfless acts of charity and kindness. Moreover, they are challenged to recognize their own humanity in a world quickly being restructured by extraneous homogeneous forces that erase their cultural identities.

The entire novel operates on this principle of competing voices and value systems, illustrated in each of its four main sections and in all of its major scenes. A close examination of the opening party scene, for example, demonstrates how Richards constructs a heteroglossic background against which the various points of view of his characters are dialogized. In this scene, one voice vies for a dominant position, but fails because of the centrifugal force of competing voices that decenter its authority. More importantly, it is an example of how the monologic is circumscribed by the dialogic, how the self is defined in part by its contiguity with the other.

Richards opens the scene and the novel with the voice of commercial radio. Two lines from an Anne Murray song, "Child of mine / child of mine," are heard on a radio in George's house (5). The lines are repeated several pages

later and on both occasions appear initially as a fortuitously neutral background voice (10). Another song, George's ribald rendition of a popular American bluegrass song, "Pearl, Pearl, Pearl," by Earl Flatt and Lester Schruggs, appears shortly after, and it, too, is repeated in the chapter and later in the novel (13, 27, 235). Excerpts from other popular songs as well as references to song titles and musicians are also strategically positioned throughout this chapter and the novel.⁶ They are one of a number of inserted genres that Richards uses to create a motif of extraliterary voices that reverberate through the characters' consciousnesses. Richards also uses references to famous people and to other genres, such as tattoos, graffiti, signs, words and alphabet letters, telegrams, inscriptions, poetry, fiction, plays, magazines, other books, paintings, television series, radio series, radio and television commercials, and films.⁷

These voices function as they do in Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien, to create a sense of ideological pluralism which, in turn, dislodges entrenched monological notions of the truth and delegitimizes the power of authority that issues from these notions. Contrary to Laurie Ricou's observation that the details, images, and references to brand names do not "provide 'layering' of 'texture' to the novel," these songs and allusions develop a

stratification of voices that provides the heteroglossic breadth to Richards' fictional world (533).⁴ They function as bridges to the world outside of local society and exert the transformative power on local culture that Angus alludes to in A Border Within. George, for example, continually sings "Pearl, Pearl, Pearl" without realizing it, as though it works subliminally to help him express his rebellious impulses against those who belittle him. Television works in the same way. We are told later in the novel that people from the town name their cabins near the village "after TV programs, 'Green Acres' and 'The Ponderosa'" (138). Another function is explained in Garrod's interview with Richards, who agrees with Garrod that "Repetitions, rhythms, cadences, and sentence structures all play their part" in helping construct meaning in his novels, that they help "heighten the experience and the characters [sic]" (Speaking 225).

If we take Anne Murray's voice, for example, we notice that it is repeated in three other scenes. In the first, the same lyrics are repeated from the first page and, again, seem to be an incidental background voice (10). But the voice accrues meaning in a second scene in which Old Simon is riding in Lois' car (107). He remembers a television commercial in which Murray is associated with religious and ethnic conflicts through her encouragement of international charity and aid to immigrants. Old Simon, after escaping

from the hospital and getting a ride back home with Lois, his granddaughter, thinks about Lester Murphy and how he

was helping to bring in a family of refugees. Boat-people. And they were to live in the village and become attached to jobs and homes and ties there. People with swollen bodies lay in various corners of the earth--so Anne Murray told him on television, people with their skins wracked with sores, or hungry--and he'd seen on television Begin and Sadat too, and the Palestinians--and children with flies crawling over their body, as he'd seen them crawl over Daniel Ward's children in Daniel Ward's house--and Daniel Ward's and Burton Crow's children had various itches and couldn't sleep, and everyone fought over jam and things. (107)

A third scene involving Old Simon also links Murray with Begin and Sadat and Atlantic Canada with the international community. Still driving with Lois in her car, Old Simon succumbs to the medication he was given at the hospital, and in a vision "Begin and Sadat sat on the edge of his bed, arguing over who owned the span. And Anne Murray kept wagging her finger at him, telling him of the bodies overseas" (122).

Murray's lyrics develop from a simple musical voice to the voice of maternal instinct to the censoring voice of charity and morality. These voices become entangled with references to Begin and Sadat, the symbolic voices of anti-imperialistic Egypt and Israel.⁹ Also, the reference to Begin and Sadat arguing over the span draws us back to the first scene in which George burns the rope bridge spanning

the river between Lester Murphy's property and Old Simon's, now owned by George.

It is the superstructural principle of dialogism that brings these diverse voices into conflict. Richards uses it to create a microcosm of heteroglossia in which the regional is bridged with the international, the personal with the political, and the poor with the rich. The resultant simultaneous representation of voices helps Richards show that all monologic voices are exposed as false by their surrounding dialogic environment, and the dialogic principle applies to all forms of identity, from the political to the personal. The party scene and the burning of the span serve as paradigmatic illustrations of this principle, since we are told that the span "might have been any one of a thousand bridges, or hundred thousand, and you might link all those bridges forever" (170).

Other oppositions reticulate from the George-Lester conflict to broaden the scope of represented ideological voices. On the personal level, there is the opposition between George and his girlfriend, Beth, over whether to burn the bridge; the division of the other guests into two groups who agree with either Beth or George (5); and the personal and business relationship between George and Lester that also involves Old Simon and Little Simon.

The span also divides the middle and lower classes from

the upper class, and the American camps from the traditional rural Canadian homestead. While George has failed in his commercial ventures, Lester has flourished to establish himself as a business voice in the community. And we see the Americans as exploiters of Atlantic-Canadian resources when we are told that they "had come up from the pools for the evening, one, a professor of theology from Maryland, having taken a four-pound grilse from Simon's pool" (6). Yet, earlier, in Blood Ties, Richards makes clear that it is the naivety of some Atlantic-Canadians and their disregard of their own cultural history that is partially responsible for this exploitation.

Near the end of Blood Ties, Lorne Everett and Maufat MacDurmot sell to an American couple, Ralph and Eleanor Cassidy, the house that belonged to Lorne's parents. While Maufat silently dissents, Lorne agrees to include in the bargain an old oak dresser, drapes, "and anything else we have here--we don't need it for sure" (257). He also consents to give away Annie's sewing machine, but Maufat interjects to say that his wife, Irene, wants it. Lorne fails to appreciate the cultural value of the house, something that Richards emphasizes in a description of the home earlier. Near the beginning of the novel, Cathy thinks of "the quiet soundless porch emptied of all that used to be there, emptied of the vases and chairs and tables and the

life those objects gave. Emptied of all except the ancient sewing-machine" (10). Richards' implication is that the identity of Atlantic Canadians, and all Canadians, is embedded in their heritage of homes and property, which are being sold as under-priced commodities to the Americans, like the river-front properties on the Miramichi in Lives. It is this struggle against cultural erosion that Richards foregrounds in Blood Ties and further polemicizes in Lives.

Other ethnic and political divisions surface in Lives with George's comments about Emma Jane Ward, Packet's girlfriend, an Indian whose foremother wanted to live like a white woman with one of the community's founders, Hitchman Alewood. George rages that she "should be strangled she's such a knowitall, strangled up, thumb prints on her, leave her on the road'" (8), which is what happened to the first Emma Jane Ward: she was strangled by her brother, Tom Proud. George's xenophobia extends to other ethnic groups that are collectively described by him as "boat-people" (8). With a note of racism, George asks "how in cocksucker can we get jobs in this country if they're lettin those no-nourished Pakistanis and Cambodian Jiggiboos in'" (8). He refers to a friend in Toronto who "says they're all up there now makin disposable diapers, every one of them and she got so screwed up listenin to them talk that she missed the handle of the press and cut about nine fingers off'" (8-9).

Then there are the class and political oppositions between George on the one hand and Malcolm Bryan and Ceril Brown on the other. Bryan is a member of the Liberal party and Lester's lawyer in a case where Lester is being accused of arson, of burning his own tavern. Also, his father is a MP in Ottawa. Brown is George's ex-business partner, who now operates several successful businesses in town. Together, Bryan and Brown represent the establishment, the legal and financial power brokers whom George tries to emulate. They are the social avant-garde who promote multiculturalism and transregionalism as a way of emphasizing their own class distinctions. They purchase the latest brand-name American products, such as Adidas and Spalding tennis equipment, and wear trendy UCLA T-shirts as status symbols (14, 15). We know also that "Ceril Brown had his hair in a new way, a sort-of afro style" and that his ex-wife had "gone for a facelift in upper New York State" (14). The crux of the problem is that "George thought he too would be able to talk to them, have a drink with them, that they'd pat him on the shoulders" (14). Feeling excommunicated and powerless, he tries to excommunicate others, to secure his world by severing connections with voices that fail to confirm his sense of self-worth. In Lives of Short Duration, violence is a retaliatory measure against loss of power, especially power embodied in authoritative speech.

Richards' comments in Speaking for Myself: Canadian Writers in Interview (1986) are pertinent here. Speaking with Andrew Garrod, he declares that "The whole thing about violence, of course, is that it is used when people do not have power" (218). Significantly, Richards says his "whole idea of violent action starts from the spoken word, which can be the cruellest, most cutting, most indefensible weapon around" (219). He implies in Harry Thurston's review, "Canada Catches up with David Adams Richards--at Last," that the presence of ubiquitous corporations and media represents the most devastating and provocative of these voices: "It's the absolute insidious violence of soap operas and commercials and McDonald's that terrifies me. It's that type of thing that most people are powerless against, and it's that type of thing I'd like to give a voice to" (51).

George Woodcock makes a similar observation in his review of Lives. In "Fires in Winter," he envisions Richards' Miramichi River as a place

where the primitive violence of a pioneer society has been replaced by the more insidious violence of a new colonization, by McDonald's and the Glad Tidings Temple, by the disco replacing the tavern and the dope peddler superseding the bootlegger.
(13)

Richards would add another neo-colonializing force to Woodcock's list: national and provincial governmental institutions, since they partly control and misrepresent

traditional Atlantic-Canadian cultures. Richards also devotes other sections of the novel to diverse forms of conflicts between ideological voices, such as the conflict between the rural perspective, represented by Old Simon, Little Simon, and Packet, and the national perspective, voiced by representatives of hospitals, justice systems, religions, and educational institutions. These political agencies are perceived as totalitarian forces that disfigure the rural ethos, even though, paradoxically, they themselves are regionally based and integral to provincial life.

Richards uses Little Simon as a rogue figure whose confrontations with various social institutions underscore their chilling insularity from the people they are meant to serve. An early vignette of him in the first section of the novel recounts how he refuses to capitulate to Father Barry, the local priest who wears steel-toed boots when he plays soccer against Little Simon's team. At the age of seven or eight, Little Simon "wouldn't get out of Barry's way but kept blocking shots, until his ankles and shins were blue" (33). Richards concentrates the narrative finally on "the two of them in the centre of the field, the short muscular priest and the child," until the scene ends with the priest rolling "the Spalding soccer ball, over the dirt; pushing the child down" (33). Here, Richards shows both the political and personal repercussions of their conflict,

something he does often in his work by overlaying the ideological with the humanistic. In this way, he shows how institutions are as flawed as the people under their influence.

We see it in another scene later in Lives that contains a description of the half-way house to which Little Simon is sent. The derisive tone of the description reveals Richards' criticism of an uncaring, ineffectual justice system that is abrasive to the humanity of its patrons:

The square brick, ugly house, squared as if by some geometrician interested not in the shades of subtlety of lines and motion but in their stark conformity, in their powerless inability to move or to breathe. And so nothing moved or breathed, nothing transpired (205).

Richards broadens the relevance of his description when the narrator adds that "the house, with its dismal Canadian (a peculiar type) of emptiness, preyed upon" Little Simon (206; Richards' parentheses). This image of him as victim stands in ironic contrast to the tattoo on his arm of "a grinning devil with a pitchfork" (265), but is consistent with characters in later novels, such as Arnold in Road to the Stilt House.

Richards' cynical comments on Canada and its institutions extend back to The Coming of Winter and Dancers at Night, as well as to Blood Ties, and forward to Road to the Stilt House. In The Coming of Winter (1974), for

example, he shows how the metabolism of Atlantic Canada's body politic is congealing from over-exposure to stultifying institutions and rapid, negative changes in its culture. Metaphorically, the coming of winter brings with it a paralytic condition that leaves the characters in this book with feelings similar to the "angry desperation" that Kevin Dulse feels after shooting Houlden Bellia's cow at the beginning of the novel (8).

Kevin's father, Clinton, feels it when he visits the principal of the school his son, William, attends and William's teacher, Mr. Shale. Drawing sharp class distinctions between Clinton and the two educators, Richards illustrates how the uneducated working class rebels against an inflexible system that seems blind to the humanity of those under its control. Although William has been fighting in school, Clinton tries to make the point that William and the other student should both be expelled, rather than just William himself. Eventually, he loses his temper: "`Shit, everyone fights,' Clinton said not knowing how else to say what he wished to say and looking at them knowing they did not understand or even care to understand what he was trying to say" (94). Clinton reacts against the church as well as the school, since he is piqued by Shale's earlier comment that "It is the responsibility of the parents to instill in their children respect for the Lord" (94). Shale says this

"as if he were preaching to his own congregation," and it is this statement that provokes Clinton's vituperative response (94).

We hear Richards' cynicism again in "We, Who Have Never Suffered" in Dancers at Night. Denis, possibly a Maritimer but one who is associated with the "endless arteries of the city" (80), makes contemptuous remarks about street life in small-town New Brunswick and about the men in a tavern who drink and sing to each other: "'There's no need for people to do this . . . not with the advances we've made this century--my God the most affluent country in the world almost and still they do it'" (81). Through Denis and Steven, a dubious friend and local resident, Richards opposes two views of the Miramichi River that represent urban and rural interpretations of Atlantic Canada. While Steven thinks the river is "'a great river,'" Denis sees it as "'a mud puddle filled with shit'" (81) and populated by "'Mindless idiots [who] live like sheep'" (86). Countering the indolence fostered by generous social systems and the profitable industrialization of the river are "the lost ballad of the woods" and the "unconquered places in the earth," a myth that lingers in the background of this story and others in this collection (86). The dialogic tensions between the individual and the state struck in this story continue in Little Simon's picaresque encounters with

establishment representatives in Lives.

A third scene in Lives shows how the police are complicit in Little Simon's victimization. In the scene in which he is picked up for questioning about a hit and run accident involving Lester Murphy, the police try to intimidate and deceive him. Little Simon realizes his own powerlessness when he is walking home: "A hatred for everyone filled him and he saw clearly his own posturing, his staggering brutal adolescence" (248). He knows that while "the sergeant would be efficient all his life," he thought that "Lester Murphy would have corn-boils and lobster-boils, and invite some Americans, a few cottagers, into the back rooms of his tavern, but never the people on the roadway" (248).

Here, Richards attacks the class and social hierarchies of the powerful and the powerless that obscure the egalitarian principles and the humanism he champions. The reference to posturing is part of his efforts to show how relations of subordination engender the construction of false class value systems. Richards, and other Atlantic-Canadian writers such as Nowlan, Kerslake, Smyth, and Janes, might agree with John Frow's predication in Cultural Studies and Cultural Value (1995) that

there is no longer a stable hierarchy of value (even an inverted one) running from 'high' to 'low' culture, and that 'high' and 'low' culture

can no longer, if they ever could, be neatly correlated with a hierarchy of social classes" (1).

However, there is still the problem of regional centres and margins to contend with, as Frow points out in his reference to Jim Collins' Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-Modernism (1989): "The contemporary culture system 'does not have one centre, or no centre, but multiple, simultaneous centres'" (24). Richards' dramatic illustration of this premise in Road to the Stilt House, which presents political and cultural unities as internally balkanized, helps illuminate his politics of representation in Lives of Short Duration.

In Road to the Stilt House, the road functions as a symbol of all impermeable borders: it separates the roadway's perpetually marginalized community from the rest of the country; it "splits two counties in the north of the province" and is used in reference to the division of the province into northern and southern regions (40); it separates the people from their governments and institutions, which ironically victimize characters in this novel; it separates them as consumers from the manufacturing centres located outside the area or the country; and it separates them as passive consumers from the media-generating cultural producers in urban centres all over North America and Europe. The region is influenced by

television game shows (20), British royalty memorabilia (111), CBC radio (101), fashion billboards (111), and commercial jingles (135), all of which transform the roadway's community into the reified, homogenized culture that Richards warns us about in Lives and which is protected here by American jets that fly over continually.

The problem of mixed cultural identities increases in Road to the Stilt House until, as Norman informs us, "No-one here knows how to dress for winter even though they've spent their entire lives in it. The girls try to dress like some picture postcard of somewhere else, some city they've seen on television or in the movies" (161). On the margin of a number of power circles, the roadway community slowly loses its own cultural identity, and its people wind up like Mabel, who listens to CBC radio and "laughed when it told her to laugh, and got upset when it told her to" (101). There are also the government inspectors, who seem to say "your opinion and your life are nothing" (102). Alluding to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, Richards has Arnold declare that "It seems as if we are always getting tricked into believing who we are, or who we are supposed to be like. For the schoolgirls on this road, they are supposed to be like that girl on the billboard, wearing those jeans" (111). Richards shows in these references how his characters are sacrificed to the juggernaut of government institutions

and corporate power politics that are always located elsewhere. As a perpetually marginalized community, the old roadway eventually collapses along with the community itself.

In Lives of Short Duration, Richards continues to use the voices of characters such as Old Simon and Packet to speak emblematically for the roadway, the Miramichi area, and Atlantic Canada, which becomes, justifiably or not, the persona non grata in the superstructure of Canadian cultures. The novel presents through these voices a regionalist hermeneutic for interpreting Atlantic-Canadian society, one relying on humanist codes that counterpoise the nationalist hermeneutic. Its ideological function is to resist what Frow calls

a uniform hierarchy of criteria, that has played the major organizing role in the most authoritative and entrenched practices of reading -with the inevitable effect of repressing the difference and the specificity of other practices, casting them as naive or exotic or perverse.¹⁰
(132)

Along with Little Simon, Old Simon and Packet function in this way to disrupt the uniformity and absolutism of urban codes by presenting rural alternatives that focus on humanistic values.

Old Simon represents the voice of rural tradition in Lives, as does his father Merlin Terri, whose photograph, neglected like the photograph in Blood Ties, is "now in some

buried archives in some metal filing-cabinet in a back room on one of the side streets in the provincial capital" (183). When Old Simon is hospitalized, his traditional life style is construed as perverse, as in Frow's schema, and undermined not only by standard hospital protocol, but also by the nurses, whose disgust of Old Simon's grandsons' behaviour compels him to act rebelliously. Because the nurses complain to the doctors, "he stopped speaking to them, wouldn't let them wash him or he spit over the edge of the bed" (54). Later, we are informed that *"It was better that he spit and be hated than talked to as a child and learn to like it"* (61; Richards' emphasis).

In other scenes Old Simon is incensed because "the government was terrible and didn't have an ounce of gumption" (66) and because

the Premier goes to a meeting and sits with the mill manager from away . . . who says the company needs more money--this province, the north of this province having to bring people in to set up businesses and having to pay them to make them stay, until the trees are gone, thousands of acres downed and nothing planted and the men working in the same part of the mill for ten years. . . .
(110-111)

Old Simon also remembers when Packet was interviewed as a poacher on television. During the broadcast, when Old Simon is still living at the senior citizen's complex, another resident, the Colonel, complains that "That's what they

expect of us up there--act like monkeys for them--that's what they want of your grandson.' And watching the television he became aware that this was so, and he became angry and indifferent to the goings-on" (55). The reference to Packet and monkeys is made again in the circus scene. A trainer stuffs a monkey's mouth with cigarettes and takes pictures of him with the spectators. But Packet, as a boy, refuses to have his picture taken (136). Like Little Simon, he refuses to surrender his sense of dignity and humanity.

The discourse articulated in these quotations is part of Richards' rural hermeneutic, which reveals how traditional Atlantic-Canadian culture becomes like the monkey humiliated and debased by the role assigned it by its detractors. Richards first explores this idea successfully in The Coming of Winter, in which the Miramichi is depicted as a geographic subregion of Atlantic Canada. It has its own languages, with multiple and distinct accents, and its own set of values that depicts the landscape as other than an hinterland area. As W. H. New explains in Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing, "Landscape is a place, but it is also a body of attitudes in time, couched in the manner of speech and asking to be read in its own terms" (130). Bellia, for example, speaks with "a heavy river accent" and he and Kevin stand against "the remarkable solitude of the land" (Coming 8, 11). Richards

generates further regional codes when Kevin feels that "Being in the woods alone at dusk was fulfilling" (11) and when he notices that "He smelt of blood and huntsclothes and he felt it was proper that he did for it gave him a wildness and a roughness, an uncontrollable energy" (12). In these passages, Richards evokes the rural-urban hierarchy in an attempt to transform its vertical orientation into a horizontal one, within which his characters are first of all human beings. He implies that cultural differences exist, but they should not be arranged unfairly according to a nationalist regime of values.

In fact, the novel shows how regional languages and their value systems are being challenged by transformations initiated by the forces of modernity, as does Lives of Short Duration. The effects of these changes on Richards' characters are palpable. Kevin, for example, thinks about his old upriver home and how "he couldn't help feeling that it was not his place any more" (Coming 30). Symbolically, he feels, with his birthday approaching, that there was "a long freezing season, an empty sterile season ahead" (37). This sterility also affects language, speech, and the ability to project identity. Clinton, for example, "was never loud in any way as if experience had taught him not to be and he rarely spoke either to argue nor to laugh" (Coming 46).

One consequence of this is the loss of connections

between Clinton's generation and Kevin's: "Kevin was his only son now and though sometimes they tried to speak to one another they rarely if ever did" (47). Also, Clinton's brother, Reginald, "had difficulty with his speech, stuttering when trying to explain the simplest things" (72). John Delano also has trouble articulating his feelings and identity. When he gets a ride to see Julie, Andrew Turcotte's girlfriend, he thinks "he didn't know why he was where he was" (131). And when he arrives, he is apprehensive about the meeting because "There would be no speaking, only the desperate urge on his part to speak, the desperate urge to refrain from being a fool" (134).¹¹

This problematizing of speech and identity is symptomatic of the changes wrought on Atlantic-Canadian culture and space by such aspects of modernization as commercialization and industrialization. On one side we have the "good unknown woods," or, in Dancers at Night, the "lost ballad of the woods," (86), and on the other side we have the "new lots that were springing up like sores, dissecting everything" (Lives 176). This dichotomy ranges through Richards' imagery and themes until the new environment disrupts the codes by which his characters are able to read their old environment and culture. Not being able to interpret their own regional narrative any more, they tend to become confused and reticent. At one point, Kevin is

drinking in a shack that was built around 1937 and that represents the ancestry of one of his friends. Unable to connect with the past, he thinks that the "faint sterile look of the place made him uneasy, the look of old paint and hammers--sterile and dead--made him uneasy" (178-79).

Richards goes on in Lives of Short Duration to show, also through the monkey reference, how other cultures are similarly oppressed. Packet meets a woman in a Hamilton bar with Spanish ancestry and notices "The woman's thick dark skin and heavy makeup--showing perhaps, who knows, some Spanish blood, the monkey with its face turned down while the world laughed at it" (257). Also, near the end of the novel George wants Lester Murphy to tell Packet about the first Emma Jane Ward: "`tell him about the murder of Emma Jane Ward Mr. Murphy--a squaw was murdered in Cold Stream Packet--her ghost is still hauntin us--just like the monkey Packet--just like the monkey--'" (281).

Richards continues his critique of regional class and cultural inequalities in Lives of Short Duration partly through Packet and his relationships with Emma Jane Ward, Tully, and his wife Devoda. Devoda, as her name suggests, is devoted to helping people she mistakenly believes need help but is misguided by middle-class tastes. She tries, for example, to revise the world according to urban social and linguistic standards that she propagates with imperialistic

rigour. Richards leads us to believe she resembles the women who live in cabins along the Miramichi, "with their inevitable talk about society and justice . . . sitting on their high-backed \$1800 chesterfields, with the cottage door opened listening to the river" (190). They also play bridge and say "`Really and truly--really and truly'" (186). Devoda is also misguided when she tries to give Old Simon money after his wife dies, thinking that he is indigent and disoriented, when he is, in fact, financially independent and quite lucid (71-72). She also sends money in envelopes marked "Personal" to Lois when she is left on her own after her parents' divorce. After some time, though, Lois would "get money from them but no longer with a letter marked personal" (77). Devoda is concerned more with her role as benefactor than with Lois herself as a human being.

The same is true of Devoda's interest in the Indians, who become another opportunity for her to exhibit her upper-class values. In this regard, she is like Susan Ripley in "Safe in the Arms," who while donating clothes to the Reserve renders judgement on Indians by suggesting that "`Liquor is a problem isn't it? I mean, it is with everyone nowadays--but with them especially--?'" (Dancers 91). Susan also refuses to allow her children to receive communion from the priest because she believes his fingers are contaminated by "germs from the mouths of the Indians" (Dancers 124).

Devoda and Tully's racial prejudices are less obvious, since they seem to support native culture by collecting antiques and Indian art. Among their collection are West Coast Indian art (Lives 92), Hitchman Alewood's antique desk (276), figures of hand-carved Eskimo boys (277), and "hand-carved Eskimo bathroom fixtures" (279).

Yet, possessing these cultural artifacts is tantamount to possessing and dominating the cultures themselves. For Tully and Devoda, Indian culture is not sacrosanct; it is a commodity that can be purchased, possessed, and controlled. Their control extends to the domain of the linguistic, since we are told that "Devoda worked with Indian children, taught them how to enunciate their vowels properly (which Indians never seem able to do)" (276). But, Richards acknowledges the complexity of this issue of cultural dominance when he has Emma Jane notice Packet's ambivalent attitude towards Tully and Devoda's social position: "And she knew that Packet more than anything wanted to be like them, to say--oh yes how right--truly how you seem to have understood it--and she knew Packet hated himself" (277).

Richards criticizes others who underwrite national culturalism as it is represented by Tully and Devoda. In one scene, we flow through time "onto the second war--with Georgie and men from the towns and villages and outlying areas--Indian and French and Irish and Welsh who called

themselves Canadian--in a country that didn't even know about them joining the North Shore Regiment" (112). This idea is reiterated through Little Simon's thoughts later in the novel about "the hundreds, the thousands of men gone from the Maritimes to work and to build the rest of the country, and then to come home--a land bought and played with by foreigners, in a country that didn't know them" (249).

Richards also implies that the Canadian government is partly to blame for American exploitation of Atlantic Canada, depicted allegorically when the American professor takes a salmon from Old Simon's pool. This idea of American exploitation is reasserted throughout Lives. Besides the professor, there is the American woman who is writing a book on the Miramichi. Little Simon is upset that "She's a damn American who moved here six months ago--and already she's decided to do a history on the roadway" (265). Brooding on the Atlantic-Canadian situation, he comments wryly that "A course they got all our hockey players, and they got all our iron ore and our fish--so they got her pretty good; they deserve it--they got it they deserve it; a lot more'n the boys in Fredericton or Ottawa" (266).

Packet's thoughts on this relationship are equally scornful. He ponders the fact that "the saws with rhythmic loveliness cut trees to be sold, pulped, transported to the

United States, made into toilet-paper and sold back to us" (267). Shortly after, Packet thinks of "the American man's laughter when he fed him the chocolate-covered Ex-Lax, the sad monkey" (267). Although Richards depicts Atlantic Canada as a region manipulated by foreign powers, he does so with the implication that it is partly to blame for its wretched condition. The image of the oppressed monkey is juxtaposed with Packet's thought earlier that we

have joined, and bragged about having and wanting, the great unwholesome anonymity of North America--houses, like ideas, straggly corpses from one end to the other, and it is what we wanted, what we bragged about having until we succeeded in having. (254)

Richards' disdain for national cultural homogeneity and his region's acceptance of it is quite palpable here. It runs throughout Lives of Short Duration and his subsequent novels and surfaces in several of his interviews. A vital point that he makes, though, concerns how Miramichi and Atlantic-Canadian cultures should be interpreted. And here we need to go beyond Lives of Short Duration to examine the broader issues of the politics of representation in his later novels, which includes his trilogy Nights Below Station Street, Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace, and For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down, and his latest novel, Hope in the Desperate Hour.

The targets of his derision in these novels are mostly

local characters who abandon their native culture and personal friendships to factitiously adopt urban, educated, or cosmopolitan mannerisms and ideologies similar to those attributed to national culturalism. They become the hunters who prey on other local characters such as Joe Walsh, Ivan Basterache, Jerry Bines, Emile Dexter, and Garth Shackle by intentionally misrepresenting their stories. They are best represented in the trilogy by Vera Pillar, a university graduate in English and a social worker, whose attitudes towards Miramichi culture advance a monologic national paradigm of relations.

Culture dilettantes like Vera are introduced in Nights Below Station Street and attract people like Adele Walsh because they appear to be culturally fashionable social analysts who have a monopoly on truth. Richards discloses their pretentiousness with Dr. Hennessey's cynical comment that these people cultivated a "'back-to-the-land-poor look'" and were "dismayed at the right times about the right things" (48). Richards reveals further that "the affectation of concern was always seductive, but wit and affectation most often eclipsed Adele, with her nervous stomach, her skirt with the hanging hem, and her chewed mitts" (48).

Here, again, Richards evokes the binary opposition between urban and rural ways of life, but characters are not divided geographically according to their Maritime roots.

Rural characters such as Myhrra, Adele, Cindy, Reta's brothers in Alberta, Father Garret, and Vye in Nights below Station Street all adopt at some time the urban-centric view of Atlantic Canada, while other educated characters such as Ralphie and Dr. Hennessey remain adamantly loyal to their region. Richards attacks not the exclusively urban or educated, but all culturally pretentious characters who blindly follow trends and shift their allegiances according to the dominant opinions of their group. Some of these characters go so far as to affect certain accents and mannerisms to elevate their social status. We see Myhrra holding her cigarette "in the sort of affectation of sophistication she had learned from childhood" (82); Father Garret with his university courses in Sociology disliking "the type of men on the river" (127); and Adele trying to imitate the British accent that Vera nursed from her year at Oxford (91).

It is Vera who embodies the worst forms of cultural misrepresentation and betrayal in the trilogy. In Nights, while she is developing a purchase on river culture, she unpredictably assumes an Acadian identity:

Vera had dressed up to be suddenly Acadian, wearing an Acadian pin, and traditional Acadian dress. More than ever at this time, she disowned her own culture and wanted to belong with the Acadians who she felt were victims like herself. (159)

To critique these mindless shifts in cultural identity, Richards develops the harsh, empirical voice of Dr. Hennessey, who represents traditional Miramichi life. He views social clubs and various societies, such as the Historical Society, as "a pretence to authenticity that people mistook as cultured and devoted no real time to anyhow" (180). He makes the point about interest in Virginian Loyalists who came to the Maritimes in 1785 that "it has nothing to do with me or you being Irish and Scots, but is considered our heritage at any rate'" (180).

Richards tries through these characters to focus on the problem of misinterpretation of Miramichi cultural identity. Identity is to be found not through membership in a society or the superficial appropriation of ethnicity, but in the type of relationships people develop with others, in whether they are humanists or egoists. The contrast between the two opposing axiological approaches to culture is delicately drawn by Richards in the scene involving Vera and Allain when they are in the woods together. Vera, still searching for an identity, is captivated by Allain as the quintessential woodsman, whom she wishes to emulate. But her attention is on Allain's appearance rather than on the story he tells her, the story that authenticates his identity: "she listened, becoming more and more engrossed, not so much in what old Allain was saying, as by the hair in his ears,

the gentle smell of woodchips and wine. . . . More than anything, Vera wanted to become like this old man" (185).

Richards becomes more explicit in his presentation of Vera as the voice of official bureaucracy in Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace. Representing a pompous academic perspective, she disseminates an unconvincing liberal humanist philosophy that falsifies the lives of characters such as Ivan Basterache, whom Richards connects through Biblical imagery with Christ. Ivan is misconstrued by Vera and Ralphie's mother, Thelma, as a typical vulgar criminal when he is evaluated according to their social morals and standards. In one scene with obvious metafictional overtones, Thelma chastises Ralphie for befriending Ivan:

`That's the type of people to get to know--of all the good, decent, hardworking, law-abiding people on the river--you drift into the gutter. . . . People like to always talk about those people as being from here. People even write dirty books about them. So when we go anywhere, it's always those people who've given us a terrible reputation--poachers and murderers and criminals. . . .' (74)

Richards uses Ivan here to counter pastoral stereotypes and the illusory idea of distinct cultures that are usually generated and perpetuated by radical regionalists, such as those James Overton discusses in "A Newfoundland Culture?" (1988). Overton argues that the idea of distinct and autonomous regional cultures, to which Vera and Thelma subscribe, is a social and historical construct rather than

an objective fact: "the small region and the cultural community . . . are an emblem for a wide range of social values" through which the rural community is "romanticized and idealized" (16). Thelma insinuates that people like Ivan are intolerable social aberrations in her idealized Miramichi.

In opposition to this flat representation of Ivan, Richards offers another in which his character is depicted as a complex sacrificial figure who, like Christ, bears the sins of pride and conceit committed by his family and people like Thelma and Vera. The community blames him for beating his wife and bases its judgement of him on rumours and gossip. The calumny reaches the point where Ivan realizes "he had become a scapegoat in some larger affair that he had no control over, until it ran its course" (161).

Although Ivan is a flawed hero, Richards shows him to have more integrity and courage than anyone else in the community. The novel's dedication, "For all those who stand beside those who stand alone," is a tribute to characters like Ivan, who at the end of this novel attempts to rescue a horse, Rudolf, trapped under a burning bridge, the fire having been started by Ivan's father, Antony. Ivan's ultimate sacrifice of his life for Rudolf, the same horse he punches in the head earlier (186), is an act that distinguishes him from Thelma's urban-minded leisure class.

Earlier in the novel, Richards divides his characters into two groups according to their work ethic and other criteria:

At times these groups became blurred and infused, and there was no way to separate them if one did not know what it was to look for. Money had nothing to do with it, nor did age. But still the two groups could be defined. Education might be the key--but that was not true either, although people who wished to make simplistic judgements would use the criteria of money, age, and education to accredit the difference. (116)

The ultimate criterion is willingness to defend the wounded prey from the hunter, an act described with delicacy in the allegory Jerry Bines tells his son in For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down.

The hunter in this novel are not necessarily Gary Percy Rils, the escaped convict who stabs Jerry to death, but government representatives like Vera, who, as a social worker, writes a book about Jerry to explain to the public the nature of patriarchal violence. Languages and their value systems become sites for the conflict between nation and region when she deftly uses official discourse as her weapon against Jerry.

The national voice is articulated through Vera and through the language she uses in her study of him entitled The Victims of Patriarchy (and Its Inevitable Social Results). Richards shows from the perspective of a young boy, Andrew, how cold and distanced its language is in

relation to the charismatic warmth of its subject, Jerry Bines. When looking at a copy of the book, Andrew observes that

the book was riddled with words like 'sexual deviance,' and 'malfunction,' and 'dysfunctional,' 'hereditary masculine reaction,' 'empowering,' 'cross-addictive personality,' and 'impacting'. . . . The worst of it was, to the boy, the book had no life. It did not show how Jerry Bines shook your hand. (51)

Richards' point is that Vera's sterile academic language fails to capture Jerry's human essence. Even the boy knows this. Richards stresses also that Vera's is a prejudiced depiction of Jerry's life meant to support her dogmatic theories about why men abuse their spouses and children. Neither Jerry, his father, nor Nevin, Vera's husband, is guilty of the kind of patriarchal violence she alleges is committed by fathers and husbands.

Defence against Vera's accusatory official voice comes from the fact that, although Jerry's father did abuse him at times, he is partly excused because of his mental incompetence that resulted from wounds to the head suffered in the Korean War. As a friend of Andrew's mother explains, people like Jerry's father and Lucy Savoie, Jerry's young cousin who is the only one to really help Jerry when Rils terrorizes their family, actually deserve recognition as heroes. They have courage, as he says,

'Courage to stand against the inevitability of

your own demise. Like in the way Jerry's father did at Kapyong--a battle so forgotten now in the annals of our miserable Canadian history books that well-heeled university boys will snigger at it in a second, and trivialize a grapple for life in the dark because they themselves have been ever protected from a slap in the head.' (39)

Vera misreads the codes of rural life intentionally to place blame for her own failed marriage and confused social ideas on public scapegoats like Jerry.

Jerry's voice is the voice of rural Miramichi life, as are Dr. Hennessey's, Joe Walsh's and Ivan Basterache's. To ensure there is no misinterpretation, Richards has his narrator describe Jerry's voice as being "extremely soft, almost indescribably so, yet it had an unusual expansive quality to it. And it had with it, in its intonation, a completely uncomplicated River accent" (27). The semiotics of his life as interpreted by Vera are given an alternative regionalist reading in this comment and in comments by Ralphie and unnamed friend of Andrew's mother. Ralphie thinks, as does Richards, that stories about people are manipulated according to the political agendas of those who interpret them. To Jerry's friend, Ralphie, "It seemed possible that the things Jerry did were misconstrued, were even wonderful" (83). To Andrew's mother's friend, who presents a relatively unbiased view, "Jerry had never known truth, but he had conceived it himself like some great men conceive of truth and chisel it into the world. . . . He

was like some great soul cast out and trying to find shelter in the storm" (79).

Richards' dialogic defence of the rural voice also includes accusations against the federal government for the same kind of unfair treatment and misrepresentation of Atlantic Canada that Jerry receives in Vera's book. This aspect of the national-regional conflict is treated in references to Ralphie's studies on the politics of oil in Atlantic Canada and on effluent from the mills in the area. The government ignores Ralphie's subsidized research in favour of "data from a firm in the States that did not have the province's interests at stake" (56). Ralphie thinks about "the waste of a quarter of a million dollars, just to see if our own oil could be pumped to us. And they decided that it couldn't--and that it was for the good of us if it was not" (56). References to Ralphie's other studies on mill effluent and the quality of ground water insinuate that the federal government works cooperatively with industry to capitalize on rural resources, while ignoring the devastating consequences of the resulting pollution.

These are the wounds that Richards exposes in his trilogy, wounds inflicted on Atlantic Canada by provincial and federal governments that affect the articulation of its voices. At the end of the trilogy, the central protagonists, Joe Walsh, Ivan Basterache, and Jerry Bines, are dead, the

victims of accidents or intentional violence, but victims also of forms of injustice at the personal and political levels. Richards brings the hunter into sharper focus near the end of For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down when Adele picks up a copy of Vera's book: "Something about it made her think of it as wounding someone in the heart, hunting someone who was wounded down" (224). To strengthen the association of the hunter with the urban-nationalist voice, Richards chooses in one of the final scenes to have Lucy, a good rural Samaritan, killed in a car crash on her way from attending a course in Moncton. Cultural differences represented by Lucy are erased by the urban world, by standard pedagogy, which Richards often signals as the instrument of homogenizing nationalism that produces such people as Vera.

In Hope in the Desperate Hour, Richards intensifies this opposition between what he sees as the artificial, cerebral world of the university and the real, empirical world of the Maritime community, partly, it seems, to retaliate against the "contrived" or "calculated misunderstanding" he refers to in the Robertson interview ("Motivations" 20). In fact, fiction, critics, and misunderstanding form the thematic bedrock of this novel, and most of its central characters are writers.

The voice of Maritime novelists whose works are

tactically misunderstood, like Richards, is exemplified by Emile Dexter. His three novels are thought to depict accurately Maritime life, but they are devaluated unfairly by standards imposed on them by envious rural academics such as Neil Shackle or haughty urban academics such as Christopher Wheem. Both Shackle and Wheem strive to become part of the new world of post-rural sophistication. Wheem, for example, is from Ontario and harbours a "belief in his own superiority, resentment at being cast down into a howling Maritime pit" (22). At one point, Wheem actually refers to people from the Maritimes as "subhuman" (144).¹² His colleagues see the Maritimes in a similar way: they "did not travel much past the outskirts of the city. Most longed to be somewhere else. Most pretended they were. . . . The British professors followed soccer, the Americans existed on baseball. Everyone pretended they had never left home" (22).¹³

Wheem and these professors become literary arbiters of Maritime fiction, and Richards shows that their canonical powers work politically to do little else but further their own careers. Wheem is a pompous, egotistical, university professor from Ontario, a failed novelist who "was so much a product of the new world--the world encroaching on them--the world that lay across an abyss and which Neil wanted to be a part of" (24-25). He considers himself "immensely European"

(30) and perpetuates Maritime stereotypes when he cautions Neil about his treatment of Anna: "'I know how people like you think--I mean way up in that...place, and having all those kids. Let me tell you there are others of us who don't take kindly to that thing any more"' (25). Richards attacks the urban-rural hierarchy implicit in these references when the narrator says that Wheem's world had nothing "to do with the life it was pretending to examine" (86). Later, in reference to Wheem and Vicki, Garth's wife, the narrator adds that Wheem "had claimed to know all about her terrible life and wrote about it for magazines. But he couldn't even begin to write her dialogue" (96).

Richards also attacks Maritimers like Neil Shackle, a university professor and aspiring novelist from Dexter's home town who denigrates Dexter's work, like Wheem, to further his own career. His politically motivated misinterpretation of Dexter's novels merely repeats the criticism of other Maritime critics. Echoing Thelma in Evening Snow, they lambaste Dexter because "he was wealthy, and wrote about 'poor people,' which gave his province, already struggling against this fierce stereotype, a worse reputation than it deserved. Certain of the university staff picked up on this criticism as well" (38).

Dexter, like his life-long friend Garth Shackle and Richards' protagonists in previous novels, is a victim of

misrepresentation and has more integrity and character than those who intentionally malign him. He writes "outside of all groups" (35) and from his own perspective about underdogs like Garth, who is as physically incapacitated as Joe Walsh: his "nose was bent, his back was slanted to the right, and he had long ago lost his teeth" (40). Garth has also been betrayed by his wife and his brother Neil (50). Dexter tries to protect him and others against people like Wheem (27) and Neil, who "became Dexter's opposite voice" (39). Neil is actually "glad people generally misunderstood Dexter's work. He had wanted to misunderstand it himself-- only recently did he see the terrible compassion it had" (55). And like Richards himself, Dexter has an "affection" for his characters that is overlooked by Wheem and Neil (55). Dexter is eventually assaulted and killed over a rumour that he is a pedophile, and his reputation is left to critics like Wheem, to whom Garth "did not look like a 'real' human being" (81).

Both Dexter and Garth are symbolic figures sacrificed by Richards to emphasize the sins of ignorance committed by Wheem, Neil, and others. While Dexter is pushed down an iron stairs, Garth dies in a fire, trying, like Ivan, to save a horse. Trying to help others in the fire is Wheem's physically disabled son, Hector Wheem, who "patted whomever he could, the love of humanity in his deformed hands" (215).

Hector is a rural character, another version of Dexter and Garth, whom Richards opposes to his urban-centred father Christopher Wheem.

Like Lives of Short Duration and Richards' other novels, Hope in the Desperate Hour is a patent metafictional rebuke of regionalist and nationalist misrepresentations of Atlantic Canada. Richards' thematics of resistance is written from a point of view that functions, to use W. H. New's words in Land Sliding, "to differentiate a range of specific political attitudes from those espoused or expressed by the nation-state as a whole, or at least from the attitudes associated with the state's most populous centres and 'power points' - Toronto and Montreal" (117), and, we might add, regional power centres like Fredericton and Moncton. The new social position developed by this differentiation dialogically challenges the existing one that is attacked by characters such as the Colonel, Old Simon, Little Simon, and Packet in Lives and by such narrative voices as the one that controls Hope in the Desperate Hour.

Richards seems to recognize in his critique of the national paradigm of relations that the politics of identity works through the reflection of value systems in languages. This recognition is evident in Hope in the Desperate Hour when we are informed that Peter Bathurst was not permitted

to speak Micmac in his home community or Moncton, nor English in Quebec (151-52). In this book, the obvious symbol for the dialogic paradigm is the communication tower above Neil Shackle's house that "seemed to Neil to be the compelling heartbeat of men and women" (61). It is a tower that Neil fails to reach when he walks towards it in a snow storm. Neil is like Diane Bartibog, a local character whose vision of rural culture is obscured by new-world politics. While Neil struggles to emulate Wheem and become part of the academic establishment, Diane is indoctrinated into the equally alienating world of bureaucracy. She takes government-sponsored university courses, gets her picture taken with the prime minister, and writes articles on native culture for a Toronto magazine (177).

None of the monologically oriented characters see the "right history" of their culture or race to which Louis Gattineau alludes in his conversation with Garth's daughter, Pumpkin (16). Richards' novels imply that histories, like fictions, are stories that have to be crafted according to dialogic principles that allow for the expression of all voices. His politics of representation suggest that these voices, personal or political, should be evaluated not according to monologic national or regional value systems but according to the degree to which they incorporate compassion, truth and justice. He expresses his view of

national-regional relations most strongly, perhaps too strongly for some critics, through Emile Dexter's reference to Atlantic Canadians like Garth Shackle and his wife Vicki: "Their country has betrayed them all. Just like the Micmacs they live beside'" (148). The hope referred to in the title of his latest novel lies in the negotiations of identity symbolized by the communication tower that Neil cannot reach. Ominously, it is perched atop treacherous cliffs, and its lines of communication can shut down if not accessed within an appropriate time. Richards may be saying in a later reference to Neil and the tower that time is passing quickly for national-regional relations: "Now, years later, Neil remembered that he had reached that light--that communication tower--a few months later, and he felt good doing it. There was, however, by then nothing on the line" (Hope 63).

Notes

¹ A similar class judgment is made by David Prosser in his review of Dancers at Night where he claims that Richards' "characters are almost universally afflicted with sweat, grime and excess fat" (95).

² See also Richards' remarks about literary critics in A Lad from Brantford:

So much of the literary criticism in our country is supplied by sophisticated illiterates. They have never been able to understand what it is they are reading. I have written enough, and read enough balderdash about what I've written, to know this is absolutely true. (37)

³ Alistair Macleod alludes to critical misinterpretations of Lives of Short Duration in his "Afterword" to McClelland and Stewart's 1992 reprint of this novel. He implies that some readers do not "care to listen and to know" about the "headwaters" to which its stories refer (383) and that "This idea, that the Maritimes and Maritimers are unknown and/or misunderstood, echoes throughout the novel" (385).

⁴ This is a phrase spoken by Little Simon in Lives of Short Duration, page 248. MacDonald continues Sheldon Currie's use of the term in his article "David Adams Richards: The People on the Roadway" in The Antigonish Review.

⁵ In The Lad from Brantford and Other Essays, Richards identifies metropolitan value systems and their dissemination through movies as one constitutive influence in the development of cultural stereotypes. In American movies, rural people are depicted as moronic anti-modernists who brutalize animals and women and have to be subdued by cosmopolitan heroes (Lad 9-10). He believes that through most of these movies "The one insistent idea is that the language and culture of modern men and women [are] unknown in rural areas by rural people" (Lad 9).

⁶ Specific references include either the name of the musician, the name of the song, or an excerpt from the song. Selected examples are "Shake your booties" (77); Waylon Jennings (88); Anne Murray (107, 122); Buck Owens and the Buckeroos (128); the Rolling Stones (153, 232); John Travolta (157); Don Messer and the Islanders (160); Frank Sinatra (171); "Jimmy Crack Corn" (179, 218); "Love Me Do" (199, 232); John Lennon and "Imagine" (220, 234); "Brown-Eyed Girl" (230); Doug and the Slugs and "Too Bad" (231, 272); Bob Dylan (251); and the Animals (257).

⁷ Page references for examples of these are as follows: TATTOOS: "Born to lose" (26, 168); GRAFFITI: general

reference (141); SIGNS: "ANYONE CAUGHT LURKING OR LOITERING HERE WILL BE PROSECUTED" (106, 162); WORDS and ALPHABET LETTERS: "UCLA" on Ceril Brown's T-shirt (19) and "Buggie till you puke" on Dale Macy's T-shirt (156); TELEGRAM: from the premier of New Brunswick (26); INSCRIPTIONS: "Irish sayings on the wall" (211) POETRY: "The Song My Paddle Sings" by Pauline Johnson (236); FICTION: Torso (15); PLAYS: Riders to the Sea (119, 161, 187); MAGAZINES: True Romances (122); PAINTINGS: Dali's Maelstrom (204); TELEVISION SERIES: the Roy Rogers show (49); RADIO SERIES: "Don Messer and His Islanders" (160); RADIO AND TELEVISION COMMERCIALS: for Sobey's (140); NEWSPAPERS: North Shore Leader (169); FILMS: Erotica (140); and FAMOUS PEOPLE: the romance writer Jacqueline Susann (110).

⁹ Keefer also believes these references serve structural and thematic purposes. She explains, for example, that the Sobey's radio commercial "acts to tie together that gross bundle of trivia which constitutes [George Terri's] swill of consciousness" (Under Eastern Eyes 171).

⁹ Begin and Sadat were engaged in political and militaristic campaigns against Britain for sovereign rights in their respective countries and against each other in four wars. Richards' allusions to them in this novel evoke these conflicts, but also their resolutions, since Sadat, as the president of Egypt, recognized Israel's independence in 1977 and signed a treaty with Israel in 1979.

¹⁰ One interesting example of casting the codes of rural life as perverse appeared in an article in the May 2, 1998, edition of Toronto's Globe and Mail. The article makes reference to litigation between the town of Pembroke Ontario and a columnist for the Ottawa Sun. As quoted in the Globe, the columnist wrote that the residents of Pembroke are from 'bastions of yokeldom,' where 'inbreeding, wood-burning stoves, moonshine stills, outhouses, human manure on the boots and baying hounds in the night reign supreme. These bindlestiffs don't eat with spoons, they play them on their kneecaps.' (D2)

¹¹ For an examination of Richards' early novels in relation to voice and regionalism, see Herb Wyle's M.A. thesis "'Now You Might Feel Some Discomfort': Regional Disparities and Atlantic Regionalism in the Writings of David Adams Richards," McGill, Montreal, 1986, and his PhD thesis "Regionalism, Writing, and Representation," University of New Brunswick, 1992.

¹² Brett Josef Grubisic judges Richards' characters in Hope in the Desperate Hour using cultural prejudices similar to those used by James Doyle. He believes they are "so unlikeable and often characterized in such an unsympathetic

manner, that it is difficult to care about what happens to them or learn from their misguided passions" ("Hope and Misery" 41).

³ Richards' point here is one he expresses more overtly in A Lad from Brantford:

Most of what Canada is or has been is somehow decided by England, France and the U.S.A.--that is, our allies, who believe it is necessary to browbeat us every so often about seals or aboriginal peoples, and at least in a symbolic or psychological way, our hockey, knowing that those of us in Ottawa or Toronto will tend to cringe if somebody in London or Washington or Paris does not like us. (87)

Chapter Six

John Steffler's Dialogized Hybridity

John Steffler, like Susan Kerslake, was born outside of Atlantic Canada, but has lived in the region for a considerable time. He is included in this study because of his devotion to an Atlantic-Canadian regional perspective in his writing. In fact, most of his work illustrates how the psychological and spiritual development of his narrators are dependent upon a shift in focus from the superficialities he associates with Ontario urban life to the natural environment of the rural world. He also defends Atlantic-Canadian culture, especially in The Afterlife of George Cartwright, from what he perceives as an intrusive and arrogant nationalism that emerges in twentieth-century Canada from roots established in its eighteenth-century colonies.

The Afterlife of George Cartwright is a polyphonic narrative that foregrounds the conflictual interaction of a number of diverse cultures in Newfoundland's history. Its structure reflects the communicative process by representing political voices from various historical periods and regions that condition each other through their multiple confrontations. Steffler's emphasis on communication and cultural double-voicing places him in the company of Richards, Kerslake, Nowlan, and other Atlantic-Canadian

writers who also structure their novels according to the dialogic principle. Steffler, though, using similar multiple narrative perspectives as these writers, offers a temporal and spatial shift from which to critique national "sovereigntist politics." With him, we move from the contemporary Maritime community to the wider sphere of colonial politics in Newfoundland, Europe, and India in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Afterlife speaks counter-discursively against a monologic paradigm of relations through an act of historical revisionism that challenges the semiotics of imperialist value systems.² It advances the political agency of the Atlantic-Canadian novel in several ways.

First, it helps legitimate the application of postcolonial theory to the literature of Atlantic Canada. Much has been written already about postcolonial Canada, and even writers such as Richards metaphorically place specific regions of the country in colonial subject positions vis-à-vis nationalist politics. But Steffler's thematic accentuation of the conflict between British imperialism and Atlantic-Canadian aboriginal cultures goes beyond that of the typical postcolonial narrative. His grounding of Afterlife in geographical specificity demands that the unique physical environment of Labrador be read even today as a political landscape for competing social forces.³ The

inclusion of the Inuit and Beothuck in this novel as voices dialogic to imperial Britain helps rectify a problem with Canadian modernist writers that Gary Boire identifies in "Canadian (Tw)ink: Surviving the White-Outs." In his estimate, "modernist constructions of the national identity" exclude "Canada's indigenous populations" (3). Paraphrasing Sandra Djwa in "A New Soil," he reiterates the idea that "the vast, snowy whiteness of Canada was a blank canvas in need of paint, a blank page in need of ink" (3). In Afterlife, Steffler scrutinizes this misrepresentation of Labrador by journalist explorers such as Cartwright and reevaluates the encoded patterns of life already inscribed there by the Inuit.

Second, this narrative draws attention not just to two cultural groups but to several, and in this way it becomes polyphonic in the sense in which Bakhtin refers to the novels of Dostoevsky.⁴ Land becomes the site of struggle that involves not only the Inuit and the British, but also the Beothuck Indians, Newfoundland fishermen, and the Americans. There is also the struggle between patriarchy and matriarchy borne out in the tension between George Cartwright and his companion, Mrs. Selby. The landscapes of Labrador and Newfoundland, liminal spaces socially, politically, and economically, as well as geographically, become the medium through which British and American

cultures impose their identities on the land through various forms of inscription that ignore or misrepresent its indigenous populations. Based on theories of racial and cultural superiority, British imperialism attempts to supplant an aboriginal paradigm of relations based on native spiritualism with one that exalts British nationalism.

Third, Afterlife underscores the primacy of capitalism as the motive behind Britain's imperialistic endeavors in the new world.⁵ While capitalism always operates as an instrumental social force in novels by Richards, Kerslake, and Nowlan, with Steffler its manipulative control is unmasked as "the determining motor of colonialism," to use Robert Young's phrase in Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race (167). Also, Steffler reveals the ambiguous motives behind Cartwright's commercial exploits in Labrador by pointing to the captivating lure of the Labrador itself, to its natural settings and wildlife that offer the freedom Cartwright needs to satiate his spiritual longings. In this way, Cartwright, too, is caught during his lifetime, and for most of his afterlife, in a dialogized hybridity of British cultural imperialism, which is fuelled by capitalistic energies, and Inuit culture, which is based on numinous nature. This hybridity is dissolved in the last scene of the novel with Cartwright's harmonious convergence with the natural landscape and aboriginal culture, one which

reflects the dialogism voiced by Steffler's Atlantic-Canadian contemporaries previously discussed in this study.

Among these is Bernice Morgan, whose novel Random Passage complements The Afterlife of George Cartwright and warrants discussion later in this chapter for a number of reasons. Interestingly, she, too, renders in fictional terms the historical revisionism practised by Steffler. Overlapping with the historical time frame in Afterlife, Random Passage (1992) functions as a counter-narrative to official explorer histories of Newfoundland's settlement, which Afterlife incorporates as a collateral narrative in the form of Cartwright's journal. Like Steffler, Morgan opposes what Stephen Slemon recognizes in "Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing" (1987) as the imperialist semiotic systems that control the colonial "capacity to signify," which implies that "colonized cultures must always remain uninscribed" (4-5). She examines problems of misinterpretation of identity that reflect directly on the work of Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, Steffler, and their regional contemporaries. Central to both novels is the depiction of an individual self attempting to inscribe its socio-political identity on the natural landscape.

6.1 Steffler's Early Work

Only a few articles have been written on Steffler's work, most notably by Peter Jaeger, Roger Martin, Kathleen McConnell, Tony Tremblay, and Stuart Pierson. These have been limited to discussions of Afterlife and, although they recognize the import of Steffler's cultural theories, they do not fully explore the dialogic possibilities of the novel or confirm their implications for Atlantic Canadian fiction. For example, with the exception of Jaeger, none of them acknowledges the ending as a climactic moment of cultural reconciliation, one originating from a dialogic model of relations that could direct national-regional relations in Canada.⁶ Before dealing more specifically with Afterlife and critical commentary on its controversial ending, it is useful to review Steffler's early work, An Explanation of Yellow (1980), The Grey Islands (1985), and The Wreckage of Play (1988). These books deploy just such a dialogic model in an attempt to show how a Canadian neo-imperialist hermeneutic misreads rural Newfoundland. They also establish an essential interpretive framework against which Afterlife can be read as a defence of the regional voice in Atlantic Canada.

In Steffler's first book of poetry, An Explanation of Yellow: Poems, a significant number of poems focus on the hypnotic and mystical powers of nature and the

archaeological traces left by past generations. The poem "Reading Late," for example, conveys the power of the wind to attract the human imagination, to lure it into a transmutative merger with nature that foreshadows Cartwright's later encounter in the final scene with the white bear on the Eagle River. The speaker, listening to a night wind whistling through his water pipes, finds surging through him "a hunger to follow the wind's / voices deeper into the mountains. / My body is sprouting / thick fur" (10). Nature here is a powerful force that circumscribes the human mind, as in "The Flea," in which we are told "The region your mind inhabits is merely / the transparent shell / with which one dark universe / is enclosed by another" (34).

These and other poems involve a quest for a penetrating temporal vision, one that allows the mind to envision the landscape as a clock recording non-linear time. In "Looking Back on a Conference Trip with Sister Williamina," time and space are circular, and in "Mineralogy," minerals on rock faces move in a "time-lapse film" (13). In "Allergies," the landscape magnetically attracts the speaker finally to consume him physically (32). For Steffler, each aspect of the landscape is a porthole through which the speaker can view the past, as in "Pines," in which the pine trees tell of Canadian colonial deference to imperial Britain's needs.

Thinking of the once abundant pine trees of "eastern and central Canada," the speaker wryly comments that "The British wanted them / for ship timbers and masts. / They were too good to be true. / And so, like every other good thing, / we got rid of them fast" (4).

The quest for a clear temporal vision is also carried out in The Grey Islands: A Journey (1985), itself a hybrid of poetry and prose. The "journey" in the title is a search for identity that leads the narrator, a town planner recently graduated from the University of Toronto, to Newfoundland's northeast coast. The association of Ontario with antagonistic nationalism is implicit in the insults of a drunken character, Jim Brake, aimed maliciously at the narrator, who is from Ontario: "Fuckin mainlander....Think you own the fuckin world....Holiday....Go to fuckin Disneyland '" (46; Steffler's emphasis). The narrator considers himself a "fragment blown out of the nation's centre" and naively thinks earlier that he is "carrying the gospel to the hinterland," to "Milliken Harbour: twin city of Niagara-on-the-Lake" (90).

Naming and mapping are part of his profession, and a sketch map of Grey Islands appears on the first pages, followed shortly after by a census of the area taken in 1921. However, the rest of the book is an attempt to show

that the islands have a mystical presence that cannot be measured or known by abstract systems of knowledge associated especially with Ontario and Toronto. For example, his first impression of the island is not as a fixed entity, but one that is "floating" (9). It was "An island of voices and ghosts. But ghosts and voices are everywhere. Even along the road. Flashing by. Stop and let them speak" (9). Eventually, he learns that the inhabitants of the region, which has been set in direct opposition to Ontario, "don't measure by what you see. They carry the world around in their heads. All this rock and water is only a backdrop. Like a felt board to which they attach the cut-out figures in their minds" (104).

In The Wreckage of Play we get an even stronger sense of the land as an encoded script requiring an appropriate rural hermeneutic in order to be read. In "Immigrant: Burnt Islands," the present floats on the past, and the speaker knows the only means of survival is to interpret the land on its own terms, to grip the dirt and "learn in our tongues and bellies its mineral words, / its deep secret songs that no one before has heard" (35). Opposed to the rural landscape and its mineral words is the national landscape, "the nicely inked map of social geography, customs and courtesies, the calm plausible voice of Gzowski or someone trying to offer the National Research Council official space

signal, a test pattern to set our mirrors by . . ." (57). Here, the national codes homogenize all others, requiring them to conform to one semiotic pattern. It is an explicit evocation of the national-rural conflict that is aggressively worked through the narrative of The Afterlife of George Cartwright.

6.2 The Afterlife of George Cartwright: Harmonious Mergers

The overarching tropes of Afterlife continue those developed in Steffler's earlier work. They equate land with the writer's journal or the artist's canvas, a material background upon which individuals inscribe their cultural identities. It is a space of dialogized hybridity, since Cartwright's inscriptions are superimposed on those of the Inuit and Beothuck and compete for supremacy with those of the Americans. Steffler's focus here is on Cartwright's British social systems, what Slemon calls the "matrix of identification and learning" (5) and what Linda Hutcheon identifies as "Cartesian rationality and Enlightenment ideals of liberty" ("Eruptions" 146). More specifically, Tony Tremblay distinguishes "a propensity to name, an Aristotelian habit of classification and diminution, an insistence on ethical systems . . . and a groping toward comprehension" ("Piracy" 164). Composing the machinery of nationalism, these abstractions operate in Afterlife in

three ways: through Cartwright's capitalist enterprises, his official acts of naming, and his writing and hunting practices. These are always dialogized polyphonically by several subversive cultural or political voices, including those of the Inuit, Mrs. Selby, and the American privateers.'

The first of these nationalist mechanisms, an imperialist-oriented capitalism, influences Cartwright's initial impressions of Newfoundland to the extent that the Beothucks are seen primarily as slave-labour to serve Britain's trading industry. His vision is aligned with that of Sir Hugh Palliser, the governor of Newfoundland, whose reflections on the Newfoundland settlers' genocidal treatment of the Beothucks betray one source of Cartwright's ambiguous treatment of the Inuit in Labrador:

'It's not only unjust and unchristian. It doesn't make economic sense! Instead of living in dread of Indian attacks, they could be trading with them. They could have the Indians out working for them' (91; Steffler's emphasis)

Still looking through this imperialist entrepreneurial lens, Cartwright becomes fixated on Newfoundland and its indigenous population :

Newfoundland changed the contents of Cartwright's brain. The basic image, the background material his mind came to rest on before he slept or when he had stopped thinking of any particular thing was now the landscape of Newfoundland. . . . A wall of dark spruce trees hiding a world of

Indians and animals no European had seen. Scotland was nothing to that. Nor India . . . It seemed free and aloof, preserving a secret few would be strong enough to learn.' (93)

These distortions generate a one-sided view of the discovery and settlement of Newfoundland that misrepresents both the land and its native cultures. It illustrates W. H. New's premise in Land Sliding that eventually "representation gives way to conceptualization," and "configurations of land function in literature (and so in Canadian culture at large) to question or confirm configurations of power" (5; New's emphasis). In Afterlife, Steffler reveals how conceptions of land question and undermine British imperial power while affirming Inuit cultural praxis as a utilitarian approach to nature and as a dialogic model of social relations. The fact that Cartwright continues to revisit Labrador as a ghost in the twentieth century makes this model relevant to the relationship between Canada and Atlantic Canada today.'

Using Newfoundland as a sort of parchment or "background material," then, Cartwright translates and reinscribes Beothuck culture using the master codes of British socioeconomic systems, which stereotype the natives as furtive creatures with whom he wishes to "eat a bear" (96) and who live in the "secret refuge" of Red Indian Lake (100). Paradoxically, he wants to capture them and "convince

them by force of his peaceful intentions, and, as a result, become famous as the man who led them out of their savage obscurity" (109). These references indicate an admixture of humanity in Cartwright's personal dealings with the Inuit that makes him a "benign despot," as Stuart Pierson describes him in a review of the novel (215). His compassion for the Inuit interferes with his attempts to construct them as an inferior race, and, consequently, he always finds himself in a space of dialogized hybridity: he wears modified Inuit clothing (264), involves himself sexually with Caubvick, and submits to Inuit fishing methods that weaken his control over the land (181). He does these things knowing that the Inuit "were the heart of the land . . . and to know them would be to fully discover the land" (102).¹¹

Cartwright's admiration for the Inuit can be explained by Young's theory of cultural hybridity in Colonial Desire, which asserts that

even 'Englishness' has always been riven by its own alterity. And so too racial theory, which ostensibly seeks to keep races forever apart, transmutes into expressions of the clandestine, furtive forms of what can be called 'colonial desire': a covert but insistent obsession with transgressive, inter-racial sex, hybridity and miscegenation. . . . (xii)

Young notes that English novels routinely expose the desire of British culture for otherness, to the point where it becomes a dominant motif constituted by dialogism (3). This

theory endorses Steffler's implied suggestion that to create a dialogized space of cultural hybridity it is first necessary to deconstruct racial and cultural stereotypes that misrepresent the Other.

As part of this deconstructive process, Steffler establishes in Cartwright's mind an alternative hermeneutic to that of British imperialist capitalism for reading the land. Cartwright eventually begins to perceive Labrador, against his capitalist hermeneutic, as an articulation of Inuit voices, as in his dream in which he "saw their voices as a range of jagged mountains through which he slowly flew. There would be deep shadowy chasms, throaty and vibrant, then high soaring spires, scratchy with brambles and dead trees" (192). He is also able to read the land's original semiotic system as it is encoded by nature itself: "The whole countryside was a maze of animal trails, flight-ways, feeding-grounds, breeding-grounds, nesting-grounds, burrows, and dens, like layers of interconnecting cities of animal cultures" (142). The social equivalent to this is the Newfoundland culture, which arises

out of a mixture of songs he'd heard his Fogo Island furriers sing, out of stories they'd told of things they'd seen and been told themselves. Acting on people the land created a body of lore, a system of plots like a second geography. And like rivers and coasts the lore continued to shape people's fates. (155)

Steffler continues to oppose the voice of the Inuit to

Britain's capitalist ideology when Cartwright takes them to London, the imperial centre, where, tragically, they contract the smallpox that ultimately kills Attuiock's clan.''

The Inuit's impressions of London dialogize Cartwright's patriotic view of his homeland as the centre of the civilized world. Ironically, they see the English as "a small tribe of landless wanderers" (9), and Attuiock observes that England is a place where the land is "All made by made man" (11). Sailing up the Thames, Cartwright is disturbed that

They weren't looking at things the way he wanted them to. Instead of admiring the steeped skyline, they would stare down at bits of rubbish floating by in the water, or study the clouds, or look at the caged eagle, the dog, the trunks and bundles they had with them on the barge. (204)

Steffler's shifting of narrative perspectives, a technique used by all the dialogic regional authors under study here, allows a subversive view of Britain as a decadent society, paradoxically, one held at times by Cartwright himself.

Other scenes at dockside (205) and with the King and Queen (214) focus on the image of the caged eagle and offer further interrogations of British society and its capitalistic underpinnings. More devastating is the scene at the pet store where they see a caged parrot and a chained monkey, an image that recalls Richards' motif in Lives of

Short Duration: "At the sight of the chained monkey, Attuiok froze. He muttered something to the rest, and they stepped back. There was real fear in Attuiok's eyes, and distrust. 'Is that an Inuit?' he asked'" (218).

Cartwright's explanation of the monkey is one of the best examples in the novel of Bakhtin's idea of double-voicing, of two languages, urban and rural and national and regional, with their points of view on the world being articulated simultaneously:

Surely they couldn't suppose such a thing, even if the monkey's coat did look something like sealskin or caribou clothing. Even if it was smaller than Englishmen. The Inuit weren't *that* much inferior in size. And certainly no one proposed to lead them around on a chain. (219; Steffler's emphasis)

The strength of Steffler's irony exposes the submerged premise that the Inuit are indeed considered inferior to the English. Cartwright's failure to clarify the misconception to Attuiok impugns Britain's capitalistically motivated rule of native culture in Canada.¹²

A second way that Cartwright inscribes British culture on the Labrador landscape is through his official acts of naming, which prove to be as antagonistic to the Inuit as they were to the East Indians in India. Leaving there on a ship in 1757, Cartwright muses that its coast was "now articulate with names and associations in every feature. And yet aloof" (57). Cartwright leaves India as an outsider,

having never truly become part of its cultural environment. Exploring Labrador, he tries, as the British did in India, to claim the land onomastically, "naming every river, island, cove, and headland we came to after family members and friends . . . It was like being children again" (118).¹³ And in Sandwich Bay, he feels the land is an "extension of himself he needed to get to know" (248).

He also names his lodge, The Ranger, after a ship sent by the King for Cartwright's use. But contesting his patriotism, Mrs. Selby reminds him that he is acting in his own interests, that the King knows nothing about the ship being sent to him, and that their survival depends not on the strength of the King but on their own strength (124). Naming the land is an act of possession, but it does not guarantee ownership. Steffler demonstrates this by ratifying Mrs. Selby's criticism in a dream Cartwright has in which the lodge burns and the land recoils "like a sheet of paper in flames on a grate" (130). The symbolic erasure of Cartwright's inscriptions on the landscape through fire prophesies the burning of his lodge at Cape Charles and the resistance of the land to his control (199). In this way, it usurps the power to identify a region, to name it, much like Cartwright does in Labrador under British authority.

But naming a place is an act of origination. As E. D. Blodgett points out, any "origin is not so much a moment of

beginning as a moment of intervention" ("Is a History" 5), a moment of reorigination (15). Similarly, W. H. New explains in Land Sliding that early exploration journals, including those of the eighteenth century, claimed the power to name (55), and, "History itself, therefore, comes to be seen as a synchronic set of codings, a *palimpsest*" (164; New's emphasis). It is possible in the shifting world of cultural politics that the earlier scripts take precedent over the later ones. In this vein, New notes that references to Indians and Red Indians are imperial designations, and

Such European names shaped *them*, leaving them without active control (as far as the English language was concerned) over the character of their own culture. That 'Indians' in recent years have renamed themselves 'Native,' 'aboriginal,' 'First Nations,' . . . serves as one way for the indigenous peoples to reclaim control, to reinterpret a disempowering past (27; New's emphasis)

This act of revisionism also informs Steffler's responses to Cartwright's journal and his hunting practices in Labrador, which represent a third method of application of British imperialist ideology.

Steffler shows quite early in the novel that writing and hunting are both violent acts that forcibly register in an intrusive way Cartwright's imperialist presence on the landscape. In fact, hunting to Cartwright is another form of writing, since it too is a supreme act of self-assertion.

Cartwright recalls in his afterlife that:

when he was alive he enjoyed making entries in his journal almost as much as he did hunting. The sense of importance, the ritual gave him great pleasure, the times by the fire in the Lodge in Labrador when Mrs. Selby would hush the others because the master was writing. He enjoyed reassembling events, picking out some pattern in what had gone on, and capturing happenings in words. It was not so different from hunting, or so it used to seem. (22)

For Cartwright, they function as instruments of power that are legitimated by the artificial systems and patterns that Slemon, Hutcheon, and Tremblay suggest constitute the ideology of British imperialism. It is the master who writes, not the subordinate, and it is the master who hunts or who profits from the hunting of others through capitalist systems of production. But Steffler uses the social-reforming feminist-revisionist voice of Mrs. Selby to open up the interstitial cracks in Cartwright's first geography of British theories of civilization and race.

Cartwright first meets Mrs. Selby at Tyborn Road in a scene weighted with political issues. She first attracts his attention with her loud protestations against the hanging of a petty criminal, asserting that the English are uncivilized and their justice system grossly unfair. England, she claims, should look to France, "where changes are coming and people are not afraid to look at things with fresh eyes," this nearly twenty years before the fall of the Bastille

(107). She also inveighs against stereotypical views of women as "either married or a governess, or a burdensome spinster" and refuses to work for a prospective employer, a woman with "a ring of keys and litany of injunctions" (107).¹⁴ Her tirade ends with her general condemnation of slavery, which "has various forms. Only great wealth confers liberty in this self-deluding land" (107).

In Newfoundland, Mrs. Selby's racial politics offer a view of the Inuit as an autonomous people whose social mores are an improvement over those of Britain. Although her character has been criticized by a number of reviewers for being politically correct, she nevertheless makes a point implied by Steffler and stated by Linda Hutcheon's in "*Circling the Downspout of Empire*" that the voice of the native and Métis writers "should be considered the resisting, post-colonial voice of Canada" (172).¹⁵ She shows support for that voice when she is angered by Cartwright's obsession with capturing Indians (110) and when she suggests that teaching Inuit British habits will benefit only the British (127). She observes with clarity that "*People are different here . . . I don't think they care for a lot of our laws*" (110) and adds later that "*It's our duty . . . to leave them alone if we can't accept them as they are*" (128).¹⁶

Mrs. Selby also lambastes Cartwright when he attempts

to inscribe the same canon of British law and order on his workers and the Inuit that she witnesses at the infamous Tyborn hangings in London. In one scene, Cartwright lays charges against his woodsman for bestiality, which is punishable by hanging. In words that echo her comments on the British criminal at Tyborn, she laments to Cartwright that "that man doesn't deserve to die for what he did" (173). When he refuses to rescind his decision, she chastises him by saying "The law is a bugaboo. You use it to suit yourself. . . . You use the law as an instrument of your own savagery" (174). Cartwright's riposte is a defence of nationalism over individualism that, at this point, seems mostly guff.

Equally important, Mrs. Selby contests the veracity of Cartwright's journal entries in scenes that develop Steffler's theme of revisionist historiography. She furtively reads Cartwright's journal and considers several of his entries a misrepresentation of the truth. Literally writing alongside of Cartwright, she disrupts the notion of the master recording monolithic truth by emending his journal with entries of her own that question his depiction of daily life at the lodge.¹⁷ Cartwright, for example, fails to acknowledge that digging a drain outside of their house to redirect run off was her idea. He also understates her role in birthing Nan's baby, an omission indicative of

patriarchy's suppression of the matriarchal voice in history, ironic in this instance because the role of midwife is traditionally a female one. It is especially odd that Cartwright commits himself to such a cheap falsification after his brother John commits a similar act against him in a letter regarding the discovery of Lieutenant's Lake (100-101).

Mrs. Selby's corrective interjections are discussed by Roger Martin in relation to Steffler's critique of historiography in his article "Found Wanting on the Voyage: 'Re-exploration Narrative,' Rudy Wiebe, Brian Fawcett, and John Steffler's The Afterlife of George Cartwright." Martin reasonably hypothesizes Steffler's point to be

that the principles and habits of historiography which inform Cartwright's selective perceptions are unequal to the task of interpreting and representing a new world which evermore appears to evade the narrow clutch of his imperialistic ideology. (60)

He also argues that Afterlife should be categorized as a "re-exploration narrative," a historiographic metafiction that is consciously not self-reflexive (60). The re-exploration narrative re-examines "the conventions of interpretive practice which inform the production and reception of any text," and "asks readers to re-consider the role that historiography plays in relation to colonial ideology and to colonially inflected representations of the

'other'" (60; Martin's italics). Martin's comments accurately describe Steffler's approach to historiography, which consistently censors the idea of apolitical historical truth. They are validated in one scene by Cartwright's own comments that his journal projected "only a slim version of the truth, only a faint portrait of himself" (280). He has not been successful because he writes from an ideological perspective that misreads and misrepresents Atlantic-Canadian aboriginal cultures.

Brief reference to one other scene shows how Steffler believes Cartwright's interpretive practices need to be adapted to the logic of Inuit culture. When Cartwright tries to stop Attuiock and Shuglawina from taking salmon from a pool he claims as his own, they respond that "'These salmon are for everyone'" (182). Steffler, whose scene recalls Sam's response to the Halifax photographer in Quilt (23), again insists on the negation of monopolistic possession in favour of a sensible practice of sharing. It is only after recalling that three white men were killed because of a similar argument four years earlier that he says "'Fine . . . help yourselves'. . . After all there were hundreds of salmon in the pound and the Inuit only wanted a couple each" (182).

Cartwright's misreading of cultural and personal relationships is also corrected by the voice of American

privateers, who represent in extenso Mrs. Selby's politics of individualism. Steffler's narrator describes one of them as "an American-voiced man" who declares to Mrs. Selby that "We're not representatives of the British crown . . . We're free individuals the same as you" (261). Taking a more scurrilous tone, like Jim Brake's tone in his denunciation of the narrator in The Grey Islands, another privateer delivers a devastating but accurate assessment of Cartwright's relations with his workers: "You shit-lord. Fine British gentleman on his estate, his little kingdom with all his servants and ceremonies. They all hated you" (264). Even Mrs. Selby grows to hate Cartwright, and she and Daubeney eventually settle together on a farm in Pennsylvania, a place that typifies the American ideal of individualism that Cartwright detests. At this point in the novel Cartwright's nationalism has been thoroughly embattled by both American individualism and Canadian aboriginal communitarianism.

In England, after his death, he languishes as a ghost in a perpetual state of alienation from other speaking human beings. The fact that Cartwright cannot communicate to others is an ironic reversal that is allegorically appropriate; having ignored the voices of the Inuit and Beothucks in his lifetime, he himself is now invisible and

without voice. His alienation is reflected in his vapid journal writing, which is now guided "with much less order and purpose" (22). Having unmasked the artificiality behind Cartwright's use of writing and hunting, along with imperial capitalism and acts of naming as apparatus of power, Steffler offers a surrealistic resolution to the cultural and racial tensions building throughout the novel.

This resolution, in the final scene in which Cartwright is eaten by a white bear in Labrador, has been discussed by a number of critics, few of whom recognize its full dialogic possibilities. The ending is not, as Stuart Pierson suggests, an abandonment of Cartwright by Steffler ("Review" 212) nor, as Tremblay suggests, based on remorse that "is tempered by a cynicism that questions not only whether anything was learned but whether anything ever can be" ("Piracy" 169). Pierson, who does recognize Cartwright as a "hybrid" ("Review" 214), is actually undecided about the ending, particularly the last sentence of the novel, which he says can be read "either as a statement about nature's recirculations, or as a statement about revenge . . . on the man with the iron gun. Either way it makes him punier than I thought we were to take him [sic]" (213). Neither is the book a failure in its historical approach because, as Pierson feels, "It alternates between being a stick to beat our benighted times with, and being a reproach to

Cartwright's own period for not being sound on capital punishment, on women's and Indian rights, and on landscape rights" (213). Although Steffler is loud on political rights, that loudness does make the book a failure.

Tremblay's interpretation reads Cartwright's fate as an annihilation that atones for the execrable history of white mistreatment of East Indians, Inuit, and Beothuck cultures (170). Focusing too narrowly on Afterlife as a guilt-ridden revisionist narrative that attempts to redress that history, Tremblay supposes that

such is the legacy of re-imagining history, a revision borne of remorse that constructs yet another narrative from the raw materials of colonialism; trapped 'inside' of language, we can never get out. Historical revisionist fiction can never be about anything more than itself. (170)

Tremblay discusses arguments by Njabulo Ndebele and others who position the cultural subject solely within the realm of language and disallow any contact with racial others that is not mediated through language. These arguments affirm for Tremblay the certainty

that blackness cannot know whiteness. Perhaps this is what we in the first world have yet to learn. And perhaps we must also continue asking: who is it that is maintaining control of meaning? And whose identity is yet again being willed to power? (172-73).

On the contrary, Steffler acknowledges cultural mergers, a position that Kathleen McConnell considers but then abandons in her article "Textile Tropes in The Afterlife of George

Cartwright."

McConnell focuses on Steffler's creation of a binarism that polarizes British and aboriginal cultures through his use of textile tropes. She believes that this binarism is then questioned by the author to "indicate the complex and often ambiguous interdependencies which resist reduction to opposing duality" (93). Steffler holds Cartwright's imperialistic beliefs even as he arrives at the bear pool. But then McConnell surmises from a change in textile images, (from technological to natural), that "Cartwright finally gives up the ghost, stops trying to fill the wilderness with reason" (107). This would indicate that McConnell defends the possibility in Afterlife of the symbolic merger of the two cultures. Yet, it is odd, an equivocation perhaps, that McConnell refutes her own findings in a surprising final statement that "Steffler's novel continues to project onto the perceived Other a positionality determined by the imperium long ago" (108). She reaffirms this opinion in an endnote in which she declares that Afterlife does not fit into Stephen Slemon's category of Second World writing, a space of cultural hybridity similar to Bhabha's Third Space (108).

Roger Martin also offers several comments relevant to this discussion. Although he insists that the imagery in this scene is "not primarily symbolic" (71), he does

interpret it as a dialogic event that "offers readers a chance to occupy the zone between colliding ideologies, between world views or metaphysical systems caught in the amber of their violence and their conversations" (72). This sounds quite plausible. But his observation that "Steffler's final images would have us recognize that the contours of dialogical relations may not be as homogeneous as we might expect" overlooks the fact that Cartwright willingly participates in the final bear scene. Also, in an entry in his journal, Cartwright speculates on

living for years in situations created by our mistakes, situations very different from what would have been had our lives taken another course. In effect we become strangers to our real selves, which perhaps continue their lives parallel to us, invisibly, in a separate world.
(246)

Peter Jaeger's ecocritical reading of the final scene is more convincing. In "'The Land Created a Body of Lore': The Green Story in John Steffler's The Afterlife of George Cartwright," Jaeger follows the ecological poetics of critics such as D. M. Bentley, whose The Gayl Grey Moose makes two basic assumptions about humanity and nature: "that humanity and nature are interdependent, and that diversity in the human and natural world must be 'safeguarded and fostered'" (quoted in "Land" 41). Although Jaeger insists that Steffler inverts the British-Inuit social hierarchy in a number of scenes, he also suggests a more egalitarian

relationship in his comments that "Steffler constructs a polyphonic exchange of misunderstandings, in which both Inuit and European voices are puzzled at the alien discourse of the other" (47).

Jaeger's theoretical stance leads him to believe that Cartwright embodies at the beginning of the novel a "dualistic split between nature and culture," but that "the character gradually sheds [it] in favour of an experience of monistic unity with nature by the end of the text" (44). For Jaeger, the ending is "an event that suggests that for Steffler nature is indeed stronger than the rationalist engines and ideas of eighteenth-century civilization" (48). One of Jaeger's final points is that "Steffler's writing proclaims the idea that consciousness-raising will affect social change by creating an emblematic character who gains freedom through awareness" (51). One premise of this study is that other writers such as Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, and others, also show that use of a dialogic paradigm of relations can improve social relationships.

A Bakhtinian reading of the final scene confirms that there is less a collision of ideologies, as Martin assumes, and more of a hybrid conflation of these parallel worlds, as Jaeger suggests, one that is willed by Cartwright. This reading also refutes the arguments put forth by Pierson and

Tremblay and confirms McConnell's and Martin's initial impressions of the bear pool as a zone of cultural hybridity. There is actually a spiritual resolution to the conflict between Cartwright's imperialism, fraudulently founded on the divine right of kings, and Inuit spiritualism or animism, developed through references to Cartwright's hunting patterns and Attuiok's animal totemism. Attuiok's paradigm of relations, for example, is based on his belief that "Everything is a man inside," including animals (136).

The imagery strongly recalls Attuiok, whose earlier rite of passage foreshadows and explains the symbolism in this last scene. During that rite of passage, he is slowly eaten, like Cartwright, by a large white bear. But his torngak or totem in the form of an owl restores him, and he continues on to defeat his adversaries and to learn the language of the torngak. Paralleling and contrasting with Attuiok's attitudes towards nature and animals are Cartwright's. He thinks of himself in his guilty afterlife as a killing monster (268) and earlier is accused by Mrs. Selby of maiming animals in traps (173). His hunting habits adversely affect him, and his guilt surfaces in dreams of mutilations. There is, for example, the dream in which he severs the legs of an owl with a shot from his rifle, but then he realizes the owl has a human face (116-17). This presages his dream in which he confines Caubvick underwater,

with "Her hands, broken, her fingers lopped off and bleeding as she reached for him" (173).

Also, Cartwright is ritualistically consumed by the same animal he wantonly slaughters in Labrador in hunting practices representative of the European assault on the Beothuck, Inuit, East Indians, and other races. The fact that the bear functions as an artist figure recalls Cartwright's attempts as an artist to capture jays in sketches. But Cartwright, at that time, fails to "worship instead of slaughter" (284), as he regrets in his afterlife, because his artistry is motivated by his relationship with Joseph Banks, Cartwright's financial backer, and is felt to be part of a "scientific expedition" (141).

He has to wait until his afterlife to finally develop the transcendental vision that allows him to see and travel to Labrador from England. It is a journey he makes without his hunting hawk or his Hanoverian rifle, an indication that he has jettisoned his old paradigm for the more humane one that runs parallel with it. Allowing himself to be eaten by the bear is the first truly sacrificial act he makes to achieve communion with Attuiock, the Inuit, and the land, since, as he is being eaten, the land is painted back in. Steffler's symbolic erasure simultaneously reinscribes the Inuit belief that "Everything is a man inside," including bears (136).

Roger Martin hypothesizes that here writing is opposed to painting, which possesses an editorial power to overwhelm the false representations at the heart of Cartwright's journal ("Found" 72). His final statement, however, supports not his previous theory that "the contours of dialogical relations may not be as homogeneous as we might expect," but its very opposite:

Sensing perhaps that the journal upon which he has relied so heavily to make sense of his life can only ever offer an image of order rather than place him at the centre of the master narrative he envisions for his universe, Cartwright is emancipated enough from both desire and mercenary ideology not to overwhelm this one fragile mystery of the 'other.' (72)

Cartwright suppresses his desire to kill for monetary reasons because he now possesses a spiritual vision that allows him to see the metaphysical truth of Attuiock's credo. This credo of transcendental humanism resolves the dialectic of alterity, of differentiating a sovereign other from a sovereign self, by literally clearing the ground of political hegemonic posturing. Everything is a self contained within its own ideological horizon but a self linked with other horizons that destabilize its centripetal tendencies. It is a theoretical proposition that extends from An Explanation of Yellow, The Grey Islands, and The Wreckage of Play, and reverberates in the writing of other Atlantic-Canadian fiction, notably Random Passage.¹⁸

Morgan's novel intersects Steffler's at a number of points and helps illuminate its role as dialogic regional fiction. Consequently, it is necessary to examine Random Passage in some detail in conjunction with Afterlife.

6.3 Random Passage as Corroborating Narrative

In her novel, Morgan creates a space of dialogized hybridity in which European explorers, like Cartwright, interpret the new land and its aboriginals according to a prejudiced European racial hierarchy. The novel actually records the same epistemological shift recorded by Afterlife, from one predicated on the matrices of Enlightenment rationalism and European nationalism to a regionalist epistemology dependent on intuition and egalitarianism. This shift manifests itself in Random Passage in a series of discursive oppositions between old-world nationalist European discourse and new-world regionalist counter-discourse. The three most important of these are between the Beothucks and the European traders, the immigrant fishery families and the merchants, and the Irish and the English, and they are all organized around motifs incorporating aboriginal oral tradition, journal writing, mapping, and romantic iconography.

The first discursive opposition explores Beothuck encounters with European traders and settlers in the 1820s

in Newfoundland, only decades after Cartwright has left Labrador. This opposition is introduced in the prologue, which privileges the Beothuck perspective and sets up a narrative framework that depicts the Europeans as invaders rather than discoverers and explorers. From Ejew, an old Beothuck grandmother and matriarch, we know they are "men without souls," who forego dialogue, preferring instead to simply shoot the Beothucks as they shoot animals (8). For example, they wantonly kill Eeshoo, Ejew's daughter-in-law, and wound Gobidin, her son, when they are hunting otters from their canoe on the river (8). They may also be responsible for the death of Mattuis, another Beothuck from Ejew's group.

These "Widdun," as they are called, approach aboriginals through European stereotypes generated by a monologic relational paradigm, which Morgan effectively captures in Ejew's allegorical song. Sitting by a sacred fire pit, Ejew sings the story of a bird and a fish in a quarrel over a magic shell. The fish eventually hooks its teeth in the bird's wing, and they drag each other beneath the water. Neither is able to take possession of the shell, which becomes lost to them both forever. As a parable, this song at first characterizes the struggles between previous intruders, to whom Ejew refers simply as "the others," possibly the Vikings, who fought with the Beothucks over the

possession of the cape. But these people disappear, never to return to the sacred place again. Then come the Europeans, and the song foreshadows the tragedy precipitated by their misconceptions of the Beothucks. The demise of the Beothucks is prefigured in references to their sacred fire pit and to the gun barrel that Toma finds on the beach.

The fire pit is a symbol of Beothuck cultural traditions, having been used for rituals for at least a thousand years (7). It functions as a liminal space, as the point of contact between cultures and their attitudes towards each other as alterities. It is the place from which Ejew speaks at the beginning of the novel, the same place where Thomas Hutchings finds spiritual peace, and where Fanny, a white girl, is impregnated by Toma. It is also the same place where Toma is murdered by Peter, Fanny's prospective husband, with the gun barrel Toma finds. The two cultures and their relational paradigms are actually differentiated in part by the uses they make of the gun barrel.

At first, the gun is simply a weapon used by the European explorers to murder the Beothucks. But by the time of the settlers, attitudes have changed. They use what is left of a gun, its barrel, at various times to both kill and help the Beothucks; while the women settlers use it to move boulders to make a vegetable garden and Thomas Hutchings

uses it as a splint to support a compound fracture sustained by Toma at the fire pit, Peter Vincent, another settler at Cape Random, uses it to kill Toma. But, like Cartwright's Hanoverian rifle, this gun eventually loses its power to kill.

Partly through her references to the gun barrel as a tool, Morgan signals a change in relational paradigms that we see also at the end of The Afterlife of George Cartwright. We move from the European's strict conception of aboriginals as inferior "others" to be shot, to the settlers' recognition of their status as human beings to be helped. In one way, then, the miscegenetic union of Toma and Fanny is a gesture by Morgan to indicate the same dialogic possibilities that Steffler explores at the end of his novel. The image of Toma as primitive is supplanted by his role as father to Fanny's child, one that locates him in the space of dialogized hybridity. Morgan suggests through two other discursive oppositions that developing new-world regional paradigms have the power to displace even entrenched British autocratic views of the world.

The second discursive opposition sets the subaltern Lavinia Andrews against the imperial master Richard Ellsworth, who, like the imperial masters in Afterlife, maintains hegemony through writing. His class produces such authoritative texts as Ten Decisive Battles in the History

of the Empire (126) and Brief History of Methodism on Cape Random, which is written by a Methodist minister in a notebook that is kept in a London archive (113, 190). Along with his brother, John, Richard Ellsworth manages a number of businesses in Weymouth, England, and keeps records of his profits in a ledger of accounts entitled Ellsworth Brothers: Record of Shipping 1810 to Their accounting system incriminates Ned, Lavinia's brother, as a self-profiting employee with their fishing company, accusations that Ned can only lamely refute. Evicted from Weymouth, the family leaves for Newfoundland, and Lavinia takes the ledger with her when Richard Ellsworth leaves it behind at their house. Morgan's narrator describes how, in Newfoundland, after writing only one sentence, "She turns the book upside down and begins to write. She begins on the last page, writing toward the front of the book--toward a future she does not dare to imagine" (17). This double act of inversion and reversal signals a challenge to the European system of writing which is emblematic of other paradigmatic shifts in cartography and romantic iconography.

For example, Morgan shows that the geography of the new world cannot be mastered by current European cartographic science. When Thomas first arrives at Cape Random, the only map he sees is the one Captain Brennan draws for him in the sand with a stone to represent Cape Random (218-19). But

even this map fades from his mind, and all he can remember is the stone itself (220). Likewise, there are no printed maps of Europe, and when one is needed for Lavinia's school, Thomas roughly draws it from memory on brown wrapping paper (158). Lavinia, too, craves to see a map of Newfoundland, something visual to orient and confirm her position in the new world. When she envisions the maps in the Ellsworth home, she "can only conjure up images of sea monsters and fish-tailed cherubs that adorned the corners" (137).

Morgan assures us, as does Steffler in The Afterlife of George Cartwright, that mapping the new world is less an exercise in cartography than in psychology, and Lavinia realizes finally that "Although there are no paper or oilcloth maps on the Cape," there are "other, invisible maps" (137). These include the various ideological maps other characters on the cape use to chart their futures, such as religious maps of paradise (137), men's maps that were "pictures of wet pathways where millions of codfish . . . swim through currents of warm and cold water" (137), children's maps (137), and women's maps (138). Lavinia's own map bridges the worlds of children and adults, and she is a "possessor of secret charts that foretell phases of the moon, the ebb and flow of tides and blood" (138).

Abandoned along with conventional cartographic systems are the old-world misconceptions of rural life popularized

by romantic iconography. At first, the Andrews family subscribes to European stereotypes of natives, such as those depicted in such books as Shakespeare's book of plays, which are held also by the mob that meets Cartwright and the Inuit in London (Afterlife 205-6). Lavinia describes in detail one illustration to Patience, her niece who has been struck blind by disease. The characters include a queen, lying unconscious with her head on a rock in a wooded area, a black boy dressed only in leaves, and several people in the woods, presumably natives, who are referred to synecdochally as "faces": "`Wonderful ugly faces they are, all lookin' down at the black boy and the queen.' She hesitates, remembering the face she and Fanny have seen in the woods . . ." (167). She then thinks "how evil the faces in the trees are" (167).

Countering these stereotypical images are the real experiences of settlers in the new world. For example, when Lavinia first meets the Vincents at Cape Random, she records in her journal that "they are not the fur-covered pagans with painted faces and horned skulls she had half expected" (29). Other stereotypes of the Inuit as people who steal children (49) and who are heathens (56) living on a level with animals (71) are dispelled by Young Joe, who lives with the Inuit for four months when he gets lost in Labrador. He corrects the popular misconceptions of the Cape Random

community by declaring "`they's the smartest people you ever saw for makin' stuff'" (71).

Other pictures, such as the one Lavinia inherits from her home in Weymouth and the painted picture on the fan Emma sends to her mother, Meg, perpetuate the romanticized British ideal of the countryside, but eventually appear anachronistic at Cape Random. In Meg's picture of a rustic garden scene, a young girl in a lavishly ornate dress sits in a rose bordered swing: "`Does she cry, go to the outhouse, does she bleed, eat, does she love someone?'" Lavinia wonders. The woman bears no resemblance to anyone she has ever seen" (189). In Lavinia's picture, "rusty sheep and smocked shepherd still walk home along a grassy lane edged with flowers and overhung with stately trees. The soft English countryside seems unreal, unlike the England Lavinia remembers" (143). The England Lavinia does remember is in stark contrast to this one.

She remembers her position at Ellsworth House, in which she plays slave to Mrs. Ellsworth's queen, a woman much like Mrs. Selby's prospective employer with her ring of keys and authoritative manner (Afterlife 107). Mrs. John, as she is called, is another master who controls her servants through the medium of writing, through "a small book with a blue velvet cover" in which she keeps a record of all the items in the house handled by them (21). She also exercises

control over their identities by assigning them names that she prefers over their real names. Lavinia becomes "Libby," because "Mrs. John thought Lavinia an ostentatious name for a servant and had never bothered to find out that most people called the girl Vinnie" (21).

The third discursive opposition is set up through Thomas Hutchings' memories of Europe that also involve subjugation, in his case that of the Irish to the English. Morgan allows Thomas to tell his story directly through his journal as a first-person narrative, thereby giving it a sense of immediacy that brings us closer to the victims of English political oppression. We learn of the history of the Irish-English conflict, of Thomas' grandparents who starved to death after being driven from their land (199-200) and of Ireland being "trampled half to death by the English; all the rights of the people taken away so they could not so much as own a horse or a house, or keep religious schools to train their own priests" (201).

To speak against this subjugation, Morgan develops the insurrectionary politics of Mike Tracey, a symbol of the poor Irish rebel. He relates how Ireland

had been civilized when the English were still bowing down to trees and painting themselves blue, `...but they had to make us out to be barbarians no better than animals as an excuse for treatin' us like they did' (206).

The immediate problem is a feudal system of agriculture,

whereby tyrannical English landlords lease too little land for farming, while they reserve large plots of arable land for their own pleasures of hunting and riding, or for grazing cattle (204). Morgan's point is clear. Like the Beothucks and the Inuit, the Irish suffer from the invasion of enterprising capitalists backed by the authority of their nation, which cares nothing for the rights of others.

The formidable strength of British imperial capitalism is demonstrated in a scene in which Thomas, Tracy, and several members of their Land League try peacefully to present a petition to the estate owners. Arriving at one of the estates with papers that "recorded the plight of the countryside," the group is attacked before they could speak by the paranoid landlords and their servants, who see them as a seditious mob (208). Branded a criminal, Thomas escapes to the new world, to Cape Random on the "very edge of the Newfound Land" (25). The characters in this liminal space are the politically charged guarantors of a new relational paradigm, one held in contradistinction to that of the old-world, one founded on two things missing from the situation in Ireland, equality and the opportunity for meaningful dialogue.

Fittingly, this novel ends with a similar prophetic vision that precedes Cartwright's journey to Labrador at the end of Afterlife. Thomas, under the influence of a more

orthodox spirituality, finds himself on a boat to Cape Random, amazed at the impromptu nature of his return journey:

In the centre of all the sound and movement, I stood suspended in an island of quiet--seeing more clearly than I had ever seen, or may ever see again, that all creatures--the child in my arms, the boy beside me, the men scurrying around me, the ship, the waves under the ship and the fish under the waves--moved in great swirling patterns which God alone understands and over which He alone has control. (269)

It is a metaphysical vision with resonances from Steffler's theory of time, one which allows Cartwright at the end of the novel to adopt the same relational paradigm. He discovers that "time is like sound--that the past doesn't vanish, but encircles us in layers like a continuous series of voices, with the closest, most recent voice drowning out those that have gone before" (3). This sense of time enables Cartwright "to tune in a detail from either the past or the ongoing course of time and, by concentrating on it, become witness to some event in the affairs of the dead or the living" (3).

Both Morgan and Steffler revise conventional notions of linear time into postmodern reconfigurations that feature simultaneity. This reconfiguration shows up in their temporal arrangement of scenes, which effectively creates a dialogue among historical periods and the cultures. It is a shift in narrative mode becoming more popular for reasons

expounded by John Berger. As quoted by Edward Soja in Postmodern Geographies, Berger observes that

It is scarcely any longer possible to tell a straight story sequentially unfolding in time. And this is because we are too aware of what is continually traversing the storyline laterally. That is to say, instead of being aware of a point as an infinitely small part of a straight line, we are aware of it as an infinitely small part of an infinite number of lines, as the centre of a star of lines. Such awareness is the result of our constantly having to take into account the simultaneity and extension of events and possibilities. (22; Soja's emphasis)

Soja's theorization of "the text as a map, a geography of simultaneous relations and meanings that are tied together by a spatial rather than a temporal logic," helps explain the structure of Afterlife and Random Passage, both of which fix place and the journal as sites of synchronic and diachronic interrogations of historiography as an unassailable epic record of the past (1).¹³

Place, especially, is constructed as a dialogic site where cultural negotiations are possible. Cartwright, Thomas, and Lavinia experience acculturation outside of European society. Both Afterlife and Random Passage rely heavily on specific landmarks, notably the bear pool and the fire pit, as settings for characters' communion with others outside the hierarchies of power. The relocation of meaningful relations to the isolation of Labrador and Cape Random challenges these hierarchies and advances the

egalitarianism relational model developed in the other primary novels considered here.

It is significant also that both Steffler and Morgan revise historical approaches to land simply as space to be exploited and brought under capitalist control. As W. H. New notes, "Nineteenth-century painters conventionally represented land as property, in turn emphasizing the power of wealth, separated spaces, and gender roles" (92). Steffler and Morgan raise an assault on capitalism and nationalism as fallacious ideologies that disfigure aboriginal conceptions of land as something that is not already made by man. It seems that they aim specifically to redesignate regional territory as a space of dialogic hybridity, a space where the political hegemony of Cartwright's Britain can be contested by Attuiok's aboriginal humanist credo that "Everything is a man inside" (Afterlife 136). In this way, they join other Atlantic-Canadian novelists who protest against the homogenizing "official space signal" of a nationalist paradigm of relations and opt for a politics of regional and cultural difference (Wreckage 57).

Notes

¹ See The Dialogic Imagination (304-5, 358-66) for Bakhtin's explanation of linguistic hybridity, and Colonial Desire (20-26) for Robert Young's adaptation of Bakhtin's ideas to cultural studies. Young outlines Bakhtin's distinction between organic and intentional hybridization and considers that, while languages are organically hybridized, in fiction "it is the organizing intention of the artist that dialogizes hybridity" (Colonial Desire 21).

² See Stephen Slemon's article "Monuments of Empire: Allegory/Counter-Discourse/Post-Colonial Writing" for a concise explanation of how imperial Britain controls colonial cultures through semiotic value systems.

³ It is this use of place, as a site for political conflict, that leads to Herb Wyile's beliefs that regionalism is, among other things, "a territorializing of literary practice" and that the term itself

needs to be disrupted in order to allow for a more appropriate deployment of the term to describe the inscription of localized experience, culture, and space in the work of various writers and to recognize both affinities and distinctions between different kinds of writing in this regard.

("Regionalism" 152, 154)

⁴ For an extended explanation of the polyphonic novel in relation to Dostoevsky's work, see the first two chapters of Bakhtin's Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics.

⁵ See "Anti-Oedipus: The Geopolitics of Capitalism" in Young's Colonial Desire for a discussion of capitalism as a motive for British imperialism (166-74).

⁶ This final scene is a supernatural alternative to the bear-pool scene on the Eagle river. Cartwright slaughters a number of bears for pure pleasure, portraying himself as the killing monster Mrs. Selby accuses him of being. During the scene, one bear in particular trails Cartwright to the ledge he is on, and Cartwright allows it to come as close as possible, titillated by the idea that if he misses the bear will eat him (255).

⁷ But, the articulation of resistant voices does not effect, as Tremblay notes, an inversion of the civilized-savage hierarchy (167), an observation later undermined by his suggestion that Afterlife and the other two novels he examines "communicate that the indigenes of history were little different from their colonizers" (171). What Steffler does show is that both the Inuit and the British can at times be both reasonable and inane, civil and savage, and they eventually assimilate each other's culture within a mutually cultivated hybrid space.

⁹ In Land Sliding, W. H. New summarizes Henri Lefebvre's theory of fictional uses of land in The Production of Space (1974): land "functions as a commodity in class structure, in capital exchange, in resource control, and in territorial (hence national or political) assertion" (10).

⁹ It is a relevancy apparently not recognized by T. L. Craig, who insists in his survey of Canadian fiction in 1992 for the University of Toronto Quarterly that "This supernatural narrative premise does not pay its way, and in fact is too often an obstacle. It can be defended, in theory, but in practice it is as counter-productive as the deadpan style" (2). Other reviewers such as Harmut Lutz and David Macfarlane argue more convincingly of the broader political and historical significance of this book. Macfarlane in his The Globe and Mail review says that Cartwright's afterlife "is more than a narrative device. It gives the chapters of Cartwright's life a magic, an energy, and a relevance that would have been lost had they been inherited by a less skilful and less daring writer" (C18). Likewise, Lutz sees Afterlife as "a parable of what often did happen to native people during contact" ("Imaginary Indian" 139). Lastly, Jaeger believes that Cartwright's relation with the Inuit is "complex," and "this complexity lifts the novel above the level of a reductive diatribe against imperialism and mercantilism, while still engaging with the problems of historical dominance" ("Land" 47).

¹⁰ Cartwright's adoption of certain Inuit cultural practices is a manifestation of his underlying sense of respect for the Inuit. In his review of Afterlife, Lawrence Mathews determines that in many ways Cartwright "regards the Inuit as equals. He makes no real attempt to 'civilize' them (beyond teaching them English). He's much more interested in learning Labrador survival skills from them" ("Living On" 30).

¹¹ Young makes an interesting observation about the designation of Greenwich, a suburb of London, as the site for the international time meridian. It marks it as the centre of time and also endows it with a special sense of division:

The cleavage of East and West in that bronze strip on the hill has gradually been subsumed into a city that, with the potent attraction of economic power exerting the magnetic field of force of the North over the South, has drawn the far-off peripheries into the centre. And with that historic movement of intussusception, the Prime Meridian, the Longitude Zero, the centre of the world, has become inalienably mixed, suffused with

the pulse of difference. (2)

¹² Steffler comments in an interview with Peter Gard that "I continue to believe the most important distinction between people is the one between urban dwellers and country dwellers--it's a demarcation far more important than racial or language differences" ("John Steffler" 17).

¹³ In "The Past as Literature," Christopher Moore alludes to Steffler's sense of being disinherited from his rural childhood home in Ontario, which was consumed by Toronto's expanding suburbs and industries. Referring to Cartwright, Steffler laments that "The people who came like him obliterated the people and the names that had been there before in just the same way" (54-55).

¹⁴ Peter Jaeger discusses Mrs. Selby's repeated attempts to persuade Cartwright that she should be treated as a partner, not as a servant. Through her persistence, she voices "a challenge to the mercantilist/patriarchal power structure that is supported by Cartwright" (46). Paradoxically, though, her own business dealings with the Inuit "implicate her with the mercantilist project" (46). Jaeger makes the significant point that "Selby is not only the victim of patriarchal oppression, but an oppressor and member of the soon-to-be dominant cultural group in the New World" (46).

¹⁵ For comments on Mrs. Selby's political correctness, see Pierson, 205; Russell Smith, 22; Mathews, 30; and Cadigan, 63-64.

¹⁶ Relevant to this quotation is Margaret Harry's comments in her review of The Wreckage of Play. She notes that Steffler's "poetry expresses concern for relationships as much as for individuals" and that "Steffler suggests that individuality itself may be dubious. Not only does he respect the other in its own validity, but also he recognizes self as the other in a fluid connection that supersedes individuality" (353-54).

¹⁷ According to Pierson, Mrs. Selby's interpolations are Steffler's fictional creation; they do not exist in Cartwright's original published journal (205).

¹⁸ In a review of Morgan's Waiting for Time, a sequel to Random Passage, Valerie Legge discusses these two books and Afterlife as revisionist narratives in line with Adrian Rich's project of "re-visionism," quoted in Legge's review as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (64).

¹⁹ For Steffler, the form of Afterlife is as important as its content. In an article in Memorial University's Gazette, he maintains that "The journal form as narrative vehicle, the question of the narrator's self-awareness and truthfulness, the process of story-telling, the use of

language as an expressive and recording medium all
interested me as much as the content of Cartwright's life"
(10).

Conclusion

The central thesis of this study is that the work of Alden Nowlan, Susan Kerslake, David Adams Richards, and John Steffler employs a dialogic paradigm to order personal, political, and cultural relations. These writers use this paradigm to challenge both monologic nationalist and regionalist stereotypes of Atlantic Canada that are constructed from biased or prejudiced evaluative frameworks. They show that the politics of identity has to be negotiated with the voices of alterity on cultural borders. In their fiction, Atlantic Canada becomes a region situated in a field of political conflicts governed by what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe call a "logic of equivalence" (HSS 144) and what Mouffe identifies in The Return of the Political (1993) as an agonistic dynamic of democracy (2-3).¹

Collectively, these writers resist the homogenizing effects of national culturalism and exploitive capitalism. Generally, this resistance is effected in a number of ways: they censure the CBC for cultural homogenization and ignorance of ethnic, racial, and linguistic differences; they question the efficacy of state-run sanatoriums and hospitals by pointing to bureaucratic priorities and officious protocols that victimize rather than cure patients; they denounce universities run by self-serving sophisticates whose abstruse, convoluted theories obscure

rather than illuminate truth; they expose nationalist historiographies as fictional documents that mask political motives of power; they deconstruct class divisions to show a base of common humanity; they replace scientific systems of cartography and urban blueprints with maps of the psyche that enable intuitive readings of natural landscapes; and, finally, they perceive unfettered capitalism as a destructive force that disorients communal and regional identities.

It can be concluded from a close analysis of their fiction that Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, Steffler, and most other writers cited in this study follow a shift in relational paradigms from the monologic to the dialogic that recognizes the elements in the nation-regional hierarchy as co-dependent. They require that the regional be read as the universal, as a site of humanist values, and that its literature be assessed within its own cultural contexts, rather than on an urban or nationalist hierarchical scale of social values. This means a rejection of oppressive hierarchical value systems in favour of an egalitarian openness to diversity and plurality. This also means discarding the "national-referential ideal" referred to by Robert Lecker in Making it Real (4) and remaining receptive to the "literary regionalism" referred to by Eli Mandel in "The Regional Novel" (119).

This shift is, as Bakhtin has observed, constitutive of life itself. He notes in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics that

The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue. . . . Reified (materializing, objectified) images are profoundly inadequate for life and for discourse. A reified model of the world is now being replaced by a dialogic model. (293; Bakhtin's emphasis)

This shift has been examined by several critics already cited in this study. Barbara Godard, for example, refers to a "crisis of paradigms" ("Structuralism" 27) and Linda Hutcheon observes a "turning" from a system reliant on single meanings to one based on polysemy (Canadian 23). Chantal Mouffe corroborates Hutcheon's idea in The Return of the Political when she notes that "A multiplicity of associations with a real capacity for decision-making and a plurality of centres of power are needed to resist effectively the trends towards autocracy represented by the growth of technocracy and bureaucracy" (100). Nowlan, Kerslake, Richards, and Steffler use a number of common narrative strategies and philosophical assumptions to develop this paradigmatic shift, allowing their marginalized characters and social spaces to communicate universal themes and humanitarian visions.

First, they incorporate a multiplicity of ideological

voices within their narratives to ensure that no one voice attains hierarchical supremacy. This social heteroglossia is supported by writing motifs, metafictional commentary, and linguistic metaphors that link language to identity. These writers maintain a constant awareness that identity is embodied in language and that language signifies identity.

Starting with Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien, we see how Nowlan relies on numerous intertextual references to novels, magazines, and historiographies to decertify both regional and national claims to cultural sovereignty. Both the community and the nation are circumscribed by larger ideological horizons that question their world views. Intertextualities help construct the bridges that take Kevin O'Brien out of his home town and his claustrophobic sense of self into the fluid streams of other societies. His own book of memoirs boosts his emancipation and helps him understand the diversity of cultural life open to him, even the diversity of his own consciousness, his own various selves. Writing also helps liberate Kevin's aunt, Kathleen, whose unorthodox style of writing, "from the bottom to the top of the page as well as from left to right," anticipates Lavinia Andrews' writing in Bernice Morgan's Random Passage (Various 98). Nowlan, through Kevin O'Brien especially, presents these other texts and writing as "windows" on the world through which he can depict his own philosophical

orientation (86).

In Susan Kerslake's Middlewatch and Penumbra we see less of a reliance on intertextuality, but a similar use of writing motifs for the same purposes. Kerslake's characters search for their identities through the medium of language, since it is only through articulation of their stories that they can reveal themselves to others. Characters such as Sibbi and Morgan co-author their lives through a meeting of selves in language away from the metropolis, in the social realm of the small community. In Penumbra, the narrator cannot create her own stories because she cannot find the dialogic landscape that she needs either on the isolated island or in the crowded town. Nor can she find another individual who can help her. Although her mother is able to tell a "true story" in the town, the narrator cannot, and she thinks of the island itself as an "unwritten song" (Penumbra 183, 26). The narrator must find, like Sam in Donna Smyth's Quilt, the empathic connections with others that enable self-expression.

In David Adams Richards' fiction, we get a similar use of both multiple intertextual references and writing motifs that we find in Nowlan's work. Particularly in Lives of Short Duration, there is a saturation of narrative with a swirl of pop culture images and commercial allusions that leaves no identity stabilized. The function of these

heteroglossic voices is to unsettle extraneous political and corporate images of Atlantic-Canada and to expose them as false against a background of regional geographical and historical details. But Richards seems to be issuing a warning in his novels, too, that with Atlantic-Canadian compliance with Canadian and American exploitation there will be nothing left to characterize regional society. An exemplary scene in Blood Ties illustrates Richards' point. When Lorne and Mauffat sell their ancestral home, the porch is "Emptied of all except the ancient sewing-machine," a symbol that recalls the quilts and the local stories they represent in The Mountain and the Valley, Middlewatch, and Quilt (10). As Kerslake indicates in Middlewatch and Penumbra, without the ability to tell stories, no person or community can find a centre for its consciousness.

John Steffler makes use of extraliterary references, too, but to a lesser degree than Nowlan and Richards. His narrative is more dependent, like Kerslake's, on writing motifs to develop a collision of ideological voices. Through Cartwright and his journal, Steffler defends aboriginal cultures against European imperialism and, like Richards, moves through social and political systems to focus his attention on the human being. Steffler finds, also, that cultural hybridity is a natural state and that, as Cartwright suggests, to know the people is "to fully

discover the land" in which they live (Afterlife 102).

Steffler, then, reduces political and racial hierarchies to the common human denominator and dialogic relationships.

Second, while they realize that conflict and angst are the inevitable results of agonistic democracy, these writers set aside the idea of a permanent social dystopia to focus, at the end of their novels, on the sometimes tenuous but persistent connections among their characters. Their shift in paradigms requires readers to look past political conflict to the characters themselves and the types of relationships they establish in the novels. Characters can survive cultural disintegration and social chaos only when they forge strong emotional bonds.

Kevin O'Brien, for example, escapes the constrictions of cultural reification in Lockhartville in Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien to find a spiritual equilibrium through his writing. Socially anchored in the world outside, he is able to reassess his tumultuous relationship with his father and friends and deal patiently with the "essential absurdity" of one's life (Various 5). Likewise, Sibbi and Morgan recover from identity loss and confusion in Middlewatch through a life-affirming interdependent relationship. Also, although still struggling with nihilism, the narrator at the end of Penumbra breaks away from the solipsistic patterns of her father's life to her mother's

ability to tell regenerative stories in the town. Both Nowlan and Kerslake move their characters through the destruction of oppressive relationships to the zone of dialogism, a shift also seen by Richards and Steffler as having positive repercussions for the formation of cultural identities.

In The Coming of Winter and Lives of Short Duration, Richards develops steady relationships between Kevin and Pamela, and Packet and Emma Jane. Although under some strain, other relationships hold in the MacDurmot family in Blood Ties and the Walsh family in Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace. In Nights below Station Street, For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down, and Hope in the Desperate Hour, Richards depicts Ivan Basterache, Jerry Bines, Emile Dexter, and Garth Shackle as sacrificial figures, risking their lives for others they love, even animals. Steffler, too, reunites Cartwright with Labrador and Attuiok at the end of The Afterlife of George Cartwright. Cartwright is eventually suffused with the metaphysical tranquillity of Labrador when he allows his afterlife spirit to merge with a symbolic representation of Inuit culture through the bear, just as Thomas Hutchings is taken with Newfoundland at the end of Random Passage.

All of these writers suggest that political relations need to be structured using the same reciprocal model of

trust and empathy that these characters develop since, as many cultural theorists acknowledge, identity is relational. It is here, though, that we encounter the hierarchies of power that misrepresent regional identity and create misleading mythologies of place.³ But rather than retreating to essentialist notions of cultural geography, these writers seem to agree with critics such as David Morley and Kevin Robins, who assert in "No Place Like *Heimat*: Images of Home(land) in European Culture" that "There can be no recovery of an authentic cultural homeland," that identity is a matter of "disjuncture" and "tension" that must be tolerated (27).

A third strategy these writers use to invest in a dialogic paradigm is reliance on nature and its ecosystemic environments, in opposition to the metropolis, as a source of metaphors for human relationships. They present nature as a matrix of dialogic interactions that encompasses the human world. This matrix fuels human intuition, and in their novels there is a replacement of scientific systems of cartography with maps of the psyche that enable intuitive readings of the natural landscapes. These writers also show that destruction of the natural world is somehow a destruction of humanity itself.

In Various Persons, nature becomes a tabula rasa upon

which despots inscribe their social hierarchies. As the Conqueror, for example, Kevin imagines the countryside as home to a slavish colony of illiterates where "people will be as ignorant and content as their livestock" (Various 17).³ Also, on Miss Noseworthy's classroom map of the feudal world, the land is carved into divisions between serfs and nobles (10). Nowlan shows in "The Glass Roses," too, that humanity is as fragile as nature, that oppressed characters and cultures can be broken as easily as glass roses. These oppressed characters escape by recognizing the dialogic environments behind the monologically constructed worlds depicted by these maps.

Kerslake uses the natural world allegorically to parallel the spiritual death and life of both Sibbi and Morgan. The crimson geranium, Samphire's Cove, Hopkin's tree, as well as other references to nature are developed as important symbols of regeneration. For example, Kerslake uses Hopkin's tree as Donna Smyth uses Sam's tree in Quilt, as a symbol of unity in diversity, of the universal in the particular. In Penumbra, it is the conjunctive cycles of the earth and moon and the island and the sea that provide the allegorical backdrop for the emotional vicissitudes of her characters. As with Smyth's Dayspring, Kerslake's nature can reflect both the tumultuousness and the tranquillity of human relationships.

Nature is treated in a similar way in the fiction of Richards and Steffler, as a barometer to measure the negative impact of social problems, especially those attributed to industrial development and personal greed. In Richards' novels, the natural environment of the Miramichi River is despoiled by polluting paper mills, and its fish are caught by Americans who own most of the riverside property. Also, the heavy "accent" of the people who live on the river is devalued when judged against central Canadian and American linguistic standards (Coming 8). Richards makes a distinction in Evening Snow (116), For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down (22), and other novels between people who care for nature and those who do not, between those who defend the weak and wounded and those who stalk them.

In his earlier fiction, Steffler depicts characters discovering themselves through a merger with the natural world, even metamorphosing into animals themselves. Similarly in Afterlife, Steffler insists that human and cultural relationships must involve a respect for diversity and plurality, as we find it in nature. Cartwright's selfish approach to Inuit culture and the Labrador wilds is undermined by the conservatism and spirituality of Attuiock and his people, whose mystical conception of nature eventually compels Cartwright's spirit to abandon an imperial capitalist view of the new world. Steffler evokes

the dialogic paradigm especially through Cartwright's attempts at cultural hybridity and his final merger with nature and the Inuit spiritual world at the end of the novel.

Clearly, the fiction of these writers consistently calls for a shift in paradigms from the exclusive and closed authoritarian systems of national culturalism and exploitive capitalism to the more open systems that propose a negotiation of power and identity between nation and region. They consistently countermand the spurious notion that the regional correlates with the parochial and the inferior. They assert, instead, that the rural environment accommodates diversity and multiplicity, and fosters relations among individuals that are more meaningfully managed than affiliative relations developed at the political level anywhere. Hence, we need to read the regional as the universal, as the dialogic site of ideological and personal voices vying for recognition and power, rather than simply as a stagnant society of antimodernist bumpkins.

As we have seen in chapter one, the dialogic paradigm offered by these writers complements what Frank Watt refers to as "new regionalism" (127), a problematizing of "the process of rapid transit and instantaneous communication, the rush toward a standardized, centralized, modern

industrial, urban Canada" (127). It could also qualify as the paradigm of "cross-culturality" that Ashcroft et al. believe represents a "new hybridized and syncretic view of the world" (Empire 36, 104).⁴ In their opinion, "Both literary theorists and cultural historians are beginning to recognize cross-culturally as the potential termination point of an apparently endless human history of conquest and annihilation . . ." (36).

Although the dialogic regional voices in this study hardly qualify as a definitive political force in Canada, they do speak strongly within literary communities to influence readers' perceptions of Atlantic-Canadian culture. And these novelists are not alone. There is also the fiction of other writers such as Herb Curtis, M. T. Dohaney, George Elliott Clarke, who articulate subject positions similar to those articulated by Nowlan, Kerslake, Smyth, Richards, Steffler, and Morgan. The proliferation of these texts help counter, to some degree, misguided interpretations of Atlantic-Canadian literature based on a monologic paradigm of relations. They try to convince readers of the humanist theme in much Atlantic Canadian fiction, a theme voiced in Richards' novels and encapsulated by Ralph, a derelict character in Raymond Fraser's The Black Horse Tavern and The Bannanbridge Musicians: "I'm not that much different. I'm pretty sure I'm a human, like everyone else" (Bannanbridge

136). If they are only partly successful in their efforts, the writers focused on in this study will help bring readers closer to the Atlantic Canada constructed by the texts themselves rather than the one constructed by ultra-regionalist and nationalist stereotypes. It is only this critical perspective on regional fiction, this adoption of a rural aesthetic, that allows these dialogic voices to be heard clearly.

Notes

¹ Their logic of equivalence refers to "the continuous redefinition of the social and political spaces and those constant processes of displacement of the limits constructing social divisions" (Hegemony 144). Mouffe asserts, in The Return of the Political, that because this process is continuous, "The illusion of consensus and unanimity, as well as the calls for 'anti-politics,' should be recognized as being fatal for democracy and therefore abandoned" (Return 5). She also argues, like Bakhtin, that all identities are relational and that "any type of we/them relation, be it religious, ethnic, national, economic or other becomes the site of a political antagonism" (Return 2-3).

² See John Urry's discussion of "place-myths" in Consuming Places (26). Urry observes how commercial tourism leads to the production of kitsch that replaces indigenous art (8) and how heritage is reconstructed as "staged authenticity" (9). Drawing on the work of Ian MacKay, he explains further how

A similar process can be seen in Canada where the theme of 'Maritimicity' has been clearly developed since the 1920s as a result of the provincial state and private capital seeking to develop modern tourism in Nova Scotia. (145)

³ Compare Denis' remark in "We, Who Have Never Suffered," in which he refers to people of the Miramichi as "Mindless idiots-- [who] live like sheep" (Dancers 86).

⁴ R. P. Draper in The Literature of Region and Nation prefers "new regionalism" (8), while Bhabha uses the term the "new internationalism" in The Location of Culture (5).

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