Torontos:
Representations of Toronto
in Contemporary Canadian Literature

by Will Smith

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Abstract

This thesis examines how representations of Toronto in contemporary Canadian literature engage with place and further an understanding of spatial innovation in literature. Acknowledging the Canadian critical tradition of discussing place and space, the thesis moves the focus away from conventional engagements with wilderness motifs and small town narratives. In this way the thesis can be seen to respond to the nascent critical movement that urges engagement with contemporary urban spaces in Canadian literature. Responding to the critical neglect of urban representation, and more particularly, representations of Toronto in Canadian literary criticism, this thesis examines Toronto as a complex and contradictory site of symbolic power across critical, political and popular discourses. Furthermore, this thesis repositions an understanding of Toronto by paying attention to literary texts which depict the city's negotiation of national, local and global forces. The thesis seeks to understand the multiplicity of the city in lived, perceived and conceived forms – seeing Toronto as Torontos.

Questioning existing frameworks deployed in Canadian literary criticism, the thesis develops a unique methodology with which to approach the complex issues involved in literary writing about place, drawing on contemporary Canadian criticism and transnational approaches to critical literary geography. The central chapters focus on four texts from the twenty-first century, three novels and one collection of poetry, approaching each text with a critically informed spatial lens in order to draw out how engagements with Toronto develop spatial innovation within literature. The thesis analyses how engaging with Toronto challenges writers to experiment with literary form. In turn, the thesis seeks to elucidate the spatial developments achieved through literary writing. The thesis then demonstrates an understanding of the material geography of the city, situating readings with reference to interview material from parties involved in writing, producing and distributing literary depictions of Toronto. Hence it combines traditional literary criticism with a spatially and socially engaged criticism, in order to clearly address the literary geographies of Torontos.

Acknowledgements

Contents

> Observed from a distance, Toronto takes a multitude of forms, not always recognizable to those who live here. From various parts of Canada and the world we see ourselves reflected back in splintered, fragmented form. In my lifetime Toronto has been seen at various times by non-Torontonians as desperately dull and scandalously successful, as flatly homogenous and wonderfully varied, as miserably greedy and remarkably welcoming. I think that at certain times all of these opinions have been true; perhaps they are all true at the same time.
>
> --- Robert Fulford.

> We speak of 'Toronto,' but there are – and have been throughout the twentieth century – so many coexistent Torontos. Frequently separated in space, almost invariably differentiated by class, often distinguished by the national or racial origin of their principal inhabitants, they are not uncommonly seen to exist independently, unaware of each other's special qualities.
>
> --- W.J. Keith.

This thesis seeks to re-place Toronto in contemporary discussions of Canadian literature. It addresses the representation of Toronto as a place and an urban imaginary, examining how the city is articulated in an era of globalization. Focusing on three novels and a poetry collection published in the first decade of the twenty-first century, this thesis examines Toronto as a local, national and global place of interconnection. Addressing these four contemporary literary engagements with Toronto, the thesis situates literary representations in the wider framework of symbolic, perceived and lived Torontos. As the epigraphs of WJ Keith and Robert Fulford suggest, Toronto is freighted with multiple symbolic meanings. It is also, significantly, diversely perceived and inhabited in multiple ways. This does not alter the sense that Toronto is at once unique in its material location and symbolic resonance, however it gestures to the impossibility of one perspective of Toronto which may be taken for the whole. Attention to the material city drives this criticism to engage with the multiplicity of the city's inhabitants and the multiplicity of its meanings.

* * *

In 1968, in a survey of Canadian literature, Mordecai Richler notes the geography of

Canadian literary production. Whilst emphasising that many writers of the time

addressed their own localities in literary work, Richler suggests that the Canadian

publishing industry is specifically located in Toronto (20). This centrality of Toronto

to the literary work of Canada has not been reflected in either literary criticism or, as

some would argue, the literary texts themselves. One way to explain this might be to

examine the uses and depictions of Toronto in literary criticism, and more particularly

the separation of Toronto's cultural power from reference to its material site.

Toronto's cultural power can be seen to derive from its network of publishing

companies, which at the time of Richler's comments in the late 1960s were seen as

national presses both in ownership and trade outlook. The Canadian stance of these

Toronto presses was further shaped through their large subsidy from national and

provincial government (Wright 18). In the 1990s Toronto-based Canadian publishers

took an increasing global outlook through the transnational institution of first the Free

Trade Agreement with the United States in 1988 and subsequently the North

American Free Trade Agreement in 1994. In the late 1990s this led to the significant

merger of Doubleday, Knopf Canada and Bantam Canada into Random House, owned

by the German media conglomerate Bertelsmann (Wright 46). Although opposed by a

nationwide syndicate of small presses in Canada, the merger was approved by the

federal government and has foreshadowed a number of similar global shifts in media

ownership. The increasing foreign control of ostensibly Canadian publishing houses

and imprints, whilst Canadian editorial offices remain in Toronto, has led certain

critics to point to a rising 'foreign-owned-press' monopoly in national literary prizes.

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Stephen Henighan's criticism suggests that Toronto itself, and its large literary output, is compromised by this complex local and national accommodation of multi-national publishers. Henighan posits that the Giller Prize's heavy association with large multinational companies constitutes a loss of national recognition, and implicitly attacks Toronto for hosting the prize and the multinational publishers:

> Year after year the vast majority of the books shortlisted for the Giller came
> from the triumvirate of publishers owned by the Bertelsmann Group: Knopf
> Canada, Doubleday Canada and Random House Canada. Like the three
> musketeers, this trio is in fact a quartet: Bertelsmann also owns 25 percent of
> McClelland & Stewart, and now manages M&S's marketing. From 1994 to
> 2004, all the Giller winners, with the exception of Mordecai Richler, lived
> within a two-hour drive of the corner of Yonge and Bloor. (*Afterlife* 272)

Such criticisms of multinational publishing companies overlook the role of Canadian editors based in Toronto tasked with publishing Canadian material for these presses. Furthermore, Henighan's portrayal of McClelland and Stewart as a fourth international-owned press seems to be disingenuous. A crucial part of the company's recent history has seen the publisher become three-quarters owned and run by the University of Toronto.[1] Henighan's gesture to the stake Random House has in McClelland and Stewart is part of his distaste for "the flagship institution of corporatized publishing" (278) as opposed presumably to independent, Canadian owned publishing houses.

Henighan's comments follow on from his previous essay collection that condemned this foreign-owned publishing concentration and again located 'invasive' commercial concerns as representative of Toronto, construing "a big-business dogma that reduces literature to a commodity and drowns a coast-to-coast Canadian culture

in the local obsessions of one metropolitan centre" (*When Words* 86). The problem with this analysis is the identification of all of Toronto as signifying the commercial compromise of Canadian content in literary work. The Canadianness and the local identity of Toronto are elided in the processes of making Toronto symbolize global concerns. This has clearly been extrapolated to the extent that even authors living within the Toronto area are inferred to be a part of the same powerful signifying system. Shifting the fear of the multinational to the fear of American capital and cultural production, such concerns also play into a perception that Toronto is, as Wyndham Lewis claimed, "said to be the most American of Canadian cities" (77). Although Henighan acknowledges that Bertelsmann publishes literature that engages with Toronto, he persists in suggesting that the overall structural bias of multi-national publishing in Toronto points towards a masking of Canadian content for commercial gain: "I think unfortunately it's a complex that has spilled into the Toronto psyche" (Personal Interview). Suggesting that such commercial concerns are immediately attached to invasive global companies both simplifies the way multinational companies function and subsumes alternative local perspectives. Wholeheartedly nationalist rebuttals can be sited in the local but this can foster the opposing problem, in assuming that Toronto stands for Canada. Instead the local identity of Toronto needs to be seen as the negotiating point, or the meeting place for such discourses and notions of power.

The novelist Matt Cohen has suggested that the perception of Toronto as a powerful cultural centre overlooks the extent to which the city as a whole is not a part of this power:

> Toronto dominates English Canadian culture merely in the sense that it is the
> centre of the media – that it is the place from which the dominant images of

television, films, magazines and books are distributed. But the place of origin of those images is rarely Toronto. (58)

Although Toronto's industrial makeup may well ensure it is construed as a cultural power centre, Cohen emphasises that the wider notion of Toronto as a material and lived space is not a beneficiary of this power. Canadian literary criticism has often operated under the assumption that Toronto is largely to be addressed as the symbolic power centre, and has ignored direct representations of the city as simply further supporting such claims to cultural centrality within the Canadian nation state. One example of this is the lack of attention paid to the city in thematic criticism, of which Margaret Atwood's *Survival* is emblematic. Recent re-readings of *Survival* have sought to suggest otherwise. Coral Ann Howells and Eva-Marie Kröller underline how *Survival* "mentions immigrant urban fictions of the 1950s and 1960s by several writers of Caribbean, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Jewish and Irish origin" (48). Howells and Kröller's observation serves to highlight how the discussion of urban literature within Canadian literary criticism has often been presented through a rubric of multiculturalism. When, in *Survival,* Atwood's attention turns solely to depictions of Toronto, the city is viewed – through Morley Callaghan's short story, 'Last Spring They Came Over' – as implicitly disloyal. The story addresses two fictional British immigrants to Toronto, who work as reporters for a Toronto newspaper. Atwood paraphrases the story, emphasising that both protagonists, brothers, retain colonial attitudes in Toronto:

> Emotionally they remain tourists, commenting on the ways of the natives in their letters home but unable to fathom them. They make no real contact with the country, nor do they seem to expect anything from it, apart from souvenirs. (*Survival* 181).

Despite their removed positions, the brothers have clearly lived and worked in the city. However, in Atwood's relating of the story, they make "no real contact with the country," despite their employ and their one journey of note to Niagara Falls. The entry of 'Canada,' and nationalism into Atwood's analysis ensures that the fictional evocation of Toronto is seen as essentially non-Canadian, failing to stand metonymically for Canada in the manner that images of survival against the wilderness achieve.

Other approaches to Canadian literature in the wake of thematic criticism turned further away from the urban, and more pointedly, representations of Toronto. The work of the thematic critics such as Atwood, Warren Talman and DG Jones, was derided for valuing works "according to their ability to record place and time" (Lecker *Making it Real* 34). However, the attendant focus of subsequent criticism on literary form and theory kept discussions of national space in operation. Frank Davey's essay 'Surviving the Paraphrase' symbolises a large part of this. Davey contends that the debate over inferences of the national neglect literary form, and focus on place leads to undue emphasis that literary work "can be 'explained' by reference to the geography and climate of the country" (*Surviving* 6). Nevertheless, Davey reintroduces place by scaling down from the national to the regional, positing that localities and specificity have been elided in national criticism:

> In regional literature too, Canada has a more than sufficient body of work for the study of a particular, intrinsically interesting literary phenomenon. In fact it is not unfair to say that the bulk of Canadian literature is regional before it is national – despite whatever claims Ontario or Toronto writers may make to represent a national vision. The regional consciousness may be characterized by specific attitudes to language and form, by specific kinds of imagery, or by

language and imagery that in some ways correlate with the geographic

features of the region. (10).

The weighting of Davey's argument suggests that Ontario and Toronto writers

primarily claim to be 'national literature'. Toronto, in Davey's scheme, is precluded

from study because it represents the heartland, the centre of publishing and literary

power, which then overshadow the other specificities of regional subjectivity.

Davey's scheme could be inverted to analyse how literary depictions of Toronto

constitute a regional consciousness, however in Davey's theory attending to

depictions of Toronto would only exacerbate the already undue influence that authors

in Toronto seem to wield. Davey's agenda therefore moves literary criticism further

away from Toronto's symbolic economy and consequently further away from

addressing those images engaged in Toronto's material and lived spaces.

Linda Hutcheon's articulation of a 'Canadian postmodern' has also dominated

much Canadian literary criticism, and helped frame criticism's conditional address of

literary depictions of Toronto. Hutcheon's examination of Canadian literature deploys

a spatial framework, noting that imbalanced notions of power and agency are often

prominent in their spatial figuration. This view is summed up in the term "ex-centric"

space, whereby previously marginalised standpoints such as female-centred

perception write back to the assumed centre. Hutcheon positions her work alongside

the renewed interest -- not in the general, universal, central -- but in the

socially and historically specific, the particular, the de-centred (or ex-centric)

of our culture: the local, the regional, the ethnic, the female. ("Feminism and

Postmodernism" 25)

Similarly to Davey, Hutcheon wishes to closely examine marginalised areas of

Canadian literature; however this does not immediately preclude depictions of

Toronto. One of Hutcheon's prime case studies of the 'ex-centric' Canadian postmodern novel is Michael Ondaatje's *In The Skin of a Lion*. Hutcheon frames the novel as an intervention into a known central base of knowledge with a new awareness of class and race. Ondaatje's novel is seen as amending our knowledge of "the names of the rich (Ambrose Small) and the politically powerful (R.C. Harris, city commissioner)" with "the names of the peripheral, of the women of the rich (Small's mistress), or of the anonymous workers (who built the structures ordered by Harris)" ("Ex-Centric" 133). This analysis is insightful; however it might be pertinent to question to whom the names of RC Harris and Ambrose Small were 'known'. Furthermore, Ondaatje's rewriting of both of these characters does as much to rescue a sense of Harris and Small as it does to re-address class and gender in Toronto's history. Hutcheon's wish to de-centre, to rescue the particular, at this scale of literary mapping, figures a sense of otherwise neglected depictions of Toronto in literature and criticism as central. The same can be seen in Ondaatje's depiction of the Bloor Street Viaduct. In Hutcheon's review, Ondaatje associates the viaduct with "the dreams and visions of the powerful" and in turn figures the bridge as a known symbol of Toronto power ("Ex-Centric" 133). However, Ondaatje's part in himself giving the bridge this symbolic power is neglected in Hutcheon's reading. Richard Dennis notes that before Ondaatje's novel, "Bloor Street Viaduct cannot be said to have symbolised Toronto to itself, let alone to the world. It was rarely the subject of fine art or popular advertising (*Cities* 18). After the unveiling of a plaque on the bridge dedicated to *In The Skin of a Lion*, a local journalist, Peter Kuitenbrouwer, was inspired to suggest "no Toronto author has done a better job of breathing life into our landmarks than Michael Ondaatje" ("Ondaatje Breathes").[2] For Hutcheon then, the local is interesting only as far as it is a marginal local. Meanwhile, Toronto's perceived centrality in the

symbolic map of literary power dissuades critics, as in Hutcheon's work, from viewing local representations of Toronto as marginal.

Some examination of representations of Toronto has entered criticism through the prism of what we might equate with Hutcheon's 'ex-centric' categories. Literary criticism engaged in approaching the subjective geographies of feminism, multiculturalism and postcolonialism has underpinned most approaches to literary depictions of Toronto. Although still far from comprehensive, a number of articles have arisen attached to individual author's portrayals of particular Toronto geographies. Familiar subjects in literary periodicals and collections include Margaret Atwood's feminist Torontos[3], Michael Ondaatje's postcolonial Torontos[4] and Austin Clarke's immigrant Torontos.[5] The same authors may also be examined through switching these paradigms, with Atwood, for example, also studied for her postcolonial Torontos.[6] Where these approaches find commonality is in their desire to read a depiction of Toronto through one of these specific lenses, aiding an understanding of subjective geographies more generally. Each approach is however based on a notion of marginalization or otherness which sets up a powerful myth of an otherwise underexamined central Toronto. As with Hutcheon's theorisation of Ondaatje's 'ex-centric' Toronto, each theory resists a broader sense of local identities which may be in dialogue within each text, and most often fits into a broader scheme of work on the author in question. It is perhaps for this reason that subsequent readings of Atwood's literary Torontos have tended to draw many of these approaches together. Howells' recent work illustrates this referring to work which positions Atwood's Torontos alongside the notion of the global city and going on to establish a reading that "mediates between feminized and globalized positions, for though I wish to stress immigrancy and nomadism, my emphasis is on the

relationality between ... women" ("Margaret Atwood's Discourse" 204). Howells

therefore recognises that each of Atwood's Torontos are multiple, and that this

requires new theoretical combinations to consider multiplicity in dialogue.[7]

A more prominent avenue for representations of Toronto to re-enter Canadian

discourse has emerged as part of a wider discussion of the lack of urban imagery in

Canadian literature. Sherrill Grace gestures to this absence explaining it as the

national artistic mind's aversion to the urban: "there is something in the Canadian

psyche that finds the city an uncongenial metaphor or landscape – it is a rural, rather

than an urban, perspective that governs much of our best writing" (194).[8] In working

against literary criticism's dominance by wilderness and rural perspectives,

contemporary Canadian criticism has sought to engage with urban literary

imaginaries. However such criticism must then address the specificity of each urban

locality. Canadian urban settlements are diverse, associated with differing regions,

histories of immigration, economies and have varying densities of local publishing

operations. Justin Edwards and Douglas Ivison note in their landmark collection

Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities, that Canadian notions of the urban are

far from defined. Edwards and Ivison suggest:

> The creation of the City of Kawartha Lakes, an agglomeration of semi-rural
>
> towns and villages, for instance, is in fact, it might be argued, a denigration of
>
> the urban, reflective of the disdain and indifference with which the city and
>
> the urban continue to be treated in the Canadian political system and cultural
>
> imaginary. (3-4)

Whilst this example may ensure that the particular is a prominent part of criticism it is

also worth underlining that the Canadian political system is a national force in the

lives of Canadian cities, meaning that there are indeed commonalities to the Canadian

urban experience. The national framework is therefore present within the citylife of Toronto as much as it is within its literature. Thus the real impetus of Edwards and Ivison's collection of essays is in its call for Canadian literary criticism to "focus on the materiality and specificity of ... cities and the experience of urbanism as a way of life in Canada" (12). The national is a part of Toronto's ongoing material specificity as much as its symbolic economy.

Recent criticism that looks to situate Toronto's literary representations within a context of global media, migration and politics must therefore engage with the national. Paralleling the trends of the field, exemplified in Kit Dobson's *Transnational Canadas*, Myles Chilton has recently examined Toronto in Atwood's *Cat's Eye* as a global city. Chilton edges towards a conclusion where Atwood's Torontonians "have had their traditional, national histories evacuated by the city's global turn" (57). However, this approach, indicative of Chilton's wider insight into the separation of the national and the global reiterates the same false dichotomy that Davey concludes his analysis with in *Post-National Arguments*. In keeping with a global sense of material space, if not readership, Davey suggests that in several Canadian novels "transnational meanings tend to be granted priority over local and national ones" (*Post-National* 264). Foreshadowing Henighan's concerns, Davey sees the global as downplaying national discourse. Such oppositional ideas of national and global within the local neglect that both forces exist in dialogue in material spaces and often productively so in literary imaginaries. To some extent Davey, Chilton, Dobson and Henighan seem aware of this, and therefore to still gesture to distinct oppositionality might be seen as strategic. In the same vein as the ex-centric subjective geographies, there is a need to trace an oppositional power in order to bring

a particular sense of Toronto to light, whether that is a version of its national, gendered, cultural or global geography.

Unfortunately these oppositions, when read in Toronto's literary geography, keep in play and even reinforce a number of conflicting stereotypes of Toronto. Attempting to see Toronto as a Canadian city invokes the ire that the city might wish to stand in for the nation as a whole.[9] Analysis considering the global-city's predominance over national conditions reinforces the myth that Toronto is neither a Canadian city, nor a city specific enough for global audiences to identify with. The idea that depictions of Toronto will not resonate globally is in practice hard to justify. Henighan, amongst others, provides anecdotal evidence that literary agents and publishers currently hold this view, restricting the publication and circulation of literature that represents Toronto.[10] Others might consider this viewpoint to be strictly historical, exemplified by the coded depictions of Toronto in Morley Callaghan's fiction through the mid-twentieth-century.[11] Certainly the global recognition of Margaret Atwood's Toronto-set literature, the nationwide readership of Michael Ondaatje's *In The Skin of A Lion*,[12] the use of Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* in the British school curriculum, and more recently the Booker-longlisting of Michael Redhill's *Consolation* in the UK, suggest that literary depictions of Toronto do not hamper a book's success. Atwood, Ondaatje and Redhill are prominent names in a long catalogue of authors who have depicted Toronto in their literary works.[13] Perhaps surprisingly then, Atwood and Ondaatje have both cited personal and external resistance to their initial fictional engagements with Toronto. Atwood, writing for an American audience in the *New York Times*, admits that her own depiction of Toronto has been tentative:

> I set my first published novel in Toronto (where else was I to set it?) but was
> so embarrassed by the location that I never actually named the city and
> disguised the street names as best I could. Everyone knew that real novels
> were not set in Toronto. ("The City Rediscovered")

Similarly, Ondaatje suggests that whilst being aware of Toronto's literary history he
was met with resistance in developing his own fictional Toronto:

> I read Hugh Garner's Cabbagetown to discover his version of Toronto -- it is
> still powerful and contemporary, and it is honestly thrilling to see it on sale at
> Home Hardware in Cabbagetown today. But I also remember being told when
> I began to write that it was commercial suicide to set a thriller in Toronto or
> any Canadian city as opposed to New York or Miami or Kiev. ("In the Skin of
> a Lion Bookmark.")

These insights suggest that these varying symbolic versions of Toronto are important,
given that their circulation inflects both the critical reception and production of
representations of Toronto.

Local literary commentators in Toronto, concerned with Toronto's literary
depictions have also reflected such anxieties. Various journalists and book reviewers
have continued to emphasise the absence of Toronto in literature. Philip Marchand
does so by comparing Toronto as a literary city to London and Paris and finds the
results underwhelming: "What would Paris have been without Balzac? London
without Dickens? In the real estate of the mind, they would have been undeveloped
properties — like Toronto" (C05). Geoff Pevere reiterates Marchand's conclusion
suggesting that international travel makes Toronto literature seem small to non-
existent:

As I read books that trade in the particular histories and mythologies of cities … I'm always struck by the scarcity of this kind of literature sprung from Toronto. I'm not talking about books merely set here, though even those are conspicuously under-represented considering the city's size and state of constant flux, but those that spring from a certain shared idea of what the city is. ("Toronto's literary landscape")

Pevere's argument falls down as it fails to address the existing literature. Praising Redhill's *Consolation* and alluding to recent work by "new and recent arrivals," Pevere's comparison to other literary cities seems concerned with the quality and the communal investment in prospective imagined Torontos. The first part of this is notoriously hard to pin down, with criteria for literary quality opening up a whole discussion of its own, equally fed by the cultural context of the critic. The second part, relating to the concern for a "shared idea of what the city is," to a certain extent, is created within the relationship of author and reading community in any existent literary depiction of Toronto. In this respect Pevere's call may equally be read as a need for a new reading practice towards literary depictions of the city. Abstract discussions of supposedly absent literary depictions remove us from discussing tangible and insightful existing literary depictions. In turn, unsupported notions of a shared idea of Toronto can override the wider recognition that Toronto is made up of numerous Torontos each with equal claim to veracity, and each operating at the same time.

* * *

Recent criticism that begins to address the city's literature responds to the city's dramatic material changes. Toronto is no longer the same city it was forty years

ago. Caroline Rosenthal's recent study, emblematic of the growing focus on Toronto

literature, emphasises this shift through demographic change:

> While until the 1970s Toronto was regarded as a stifling and boring city –
>
> more an extended small town than a metropolis – waves of new immigrants,
>
> who changed the social texture of the city as much as its literature, have since
>
> made Toronto into a polyphonous city of many cultures. (32)

Although contemporary descriptions of Toronto as the world's most multicultural city

have been shown to be hard to substantiate, nearly half the city's population were

born outside Canada ("2006 census").[14] Along with the city's changing diversity,

other material change is reflected in an influx of new arts buildings in the city's

downtown. Each building, often designed by internationally acclaimed architects,

demonstrates a newfound prosperity in the city underlined by private investment in

arts organisations.[15] One such outcome of philanthropy has been the establishment of

the Diaspora Dialogues program, funded by businessman Alan Broadbent's Maytree

Foundation.[16] In turn, local public engagement with the city's urban environment has

grown notably, illustrated by the work of grassroots activist group the Toronto Public

Space Committee, the local urbanism magazine *Spacing* and Jane's Walk; the city's

most explicit tribute to the work of urban activist and late Toronto resident Jane

Jacobs.[17]

Amy Lavender Harris, a contributing editor to *Spacing* and an organiser of

literary walking tours for Jane's Walk, has recently written the first study of

Toronto's literature. Stemming from a research project at York University which has

seen Harris publicly responding to literary critics like Marchand for overlooking the

existing body of Toronto literature, *Imagining Toronto* represents a huge step towards

documenting the city's literary history. It is perhaps then notable that in the midst of a

new Toronto, Harris's significant achievement is in charting its literary heritage.

Harris's study is also significant for being published by Toronto small-press,

Mansfield Press. The press, run by Denis De Klerck, is branded as local, community

engaged and in opposition to "multinational publishing companies" ("About

Mansfield Press"). Harris's study follows the press's ethos, seeking to strike a balance

between a popular history and a cultural geography of Toronto's literature. Citing an

array of literary depictions of the city, Harris's text has a number of aims:

> It looks closely at the images and experiences that recur most hauntingly in
>
> literary works, and asks: what versions of Toronto are these authors trying to
>
> convey, and why do they write about them? What is it about Toronto that
>
> prompts such a diverse outpouring of literature? What images and experiences
>
> haunt the city's literary muse? What stories remain unwritten, and when – and
>
> how – will they be told? (32)

Such aims perhaps betray the study's emphasis on geography over literature, or to put

it another way, the study's overdetermined idea of how literary depictions function.

As with Pevere's questioning of the 'unwritten' Toronto, this thesis will not dwell on

which aspects of the city's material geography have yet to be evoked in literature, as

to do so seems to presume artistic response as a cataloguing or inventory impulse. In

seeking to retain a sense of mystery and complexity in the multiple perceptions of

Toronto and the act of engaging with the city in literature, this thesis, in chapter one,

develops a methodology sensitive to the meeting of Toronto and literature. Harris's

coverage of texts and her attempts to engage with the material and cultural city behind

textual production lend her study a suggestive framework, and one which this thesis

seeks to build on. Rosenthal's recent study of New York and Toronto literature also

draws upon Harris's work, noting that: "the imagining Toronto project really is on the

rise" (33), going on to articulate Harris and her own shared context of Canadian urban literary criticism. Rosenthal's study develops Harris's work by expanding on the varying national/non-national sentiments symbolised by Toronto, and New York. Where Rosenthal's own methodology differs from Harris's, is in its return to the discourse of subjective geographies. Although the study's close readings of Carol Shields' *Unless* and Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* attend to Toronto's material geography, it largely operates through a framework of female urban space, the "*flâneuse*," and ethnicity (8).

As part of this thesis's exploration of Torontos in literary texts, each text within the study has a unique relationship with the material city via the City of Toronto Book Awards. The Book Awards recognises annually "authors of books of literary or artistic merit that are evocative of Toronto" ("City of Toronto, Toronto Book Awards - About the awards"). Both as a prize-giving institution and a public readership, the awards have a material connection to the city. Run since 1974 by the municipal government, the awards traditionally draw their jurors from citizens who express an interest in participating. In turn the awards have engaged a city-wide-public by holding events in the council offices, participating in 'The Word on the Street' street-festival and more recently linking into the library-based One Book Toronto reading project.[18] Considering the work done by these city-council-led schemes, local communities can often see themselves refracted through the ways literary works are framed and interpreted. The awards suggest just one avenue by which literary texts engaged with Toronto circulate and signify within Toronto. This thesis situates a close examination of four contemporary texts – three novels and one collection of poetry – in this symbolic circulation, considering the roles of publication, review and authorship in influencing the varying spaces of literary

Torontos. In turn, the thesis seeks to keep in play the conflicting presumptions involved in Toronto's symbolic resonance by focusing on each literary depiction of Toronto with the knowledge that it is overlaid with multiple specific notions of power. Ultimately, each literary depiction of Toronto is situated in the materiality and specificity of Toronto, and so is imbricated in multiple tracings of national, local and global space.

1. Critical Literary Geography

In recent injunctions to pay attention to the urban in Canadian literature no one critical approach to the area seems prevalent.[1] Justin Edwards and Douglas Ivison's *Downtown Canada* collects a number of approaches as a corrective to this relative absence of urban focus in Canadian literary criticism. Central to Edwards and Ivison's own claims is an injunction that new thought on Canadian literary imaginaries provides a departure from previous attempts to analyse particular symbolism and meaning in Canadian texts: "the spatial theory informing the work of [W.H.] New and [Graham] Huggan allows us to escape the dead end of the place-based criticism often associated with the cultural nationalist critics of the 1960s and 1970s while insisting upon the specificities of Canadian spatial experiences" (5). Huggan himself frames this process, suggesting in the early 1990s a "recent shift of emphasis in the 'literary geography' of Canada … from the isolation and definition of place to the attempted coordination of a series of movements through space" (*Territorial* 58). The critical work of both New and Huggan is a testament to the influence of the spatial turn across the humanities, as indeed are many of the essays within *Downtown Canada*. Such work is part of Canadian literary criticism's increasingly nuanced discussion of space and place and, perhaps counterintuitively, a retooled and reinvigorated analysis of place.[2] Where too often the historical terms of reference have been solely national, now Canadian criticism is increasingly aware of the transnational. However both tendencies have focused on the national and transnational at the expense of focussing on localities. This thesis uses aspects of contemporary Canadian criticism whilst developing a unique methodology based on Andrew Thacker's conceptions of a critical literary geography and Henri Lefebvre's notions of space as produced and textured.

To augment a Canadian critical inheritance of approaches to space and place, this thesis focuses on a methodology put forward as a result of the wider spatial turn across the humanities. The spatial turn is widely understood to be a cross-disciplinary movement to understand the power of space and place in re-reading notions of temporality. It is therefore not divorced from time or a sense of history, but very much involved in charting the geography of divergent temporal schemes. Various disciplines have shown a marked departure to "assert that space is a social construction relevant to the understanding of different histories of human subjects and to the production of cultural phenomena" (Ward and Arias 1). Therefore, since the spatial turn, literature and geography have found themselves as disciplines engaging with similar theory and issues. One such issue is that of examining place and literature together, that is to say place in literature and literature in place. A number of approaches to this issue have been termed, as Huggan gestured to in *Territorial Disputes*, literary geography.

Literary geography has a varied history, and a similar variety of meanings across critical usage. Virginia Woolf deploys the term to refer to works of literary tourism in a 1905 review for *The Times Literary Supplement* and this same meaning is still in currency, used more recently by Nicola Watson: "a number of cross-disciplinary strands of investigation have begun to converge suggestively upon literary geography" (5). Watson notes that the term denotes an area, or a productive border between the two disciplines. Literary geography is still then an emerging field, made more complex by the competing parts in its interdisciplinary nature.[3] Sheila Hones has neatly illustrated this tension by pointing to "the question of whether its key terms refer to discipline or to subject matter" (1303). When geography is the dominant partner, textual qualities and the literary can often be sidelined.

Allen G. Noble and Ramesh Dhussa display just this tendency towards literary output when reviewing geographical approaches to literary geography:

> Using modern terminology, literary creations might be considered as "databanks" consisting of subtle and elusive bits of information stored by sensitive, perceptive, and imaginative writers, who may respond to stimuli and landscapes in a different fashion than academically-trained geographers. (50)

Although this documentary reading of literature for its geographical insight might seem limited, a geographical engagement with literature can also be productive. Much is gained from seeing landscapes through textual or literary terms. Andrew Thacker characterises this critical approach through the work of Derek Gregory, and one could also add Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove, given their joint focus on the constructed, framed nature of landscape ("The Idea" 60). Gregory, Daniels and Cosgrove address the structural meaning of place symbolism, including the textual representations and text-like structures of depicting place. As Daniels and Cosgrove make plain in their own discussion of the iconography of landscape: "To understand a built landscape ... it is usually necessary to understand written and verbal representations of it, not as 'illustrations', images standing outside it, but as constituent images of its meaning or meanings" (1).

This geographical focus builds upon Raymond Williams *The Country and The City*. Williams' work looked to the English and Welsh geographies of his education alongside a deep literary history to analyse the role of rural and urban place in English culture. Whilst the work approaches English history and literature, the model of cultural analysis deployed is significant for how it joins concerns of style and form with a feel for the extra-textual role of place. In turn, *The Country and The City* also foreshadows the situation in which Canadian literary criticism finds itself:

English attitudes to the country, and to ideas of rural life, persisted with

extraordinary power, so that even after the society was predominantly urban in

its literature, for a generation, was still predominantly rural; and even in the

twentieth century, in an urban and industrial land, forms of the older ideas and

experiences still remarkably persist. (*The Country* 2)

This observation of a lag in sensibility is part of Williams' broader understanding of

history as a continuous negotiation between emergent, dominant and residual

sensibilities, which he termed "structures of feeling" ("Dominant" 356). Williams'

critical understanding of how and where the emergent negotiates with cultural

production leads to an appreciation of how textual innovation is triggered. For

example, when discussing James Joyce' *Ulysses*, Williams comments that the

originality of the text is partially garnered from its linguistic shift to accommodate

emergent sensibilities: "It is a necessary innovation if this way of seeing –

fragmentary, miscellaneous, isolated – is to be actualised on the senses in a new

structure of language" (*The Country* 245). Williams then is an initial proponent of the

point of view that cultural sensibilities manifested in material geographies can lead to

formal literary innovation.

When the literary aspect of literary geography arrives at the fore, questions of

textual form are addressed. Neal Alexander has termed these recent critical

approaches towards a literary geography as those "which attend to the articulation of

material and metaphorical spaces in literary texts, and map the relations between site

or location and literary forms" (17). Given such a broad scope, Alexander notably

prefaces this description by describing these approaches as "various and rather fluid

critical formulations" (17). It is therefore valuable to turn to Thacker's concept of a

"critical literary geography" for some clarification ("The Idea" 56). Thacker posits

four basic foundations for a rigorous literary geography, some of which resonate with the Canadian literary critical discussion. These foundations can be summarised as attention to: spatial metaphor, representational space, textual space and maps.

Spatial Metaphor

In the first instance, a critical approach needs to appreciate "the metaphorical nature of the spaces being discussed in literary and cultural studies" ("The Idea" 62). This is the contextual discourse of describing space and place. Taking the critical spatial rhetoric of mapping, centre-margin and counter-mapping as metaphorical, Thacker identifies a tendency for this analysis to become reductive if it is seen as the sole spatial framework deployed. Therefore, Thacker looks to approach a more complex sense of space where such metaphors are part of multiple ways of seeing.[4] These metaphors are not to be dismissed, but are to be interrogated for their material and historical construction and their powerful ability to shape conceptions of space and place. This approach is influenced by the work of Henri Lefebvre and his conception of how metaphorical or abstract terms are engaged with "the practico-sensory realm of social space" (15). Lefebvre suggests this only after himself agonising over the recognition that literary texts, though engaged with real spaces, also contain space "everywhere and in every guise: enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about" (15). Lefebvre himself never resolves this approach to literary space; however *The Production of Space* indicates a number of pathways which such analysis may take. Thacker's use of Lefebvre indicates his wider prominence in reconfiguring ideas of space and place, and this chapter will necessarily return to discuss the schematics of social space in some depth.

At this level of Thacker's scheme, studies of Canadian literature must recognise the ongoing role of spatial metaphors in Canadian criticism. In readdressing the notion of place and space in Canadian literature, Warley, Ball and Viau gesture towards these: "particular concepts that are specific to Canadian representations of spaces and spatialized identities tend to recur: wilderness, garrison, north, region" (3). In turn the authors question "why, when the majority of Canadians live in large and small urban centers, cities and city life are so often absent in our critical conversations" (3). In some senses part of an initial answer to this lies in those dominant spatial metaphors, and their historical and material construction by an urban population. Caroline Rosenthal has termed this set of metaphors as a Canadian tradition "of imagining space" going on to echo Warley, Ball and Viau by the brief summary: "Canada as a northern nation, imaginatively dwelling on spaces of the wild, unfathomable, and on the small town, rather than the metropolis" (5). The garrison and the wilderness become particularly charged terms in examining the Canadian equivalent of Williams' city and country division, or as New has reconfigured it for the Canadian context, the city/non-city binary (156).

The foundational text for such dominant spatial metaphors in Canadian criticism is Northrop Frye's 1965 essay, 'Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*.'[5] In Frye's text Canadian identity is subsumed in a necessarily geographic project, where Canada "is less perplexed by the question 'Who am I?' than by some such riddle as 'Where is here?'" (*The Bush Garden* 220). In turn Frye develops this geographical project into the 'garrison mentality' whereby Canadian literature is underpinned by "[s]mall and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological 'frontier,' separated from one another and from their American and British cultural sources" (225). Those critiques that dwell on the notion of this ever-

present frontier, such as Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, substantiate the role of the wilderness in Canadian literature at the expense of the urban glance that Frye goes on to gesture to. It is less recognised that Frye actually foregrounds a societal movement in Canada where "the centre of Canadian life moves from the fortress to the metropolis" (*Bush Garden* 231). In doing so, Frye maintains that the garrison mentality remains but adapts to urban development, the frontier becomes an urban populace policing popular convention and the garrison becomes an avant-garde perceiving convention to be the enemy. Surprisingly in this concentric model Frye suggests that metropolitan life changes Canadian literature but stops short of seeing this as literary development, preferring instead to damn with faint praise "the literature it produces ... [as] rhetorical, an illustration or allegory of certain social attitudes" (231). Frye's consideration therefore shuns the solely literary for a cultural engagement with literature. In this approach Frye foreshadows the geographic approach to urban literature demonstrated by L. Anders Sandberg and John Marsh whereby literature is reduced to a sociological documentary function: "In realist novels, geographers may find social commentaries and experiential accounts as well as examples of the emergence of a Canadian national identity" (266).

Attention to more recent criticism and to contemporary literature challenges the assertions made by Frye's 'Conclusion.' There is an ongoing dialogue between fictional texts and the material world which Thacker sees as essential to challenging the assumptions of spatial metaphor. In applying this critical literary geography to modernist literature, Thacker emphasises that texts "creat[e] metaphorical spaces that try to make sense of ... material spaces" (*Moving Through Modernity* 3). Literary texts can temper and revise the critical traditions of imagining space, as can critical engagements with literary texts. The second point here is particularly important as it

illustrates the function of criticism in amending cultural understandings of spatial metaphor by highlighting important literary texts. It is for this reason that it will become necessary to situate the shifting depictions of Toronto literature within contemporary concerns of Canadian literary criticism. As the introduction makes clear, Toronto itself generates its own raft of specific spatial metaphors. How these metaphors intersect with and divert from the wider Canadian theory on a city/non-city binary should clarify conceptions of the material spaces of Toronto.

Representational Space

Thacker's second concern is with the representational aspect of text, and the varying scales and referentialities with which literary texts engage. Explicitly using Lefebvre, Thacker looks to pick apart the cultural depiction of "official organizations of space" and the aesthetics of space ("The Idea" 63). One application of this, Thacker suggests, is that a critical literary geography could analyse "the spatial histories of specific cities depicted in literary and cultural texts" (63). Cities in this sense can be understood as places, as spaces in wider transnational processes and as an accumulation of smaller places like cafes, streets, parks and neighbourhoods. All of these dimensions, whilst being co-present, have their own significant readable meanings. Thacker's signposting of Lefebvre, particularly his tri-partite scheme for understanding varying spatial productions, is an injunction to think more carefully about the ways in which space and place have been deployed. Lefebvre's scheme is a categorisation of kinds of space: the spatial practice of everyday life, the representation of space undertaken by official discourses and the representational space of art, of symbolic reading and of temporary alternatives to order (*The*

Production of Space 33). Such categories are helpful in establishing the interests at work in producing space. Although it is also worth mentioning that any distinctions are fleeting given that these spaces are produced simultaneously and are all interconnected.

Following Thacker's injunction to analyse the official city alongside the aesthetic city it is important therefore not to lose sight of the material city. However defining the material city can seem just as complex. Rob Shields points out that the city is constantly moving between metaphorical and material in that it is both visual and interactional: "'The city' is a slippery notion. It slides back and forth between an abstract idea and concrete material; between the abstract universal of 'The (ideal) City' and concrete particular of 'This (my) City'" ("Alternative Traditions" 235). Alluding to the city and its varying spatial dimensions, societal roles and composition can appear daunting. It is figured by both human density and technological facilities premised on information exchange. With this sort of problem in mind Richard Harris suggests "[o]ne of the most aggravating debates about cities, and certainly the most fundamental, is definitional: are they defined by their social relationships or their spatial forms? Some of the more persuasive writers have answered yes on both counts" (275). For Lefebvre, the answer would also be yes to both, but rather than leaving this as an unstructured retort, Lefebvre's scheme insists on the "*dialectical* interaction between spatial arrangements and social organisation" (Shields *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle* 157). A single aspect of cityspace not only coincides with multiple additional spaces but also has direct implications for and reactions to other spaces. The dynamic aspect of this "triple dialectic" (Soja xvii) implies the specificity of each specific urban locale, and resists positioning either a schematic hierarchy or an ideal equilibrium.

New's use of this dialectal understanding frames his study of land-language in *Land Sliding*. New posits that Lefebvre's dynamic schematic can serve to analyse the use of spatial metaphor in representational space. As such, New sees terminology for describing place and space in Canadian writing as far from neutral, rather, semiotically loaded, representing an "ongoing history of a culture's relations with place and space" (8). Although acknowledging that Canadian references are implicated in a discourse of cultural nationalism, New is then at pains to point out that there is a continuing and ongoing dialogue created by specific engagements with particular local places:

> The particular and local ... do not exist in a cultural and historical vacuum; they derive from conventions – and while they can and do often re-record these conventions whether for good or ill, they also counter and contend with them, re-claiming continuously the power of reality from the presumptions of knowledge. (11)

Taking New's deployment of Lefebvre on board, the city of Toronto can be seen as a site which is imbricated in national, transnational and local histories and cultures all of which are a part of the material city, and its engagement with representation. It is this engagement with representation, where the city meets a literary imaginary where Thacker's framework comes into focus.

Textual Space

The third part of Thacker's concept focuses more on the formal literary aspect of texts. Echoing Williams' views on the links between place and formal innovation,

Thacker proposes the term "textual space" to handle the meeting of the material space of the page and the social space of the lived environment:

> We should reconnect the formal properties of literary and cultural texts not
> only to the material spaces they depict, but also reverse the movement, and
> understand how social spaces dialogically help fashion the literary *forms* of
> texts ... *Literary texts represent social spaces, but social space shapes literary*
> *forms.* ("The Idea" 63)[6]

Here Thacker attempts to move literary analysis of text past considerations of how a familiar place may be revised or depicted within the text. Taking the fluidity of place and the social engagement of the text in dialogue, Thacker suggests that language and literary structure are both influenced by and part of Lefebvre's "social space." Such a view emphasises the experiential space in which a creative work comes to fruition, whether by direct representation or by artistic location. Understanding texts as located both in creation and publication, Thacker's conception of textual space allows for us to see literary texts as dynamic. Literary imaginaries, whether literary landscapes or cityscapes, are neither flat not disengaged, but instead are resonant with the formal and representational challenge of depicting complex spaces and places. Thacker suggests that formal development may come of this experiential engagement. Such a view is radically different to Frye's perspective on such engagements taking place in Canada.

Frye claims that "[w]hat the Canadian writer finds in his [sic] experience and environment may be new, but it will be new only as content: the form of his [sic] expression of it can take shape only from what he has read, not from what he has experienced" (*Bush Garden* 232). In short, for Frye, the formal aspects of literary work can only develop from a writer's familiarity with other writing. It is initially

implied that the development of form is therefore a universal issue and something it is impossible to locate. The only application of location to literary imaginaries can be to provide interesting content. However, when Frye goes on to make the same point to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) one aspect alters significantly. Frye suggests that: "Contemporary painting and writing, whatever the language, speak an international idiom, and the capitals where that idiom is established are still, as they have always been, the big centres, London, Paris, New York" ("Culture" 530). The idiom, literary form, is seen to be universal but underpinned by "big centres". Frye reveals that real culture can only achieve formal development in foreign cities, and not within a Canadian context. Therefore, Frye's analysis of space and place is drastically tempered by his acceptance of a colonial system which Canada, and therefore Canadian localities, cannot break free from. Frye's insistence that fully developed writing could not be achieved in Toronto, as it could in London or New York, provides a negative critical inheritance for writers and later Canadian critics alike.

Departing from Frye's investment in particular cities as sites of formal innovation, it has become a familiar assertion in more recent criticism to link all cities with such productivity. Approaches to the urban in literary geography that serve as surveys of Western literature often assert the proximity of literature and the city. However, the detail or theory of the relationship is not fleshed out. Richard Lehan asserts, in the ambitious *The City in Literature*, "the city and its literature share textuality – ... the ways of reading texts are analogous to the ways urban historians read the city. Shared are constructs built on assumptions about the mechanistic, the organic, the historical, the indeterminate, and the discontinuous" (8). This analogy highlights the interdisciplinarity of urban studies, however the object of study and the

approach receive no further clarification. Reading the city as a text might allow focus on the urban geography but subordinates the structures of text to metaphor. In turn the impact of representations of the city on its very construction is also popularly asserted: "[n]o city stands in bricks and mortar which is not also a space of the imagination or of representation" (Bridge and Watson 3). Drawing on these revised, universal notions of the influence of urban form on literary form, Amy Lavender Harris makes the same claim specifically concerning Toronto literature, whereby "our cities unfold not only in the building but in the telling of them" (13). How this process functions needs clarification. For Harris, the city unfolding in literature seems to be a patchwork parallel imagined city: whilst taking its reference from the material world it is accessed only in the act of reading and writing literature.

Thacker's emphasis on the interaction between literary form and place provides the tools to hone this vague, if accepted, relationship. To appreciate how the city's social space "intrudes upon the internal construction of spatial forms," Thacker suggests paying attention to the material structure of the text, for example: looking at typography, typesetting, layout, narrative structure and the relationship between depicted space and material space ("The Idea" 63). Although admitting it to be difficult to find evidence for suppositions on this relationship, Thacker concludes this point by urging literary studies to draw upon the geographical shifts in understanding space: "To investigate a novel as a spatial text must amount to more than simply considering how that text represents an interesting location" ("The Idea" 63).

Thacker's injunction proves crucial to thinking of place as both situated and multiply connected. John Clement Ball's contribution to the recent discussion of methodologies for addressing the city suggests that we need to address how transnational connections are both suggested by and embedded in situated texts. Ball

draws on Michel Foucault's "Of Other Spaces" to illustrate how fixity of place is bound together with networks of differing places and spaces, or, as Foucault notes, "our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein" (22). Ball's article suggests that cities in literature can illustrate this interpenetration, as the literary protagonists' mental mapping means "Toronto and London ... hide and reveal each other" ("Duelling" 188). This associative view of space and place can be taken further, past the overt narrative of transnational cities, to be seen in the specific structure and typesetting of a text. Editions of the same text published in differing countries will vary in their paratextual material, and as such the text's textual makeup will shift in response to its newly located publication context.

In examining transnational relationships, and their various power imbalances, it is also important to note the contribution of overtly postcolonial approaches to Canadian literature, and their concomitant focus on the place and space of the literary imaginary. Thacker is keen to point out that a critical literary geography need not be postcolonial in its framework although he does recognise that "the rise of postcolonial criticism has emphasised the significance of geography as a paradigm for understanding culture and power" ("The Idea" 58). Thacker's assertion is apt for this thesis given the current trend towards discussing the transnational in Canadian criticism. The diversity of approaches being developed by Canadian criticism towards the transnational and globalization is notable as an outgrowth of work on postcolonial power differentials.[7] Broadly this critical field addresses "the politics of the 'trans,' which through globalizing processes draws attention to the ways in which the nation is embedded in the global rather than stressing its distinctiveness" (Brydon 10). Although the scale models of how global space is figured and imagined differ, critical

work points to the awareness that situated experience is increasingly and imminently imbricated with transnational or global processes. In contemporary Canadian criticism the term transnational is often used interchangeably with that of globalization despite the political and economic baggage of the latter.[8] Kit Dobson points out that the term transnational can be seen as a more potent symbol of how "national entities are criss-crossed by the global order" (xii). However, this thesis often uses the term globalization as a means to privilege the local as it is situated in fluid relation to other localities, often before the nation and other nations.

Maps

Thacker's fourth term for investigation is mapping. Eager to look past the frequent metaphorical use of the term[9], Thacker points to new uses of maps to analyse literature as well as approaching the literary deployment of maps. The first approach is illustrated by gesturing to Franco Moretti's work, where the geography of canonical Western literature is questioned. Moretti's maps draw attention to the restrained production context of literary works in order to question the general understanding of colonial power in art, so well explained by Frye's faith in "big centres". Wary of the power of maps, and their claims to neutral clarity, Thacker suggests that an alternative approach would be to "return to the map as a set of material signs, and to understand what is at issue when a text employs an actual map as component of the narrative" ("The Idea" 64). Canadian criticism has often deployed the map as a metaphor for understanding canonical literature, and national identity. Atwood asserts in *Survival* that "[l]iterature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind. Our literature is one such map, if we can learn to read it as *our* literature, as the product of

who and where we have been" (26-27). In this instance the neutrality of the map is maintained, and the individual must shift to invest in the map's ownership. Thacker's material approach has a precursor in more recent Canadian criticism, in the work of Graham Huggan. Huggan's *Territorial Disputes* examines the topos of the map in Canadian literature, in comparison with Quebecois and Australian literatures. Huggan's methodology is tightly focused on the history of cartography and its application to fictional texts, or what Huggan terms "the conceptual maps of literature" (xv). Huggan draws on the surprisingly widespread depiction of maps in fiction as part of a widespread move to see place as multiple, fluid and personal.

This aspect of Thacker's scheme seems to skew the model for critical literary geography. Maps are no doubt important, but are subordinate to some of the broader concerns being dealt with in this engagement. Maps can be seen as a meeting of official notions of space with symbolic codes of meaning, and therefore are a part of the wider understanding of spaces of representation and representational space. As such, the map is one form of many coherent templates with which societies seek to understand space and place. To single out maps is to lose sight of other equally important material and symbolic methods of figuring space and place, such as photography or painting.[10] To single the map out at the level of primary constituent to a critical literary geography seems to give maps and mapping undue prominence. In Thacker's defence, the overall scheme is generative, and the focus on maps simply underscores the possibilities for rigorous thematic and material examination.

Representation of Space/ Spaces of Representation

34

Thacker's invocation of Lefebvre deserves a fuller explanation, and indeed has tangible consequences when read back into Thacker's framework. Lefebvre's own work on space as a continually produced material experience enables a more thorough understanding of what can be termed the issue of 'placelessness.' In Lefebvre's sketches of how space can be read in texts, the flexibility of spatial metaphor and spatial perception collide with the classic perception of space as abstract, not least on the literary page where the aesthetic conventions of publication and white paper emphasise at once the clarity and formula to textual production. Practising a critical literary geography relies on a sharp understanding of place and space, and their shifting meanings. Lefebvre's greatest contribution is in adapting the understanding of how we use the term 'space.' In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre highlights how "not so many years ago, the word 'space' had a strictly geometrical meaning: the idea it evoked was simply that of an empty area" (1). Departing from this, and from the vague idea of space as container, in both material and mental variations, Lefebvre looks to suggest a dynamic schematic that might apply to both the material world and a symbolic economy. Indeed as Lefebvre's model shows "each of these two kinds of space involves, underpins and presupposes the other" (14). An illustration of the logic Lefebvre sets out can be seen reflected in contemporary studies of literary space. Richard Dennis supplies such an understanding in his critical examination of *Cities in Modernity*. Dennis's comparative study of early twentieth-century Toronto fiction, and its corresponding networks of apartments and city dwellings shows how literary innovation can engage with the material city. In doing so Dennis acknowledges: "Space is not simply a container in which modern life is played out. Rather, the ways we conceptualise and operationalise space are products of political, economic, social and cultural processes" (1).

Space and place are then in tension between flux and fixity, between shifting processes of definition and the legibility of the defined. As such, place is continually unsettled and resettled as a multitude of spaces compete to be seen, read or legitimated.[11] With this in mind it is important to realise that discourses of placelessness are equally loaded. The denial of place is also the denial of fixity. Depending on how this assault on place is framed it might serve a liberating or oppressing end. Such a process might dissolve accreted, homogenous or powerful meanings into a flux of spatial processes, but it might also override individual perceptions by reverting to imagining place as a homogenising blank space, a geometric, abstract container. The danger in this act can be seen more clearly in a consideration of Lefebvre's socially produced "social space".

Through social space what constitutes the local for Lefebvre is seen at once as place and space:

> the *places* of social space are very different from those of natural space in that they are not simply juxtaposed: they may be intercalated, combined, superimposed – they may even sometimes collide. Consequently the local ... does not disappear, for it is never absorbed by the regional, national or even worldwide level. (88)

The multiplicity of social space, which highlights the tentative fixity of place, also includes "individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements, and flows and waves – some interpenetrating, others in conflict, and so on" (88). Lefebvre's marshalling of this multiple and divergent subject into a group of definitions greatly enhances the potential for critical literary geography. Under the rubric of social space, Lefebvre constructs a tri-partite system of: spatial practices; representations of space and representational spaces. Lefebvre defines the first

category of 'spatial practices' to mean those activities closest to everyday routines, the use of space in all its varying divisions. The example Lefebvre gives is "the daily life of a tenant in a government-subsidized high-rise housing project" (38), although he is at pains to point out the multiplicity of the category. The second notion of 'representations of space' describes official ideas of space, sanctioned by power. These spaces are "the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (38), and as such are seen as the "dominant space in any society" (39). Whilst it can often be difficult to pin down the ideology of such ideas, these can also be the most accessible given their frequent demonstration in plans, monuments and official zoning schemes.

The final category "representational spaces' is reserved for the meta-level of coded space, whereby space is accessed through "its associated images and symbols" (39). Shields suggests that this category might be better translated as 'Spaces of Representation' given that Nicholson-Smith's translation makes it "difficult to comprehend in relation to other aspects of Lefebvre's terminology" (*Love and Struggle* 161). Switching the emphasis as per Shields translation yields a further emphasis on these spaces as self-aware of their status as representation. For Lefebvre such "spaces made (produced) to be read are the most deceptive and tricked-up imaginable. The graphic impression of readability is a sort of *trompe-l'oeil* concealing strategic intentions and actions" (143). Therefore, this category can be seen as directly including literary works, produced for readership and infused with multiple levels of meaning. Elsewhere however Lefebvre is less open to the deception of artistry, preferring to designate spaces of representation to "writers…who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe" (39). Few writers can be said to approach their work to simply describe things. Even then, description itself cannot limit itself to a denotative

function but must always play with the connotative function, the manner in which symbols interact with various located everyday and official significations. Inadvertently, Lefebvre's terminology for writers helps us to realise that when taking account of detail, of street names, or even archetypal buildings and streetscapes, these actions are seldom neutral and sundered from the worlds of social, economic and political meaning.

Noah Richler has suggested that the "Canadian conviction that the country is Nowhere has been a trait of its psycho-geography since the earliest days of settlement" (*This is My Country* 6), and Richler goes on to remark that Canadian literature has a particular kind of nowhere in "the abstract landscape of a whole generation of 'urban' writers who have not yet found the ways to express their cities' differences and so speak of them in unnamed, generic terms" (15). For Richler, such nowheres are largely composed of Marc Augé's 'non-places', particular places linked to transnational capital that carry a generic aesthetic with many similar airports, stations, highways or offices in other cities (96). However, as Augé also concedes, a location can never completely be a 'non-place' and using Lefebvre's awareness of produced space the same can be seen to apply to the literary cities Richler views. Works of literature, as with material cities, can be seen as constituted of Lefebvre's produced space. Representations of urban life can never be wholly abstract for they contain signs and symbols indicating locational affinities. Using Lefebvre's rebuttal to the notion of abstract space or emptiness, Richler's charge that some literary writers, despite writing about cities, have not articulated specific cities can be undermined. Two Canadian critics have demonstrated just this with regard to literary texts.

In the recent volume *Downtown Canada*, Richard Cavell asserts that the concerns with land in Canadian literary criticism have dominated "for the last half

century, largely to the exclusion of critiques relating to literary systems as urban institutions" (14). Cavell therefore proposes that literary criticism address the city as a cultural, industrial centre with power over the process of literary production. This approach indicates a recognition of the complex history of space and spatial production in Canadian literary texts. Taken by some as emblematic of Edwards and Ivison's new urban criticism, Cavell's own piece is perhaps distinct in its rereading of canonical twentieth-century Canadian texts for their urban influence.[12] However, Cavell's approach is to suggest these literary texts are indicative of a wider presentation of "defeatured topologies" whereby "this *defeaturing* of the landscape, be it as archetype or urban wilderness, is ultimately a repudiation, in both the critical and literary traditions, of the materiality of cultural production" (14-15). Cavell's own close readings then attest to instances of abstraction in representation whereby the material realities of place are neglected. This clearly serves a purpose in analysing the sometimes vague focus on non-urban, or indeed the 'placeless' as part of a material urban order, however it evades approaching the equally lively history of Canadian texts which do engage directly with the city.

James Doyle's consideration of the early work of the Toronto novelist Richard B. Wright can be seen to take a different approach to the abstract, aligning the generic urban scene with an explicitly American and implicitly international aesthetic (151-2). Doyle's method is then to acknowledge that clichéd or 'American' urban settings in Wright's first two Toronto novels are part of a larger cultural trend, allowing Wright's own particularity in his fictional response "to these processes" (163). Doyle's work acknowledges that texts themselves can resist blandness or homogeneity in their own idiosyncratic descriptions or deviations from apparently consistent symbolic orders. As with Cavell, Doyle allows for a reinsertion of the located sensibility into a

supposedly placeless environment. Furthermore, of particular interest to a critical literary geography is the manner in which Doyle and Cavell's approaches can be seen to emphasise how official or conventional ways of interpreting space can be challenged in literary 'spaces of representation'. The social spaces of literary texts in which there is less of a perception of abstraction will ultimately need more nuanced tools than those which Doyle and Cavell bring, however the forces which both critics identify are still a produced part of urban space.

What this expansion on the theory of Lefebvre has so far addressed is the role of social space within literary spaces of representation, that is to say *within* the book. Another crucial insight which attention to Lefebvre can bring to Thacker's framework is the role of the book within social space. The book, as a circulating object, is part of a material spatial practice forming various situated and located readerships. In turn, the book can be championed by official representations of space, through various levels of governance or indeed literary industry-sanctioned schemes. Finally the book can be framed by other spaces of representation, by both direct and indirect reference, tending towards the allusive in other creative work or the programmatic in documentary works. All of these are tangible pathways towards the extra-textual life of the text set out by Lefebvre's 'social space'. It is this way of seeing the text, from within and without that clarifies the textual interface described by Thacker in his term 'textual space' ("The Idea" 63).

Contemporary approaches in Canadian criticism mirror aspects of this idea of textual space. Peter Dickinson's contribution to *Downtown Canada* examines the representation of Vancouver in contemporary literature through the critical work of Elizabeth Grosz. Grosz's work is used by Dickinson as a suggestive allegory for the city's accommodation of material readers. As such, Dickinson extends analysis of the

literary depictions of Vancouver into an "interface between city and classroom, body and text. ... to think of what it means to be both resident and reader of a particular place" (80). The resident-reader of Dickinson is clearly bound up in the multiple ways in which texts can circulate outside of their specific reading of each literary text. Although Dickinson's model is affective in this sense, and therefore generative, it is also predicated on the location of the critic in the place of discussion. Dickinson suggests he is explicitly engaged with the "interface between my critical interpretation of the city as a literary locus and my social and political participation in it as a cultural habitus" (101). Such an expansive situation of literary texts need not be tied to such overt personal social and political participation, however criticism does need to gesture towards such a context and understand that in locating criticism the analysis itself becomes a part of this social space.

Outline

The interconnection of Lefebvre's categories and Thacker's critical literary geography, particularly the notion of textual space, aid an understanding of the multiple Torontos present in and produced around contemporary Toronto literature. Novels and poetry circulate in material space, and rather than keeping to the imaginary realm they engage readers to act. The texts within this thesis all have separate histories of reading, both personal and critical, but they also have geographies of engagement. Each of the chapters of this thesis demonstrates how the textual spaces of Toronto literature are increasingly fluid in their reach, as each text's circulation and afterlife demonstrates not simply an engagement *with* place, but an

engagement *in* place. The contemporary context of each text is framed by a concern for how the text has been received, and the physical afterlives of its ideas.

Approaching each literary text using a combination of Thacker and Lefebvre's concerns, a distinct spatial metaphor or spatial discourse is employed through which to explore each work's textual space, and therefore its particular engagement with Toronto. Each chapter consciously evokes contemporary literature's shifting ways of conceiving Toronto, the plurality of Torontos contained within its texts and therefore looks to depart from what C.S. Clark famously termed "Toronto the Good" (1). Clark's moral formation of the city still has resonance, although as Kevin Bazzana has suggested, the phrase is now a "cliché of the Old Toronto" (18), by which old may be taken as anything from the nineteenth-century up until the late 1960s. Still, Clark's term for Toronto, drawing on the political context of the time, evokes a plurality of other Torontos. The following chapters draw upon this time-worn phrase in order to show how each representation of Toronto is a particular spatial engagement with a version of Toronto. In this respect, the spatial critical lenses deployed gesture to these discrete textual spaces of the city. Although these critical terms differ, each chapter asks the same questions of each textual space in seeking to understand Toronto's particular resonance through local, national and global notions of identity.

Michael Redhill's *Consolation* (2006) engages with Toronto by drawing attention to its history. The Toronto City Book Awards and the One Book Toronto project frame *Consolation* as attempting to restore a sense of Victorian Toronto's legacy experienced in the present day. Redhill's novel emphasises the material traces that lend support to this experience and in turn offers an empathetic window onto the lives of those attempting to make a living in the early city. Using standard

conceptions of the work as a historical novel could engage with a depth of local history, in a manner similar to the work that has been produced on Ondaatje's *In The Skin of a Lion*.[13] Deploying Sigmund Freud's 'uncanny', and Anthony Vidler's spatial extension of 'the architectural uncanny' chapter two, "Toronto the Uncanny," looks at the relationship between Toronto figured as homely and unhomely. Through this, Redhill's novel can be understood as a more complex engagement with Toronto's history. Allowing scope for engagement, and for unfamiliarity in the past city, Redhill's novel is both civic-minded and premised on a productive sense of uncanny space. Values found in Toronto's material city and historically documented city are cherished by the characters within the novel for their peculiar and unexpected affective encounters. The space allowed for the peculiar and the unexpected reflects back on the novel's formal developments, emphasising urban photography's power to both distance and engross.

In chapter three, "Toronto the Diasporic," Dionne Brand's *thirsty* (2002) is similarly found to be premised on a sense of encounter and engagement. Despite its familiarity amongst Canadian literary scholars, *thirsty*'s overt grounding in a Toronto setting might be seen as one reason why this volume of Brand's poetry has drawn the least critical work in her oeuvre. This is all the more surprising given that *thirsty* develops themes overly examined in Brand's other poetry, essays and fiction, particularly in her attention to historical cultural negotiations and skilful deconstructions of racism. Moving on from analytic models of belonging or cultural exile in Brand's work, approaching *thirsty* in light of new work by Jenny Burman on diasporic space, shows how the city provides a material source for Brand's located optimism. This chapter also uses Burman's work on the contemporary applications of the diasporic to address the resettled aspect of diaspora. Although hesitant towards

new spatial constructions of violence and oppression, Brand also highlights how local, national and global senses of being can force and forge intersubjective benefits in Toronto. In expressing this sense of openness, Brand too extends the formal space of poetry to account for the reader in innovative ways.

Stephen Marche's *Raymond and Hannah* (2005) is a compelling romantic novel bound up in notions of youthful, multicultural Toronto. It is a novel that demonstrates, as Amy Lavender Harris emphasises, that "between the urban imperatives of production and consumption lies a vast, corporeal landscape made by our movements in the pursuit of leisure, pleasure and play" (215). Chapter three, "Toronto the Mobile," then departs from regarding Marche's novel as a spatial evocation of the sexualised city, emphasising the novel's textual self-awareness. Reflecting on the use of the multi-centred page, the chapter examines the novel's development of technical and technological space. At the novel's heart, *Raymond and Hannah* is also about transnationality and the increasingly complex circulation of Torontonians in their mid-twenties. Seeing the novel through John Urry's concept of mobile lives ensures that lived, material sense of travel and dwelling is seen in its whole. As with the experience of forced exile and the involvement of wars in mobility, the material affective force of borders and restrictions within fluid movement are then addressed. Following David James's insightful observation that "claims for the appeal of postmodern migrancy soon turn into velleities" (*Artistry* 38) this material focus on spaces of mobility and technology as located ensures that fluid movement is far from regarded as an ideal. Nevertheless, the extent of circulation in contemporary Toronto, both through communication and circulations of popular culture are drawn out by highlighting the novel's configuring of a literary Toronto from spaces of mobility.

Maggie Helwig's *Girls Fall Down* (2008) is indicative of Toronto's imbrication in wider outlines of geopolitical space, both national, continental and through military-political affiliations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Toronto might well be a space that is dreamt of as "a city where war never visits" (Marche *Raymond and Hannah* 205), but it is one caught up in the globalized "war on terror". Terror is both ethereal and materially grounded in memories of the World Trade Centre attack at 9/11, but also the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Chapter four, "Toronto the Terror-tory," then examines how *Girls Fall Down* represents contemporary Toronto in a register of unease drawing on this circulation of terror. Looking at the novel's depiction of Toronto as, in Gerhard Richter's terms, 'terror-tory' allows for an understanding of the located evocation of crisis. This frame for understanding the spatial resonance of the text ensures that Toronto is seen as a locality negotiating the imminent religious discourse of apocalypse. In turn, this approach looks to recent work by Marlene Goldman and Alex Houen to understand how the apocalypse and terror operate within literature. The novel's symbolic use of the female body, vision and photography expands this negotiation of local, national and global influence in the city.

In situating the analyses of each text, the thesis engages with the material circulation of culture within the city and draws on personal interviews with a number of figures that have framed or intervened in Toronto's cultural production. Each chapter considers the position of the author in writing and in some cases shaping the extra-textual life of the text. Three chapters draw on personal interviews with the authors themselves, which are also transcribed in the appendices. Although Dionne Brand was not interviewed as part of the thesis, there are numerous published interviews with Brand that influence the analysis in chapter three. However, it should

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also be noted that much of the criticism of Brand's work has often overtly drawn on her various interviews and public statements. Attaching less focus to the authorial role of Brand can then also be seen as an attempt to depart from existing scholarship. Furthermore, many interviews were conducted which are not directly cited in the thesis but were influential in shaping this thesis' engagement with the lived social spaces of literary production and circulation in the city. In considering the role of public reading and civic engagement in Toronto, I interviewed Bev Kurmey from City of Toronto Protocol, who administer the Toronto City Book Awards, Camilla Holland, who was head juror in the 2008 Awards and Vickery Bowles from the Toronto Public Library, where the inaugural One Book Toronto program was held in 2008. Other figures who were key to establishing a sense of the city's material production were: Alana Wilcox, general editor at Coach House Books; Mark Kingwell, author and editor of work on urban studies relating to Toronto; Noah Richler, journalist and author of *This is My Country, What's Yours? A Literary Atlas of Canada* (2006), Philip Marchand, former long-standing books columnist for the *Toronto Star* and now columnist for the *National Post*; Judith Chant, the fiction buyer for Chapters-Indigo bookstores; Richard Florida, 'creative class' theorist, author of *Who's Your City?* (2008) and head of the Martin Property Institute at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management; Stephen Henighan, academic, writer and author of *When Words Deny The World* (2002) and Joe Fiorito, journalist at the *Toronto Star*, author of *The Song Beneath the Ice* and the 2003 winner of the Toronto City Book Awards (beating Brand's *thirsty*). Involving an analysis of the texts within the material city necessitated the consideration of literary engagements with Toronto from these diverse perspectives. In many cases the interviews both informed the current project and created new avenues of research. It is for this reason the thesis is

selective in considering interview material for direct use although the project owes

these figures a great debt.

2. Toronto the Uncanny: Michael Redhill's *Consolation*

> The uncanny that we find in fiction – in creative writing, imaginative literature
> –actually deserves to be considered separately. It is above all much richer than
> what we know from experience, it embraces the whole of this and something
> else besides, something that is wanting in real life.
> --- Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny"
> (155)

Michael Redhill's recent novel *Consolation* (2006) engages directly with Toronto. Set in the city in the nineteenth century and in the late-twentieth century, the narrative is concerned with traces and memories of the city's lost histories. The novel plays with notions of fiction and experience, and the lives of those who dwell in, describe and inscribe the city. This chapter addresses these thematic concerns alongside the formal structure of Redhill's novel through Sigmund Freud's concept of the 'uncanny' and its spatial development by Anthony Vidler. In employing the concept of the uncanny as a lens through which to see Redhill's literary Toronto, this chapter recovers the concept from its use solely in the discourse of the gothic in contemporary Canadian literary criticism. *Consolation* provides several instances of what Freud sees as indicative of the uncanny: doubles, repetitions, hauntings, returns, omnipotent thoughts and overlaying of the homely and unhomely. Exploring the benefits of individual perception, the shaping of collective memory, and challenging notions of consolation, Redhill's novel suggests yet another side to Freud's notoriously malleable concept of the 'uncanny.' Questioning the very values put forward in the media of photography and fiction, Redhill's text doubles back on itself, offering commentary on the nature of city dwelling, of literature and the essentially uncanny qualities of representation. *Consolation*'s deployment in various extra-textual institutional settings highlights just how enticing and fluid the novel's subject matter is. Situating a reading of *Consolation* within the material geography of the city, this

chapter addresses how the novel's engagement with the city occurs in 'textual space.' This chapter then examines 'Toronto the Uncanny' as revealed in the novel's interrelation of the pasts and presents of the city, and as enabled through conflicting conceptions of fact and fiction.

The concept of the uncanny presents unique problems in comparison to other, more developed, methodological terms. Although much-used in contemporary literary criticism, as Anneleen Masschelein demonstrates, the conceptualization of the uncanny, often relies on reference to a single ur-text: "Freud's text 'The Uncanny' ('Das Unheimliche') provides the starting point for the twentieth-century conceptualization of the uncanny – even if Freud himself does point out some earlier sources on the uncanny (Jentsch and Schelling)" (54). In that ur-text, Freud draws on the tradition of the sublime to discuss an aspect of aesthetics that he believes to have serious implications for emotional impulses. Freud's pursuit of the uncanny, in the 1919 essay of the same name, leads him to suggest "there exists a specific affective nucleus, which justifies the use of a special conceptual term" (123). This nucleus, for Freud, lies in the field of the frightening and is gestured to through a loose cluster of effects. Claiming the existence of the uncanny both in real life and in art, Freud frequently turns to literature for examples of the uncanny. Deploying scenes from ETA Hoffmann's short story 'The Sand-Man' as examples to support his thesis on the uncanny, Freud progressively becomes caught up in the power of fiction itself to be uncanny. Frequently talking of the "uncanny we know from experience" (155), Freud departs into literary criticism suggesting that the literary uncanny "is above all much richer than what we know from experience" (155). However his further insights appear somewhat basic as literary criticism: "Among the many liberties that the creative writer can allow himself is that of choosing whether to present a world that

conforms with the reader's familiar reality or one that in some way deviates from it" (156).

Subsequent use of the 'uncanny' within literary criticism needs to be seen within the wider recent history of the term. Martin Jay has suggested that the uncanny goes largely undiscussed in the twentieth-century up until the 1970s in essays by Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida. Cixous's reading of Freud's essay questions Freud's inability to answer "What is fiction in reality?", suggesting that: "Fiction is connected to life's economy by a link as undeniable as that which passes from the *Unheimliche* to the *Heimliche*: it is not unreal; it is the 'fictional reality' and the vibration of reality" (546). In linking fiction and reality under a system such as "life's economy," Cixous appears to echo Raymond Williams' notion of the "structure of feeling." Williams' initial conception of the structure of feeling exemplifies this holistic surround:

> In principle, it seems clear that the dramatic conventions of any given period
> are fundamentally related to the structure of feeling in that period. I use the
> phrase *structure of feeling* because it seems to me more accurate, in this
> context, than *ideas* or *general life*. (*Preface to Film* 21)

In this system, the uncanny seems to embody the shifting movement between fiction and reality, whilst also gesturing to the structural conditions of its use. This appears to be one way in which the literary uncanny's link to the real world could be read. After Cixous, Jay traces a shift in the term's use when, across the 1980s and 1990s, literary critics such as Neil Hertz exemplify how "the concept has migrated from the ghetto of poststructuralist literary criticism first to the visual arts, and now to cultural studies in general" (158). Both Jay and Masschelein single out the work of Anthony Vidler in developing a contemporary urban analysis of the uncanny in *The Architectural*

Uncanny. Vidler's work is unique in spatialising the uncanny, and applying this to textual, visual and architectural analysis. Furthermore, Nicholas Royle, in his recent comprehensive study *The Uncanny*, points to Vidler as situating the uncanny in 'real life' analysis. Royle notes how, in the same manner Masschelein suggests, "[i]n many respects the present study seeks to provide little more than a reading of Freud's short text" (6). Although this is somewhat modest, Royle's study is indeed indebted to the many allusions and dimensions set out in Freud's essay, setting up the concept's structuring logic. This chapter's analysis therefore deploys Vidler's work on the uncanny, precisely because of his unique spatial and urban extension of the term.

Contemporary Canadian criticism has seemingly subordinated the uncanny under the general rubric of the gothic, or appropriated it in an attempt to explain the literary and critical discourse of postcolonial writing in a settler-invader society. Marlene Goldman and Joanne Saul's recent special issue of *University of Toronto Quarterly* examines the position of haunting and the uncanny in contemporary Canadian literature. In this collection the politics of memory and loss are duly raised but the conceptual scope of the uncanny becomes circumscribed by a trope of haunting. The uncanny after all is that description of the familiar unfamiliar, it is uncertain, a challenge to the notion of representation – all of which can be involved in particular kinds of haunting, but all of which expand beyond the stock encounter of ghosts, or the tangible, immediate presence of history. Goldman and Saul's introduction suggests that each essay pays attention to the primary trope of "haunting, or some sense of the supernatural or the uncanny" (647). Haunting itself then takes on some of the connotations of the uncanny without any conceptual acknowledgement. This conceptual shifting is illustrated by the Sylvia Söderlind's metaphorical use of the uncanny to describe a discipline's construction: "English-Canadian writing –

particularly critical writing – about nation is in a way doubly haunted…by Quebec"

(673). Söderlind qualifies her use of the uncanny by comparing it to the role of the

ghost, or 'ghosting,' suggesting "[t]he 'uncanny,' like the ghost, is the repressed

memory of something familiar that has been lost and whose return causes anxiety."

(680). This comparison merits a brief intervention given that a ghost can be uncanny,

but a ghost does not have to be. A ghost can of course be something entirely

unfamiliar, whereas the uncanny holds the firm tie of familiarity through the

experience of the unfamiliar. In this sense, the article's usage of the terms of haunting

and the uncanny seem to be used as more dramatic replacements for a term such as

'critically unacknowledged'. Similarly when Castricano gestures towards the uncanny

it is subordinated to a wider discussion of the gothic because "it's almost impossible

to avoid the discourse of psychoanalysis when talking about the genre" (806). This

employ of psychoanalytic discourse, without Freud's rich sense of the term in

aesthetics, risks a somewhat confusing emptying of the term's use-value.

Similar problems of the term's use can be seen within Cynthia Sugars and

Gary Turcotte's edited collection *Unsettled Remains* (2009). Although recognising

the term's specific connotations Sugars and Turcotte also place the term within a

hierarchy, suggesting that "[t]he uncanny is one among many possible manifestations

of the Gothic" (ix).[1] This allows the collected essays to produce a confusing sense of

the term, as seen in Brian Johnson's discussion of the gothic and the uncanny in

Farley Mowat's fiction. Johnson invokes the recurring *unheimlich*, or unhomely,

aspect of Freud's uncanny only to suggest that Mowat is one example of "recent

settler gothicism which reverses this trajectory by 'discovering' that the supposedly

repressed content of its uncanny fears is nothing other than a reassuring image of

itself" (30). Recent settler gothicism may well discover reassuring images of itself,

but by moving the use of the uncanny into a metaphorical critical paradigm for discovery the explicit experiential quality of the term is reduced. Some of the conceptual sense of the uncanny is kept in the introduction of Sugars' edited anthology *Unhomely States* where the connotations of being familiar and unfamiliar, homely and unhomely, are used as metaphors for how so many writers in Canada have felt. Even so, this draws attention away from the marked ways that, as this chapter shows, the uncanny can be textually constructed through Canadian literature itself. This chapter is concerned with how such textual constructions can lead to more nuanced local engagements with the uncanny, overriding some of the strictly national or postcolonial approaches expressed in the wider body of Canadian criticism. Introducing Vidler's thinking here aids an approach to the locally, materially sited depiction of the uncanny, given Vidler's understanding that "if the theoretical elaboration of the uncanny helps...to interpret the conditions of modern estrangement, the special characteristics of architecture and urbanism as arts of spatial definition allow us to advance the argument into the domain of the tangible" (13). It is this domain of the tangible which this chapter's literary geographical examination of *Consolation*'s Toronto looks to access.

Teresa Gibert in the *Cambridge History of Canadian Literature* refers to *Consolation* loosely as a 'ghost story', or historical fiction, and yet it is not a straightforward genre piece, and arguably does not contain a ghost. It could be suggested that the haunting supplied by the novel comes from portraying at least two protagonists who are, in the narrative's present, already dead. Redhill's novel depicts Toronto in two time frames, and therefore two different stages of the nation's development, the pre-Confederation nineteenth-century Province of Canada, and late-twentieth-century Canada. In the present day narrative a family mourn the death of

David Hollis, a self-declared "forensic geologist" with a degenerative disease who has written a monograph on the city's past (10). As David's family mourn – his widow, Marianne, his youngest daughter, Bridget, and her fiancé John – David's work comes to take on a greater significance. David's monograph contained unproven assertions of a collection of nineteenth-century photographs, each depicting the early life of the city, buried beneath Toronto's lakeshore. The potential timeframe to uncover these images is restricted by their supposed resting place, conveniently excavated but also, inconveniently, the construction site for a new sports arena. In an attempt to reinstate David's work and David's presence in their lives, Marianne takes a hotel room above the construction site and John helps her look through some of David's sources. Interrupting this narrative, in 1855, Jem Hallam arrives in Toronto as an immigrant chemist from England. Struggling to make his business a success, and not wanting to appear a failure to his wife and children back in London, Hallam invests in the nascent technology of photography. Going into business with the Irish-Canadian immigrant Sam Ennis and the widowed Claudia Rowe, the new company set up work and eventually home in the back of Hallam's shop. The indication is that a collection of Hallam's photographs of the city, which are to become David's missing source, are the treasure buried beneath the present-day lakeshore. The themes of self-invention and haunting then resonate throughout both narratives through the novel's pivotal plot twist and the medium of photography. The life of a photograph as a reproduction retaining ongoing meaning can in itself be seen as uncanny, however the novel's investment in Toronto's cityspace also lingers on an uncanny twist in the etymology of the word 'haunting.' To haunt or be haunted now more commonly mean a "visitation of fears, suspicions, imaginary beings, spirits" (OED), but the noun 'haunt' has another meaning of a regular dwelling, a "usual abode" (OED). It is this tension

between process and positioning noun that characterises the novel's own complex uncanny attitude to Toronto's cityspace.

Gibert suggests that *Consolation* demonstrates how "[m]ajor cities like Toronto, too, have local stories buried beneath the official ones" (484). Although it is hard to pin down who is asserting an official narrative in the text, Redhill's novel is highly concerned with the untold or unnoticed local story. In addressing Gibert's point, however it is hard to imagine how official stories cannot also be, in some senses, local stories. What is crucial to *Consolation*'s portrayal of Toronto is how the novel then questions the kinds of stories told about the city in general. The multiple attitudes towards the city, formed at different times and in differing contexts, resonate through the two distinct time frames, creating an uncanny coagulation of urban narratives. Vidler's use of the uncanny within the urban realm points to how we might approach *Consolation*. Vidler specifically addresses how the uncanny's "theoretical exposition by Freud, and later by Heidegger, places it centrally among the categories that might be adduced to interpret modernity and especially its conditions of spatiality, architectural and urban" (12). Following this through Vidler sees a link between the empty spaces of the city, created in real life through excavation and demolition and "on the phenomenal plane by the tabula rasa imagined by modernist utopias" (13). As an exploration of the uncanny in *Consolation* will show, particularly in the mise-en-abyme of the excavation/construction-site on Toronto lakeshore, one aspect of the urban uncanny Vidler puts forward is created from the so called 'empty space' in the city. It is this empty space that, for Vidler, provides "apparently irreconcilable demands for the absolute negation of the past and full 'restoration' of the past" (13). A similar uncanny tension is held in the novel's recreation of the nineteenth-century city. Considering Jem Hallam's narrative to be what Rosario Arias

and Patricia Pulham have termed "neo-Victorian fiction," there are obvious uncanny ramifications. Arias and Pulham suggest that neo-Victorian fiction:

> [o]ften represents a 'double' of the Victorian text mimicking its language, style and plot; it plays with the conscious repetition of tropes, characters, and historical events; ... [it] seemingly calls the contemporary novel's 'life' into question; it defamiliarizes our preconceptions of Victorian society; and it functions as a form of revenant, a ghostly visitor from the past that infiltrates our present. (xv)

By constructing a period narrative within the contemporary frame, *Consolation* provides a demonstration of the uncanny nature suggested in Pulham and Arias's neo-Victorian fiction. The blend of contemporary urban thought with this strand of conscious period-pastiche brings further dissonant effects, configuring a unique use for the uncanny.

A state of the uncanny is aptly established by the novel's epigraphs. Often seen as external to the novel, epigraphs are more accurately what Gerard Genette terms a paratext. Genette indicates that "the use of an epigraph is a mute gesture whose interpretation is left up to the reader" (156). However, Genette goes on to suggest the foremost function of the epigraph as a comment on the title or the text (157). Sam Solecki qualifies this, explaining that "[i]n the majority of cases they [epigraphs] introduce the text metaphorically, metonymically, or by way of analogy by hinting, however obliquely, at what the text is about" (114). Redhill's epigraphs metaphorically introduce the text suggesting two senses of the uncanny. The first epigraph by Jorge Luis Borges suggests the finality of death whilst simultaneously evading finality in the continuance of perpetual dream: "the man who commits suicide remains in the world of dreams" (*Consolation* n. pag). The quotation itself

comes from Eliot Weinberger's translation of Borges' *Seven Nights* (1985. The text has not only been mediated and doubled by translation but also by selection by Redhill. This last shift is notable as Redhill omits Borges' preceding line in *Seven Nights*, which suggests that we must "renounce passion" and that "[s]uicide does not help, because it is a passionate act" (71). The removal of this judgement of suicide is provocative as the epigraph foreshadows the suicide of David Hollis in the novel's preface and his continued presence through his family and more particularly Marianne and John's project. Through the selective use of Borges, Redhill hints at both a death and an uncanny afterlife, and the potential for suicide to create a tragedy beyond comprehension. The second epigraph attributed to the Scottish poet Don Paterson is equally complex and furthers the disjunctive tone: "in my solitude I have seen things that are not true" (*Consolation* n. pag). Again the voice is complicated by the double effect of translation, formed by Paterson's adaptation of the work of Spanish poet Antonio Machado. The epigraph's initial message of solitary perception is then turned into a ghostly double in which we could receive both Paterson and Machado's authorship. Furthermore from this uncanny viewpoint things are seen "that are not true." Not true is a strange expression – belonging between true and untrue. If someone had seen things that were untrue we could perhaps suggest a delusional period or a change of heart to acknowledge this but 'not true' leaves the reader uncertain of what has happened. These epigraphs, as oblique hints, quietly gesture towards the particular sense of the uncanny which pervades *Consolation.*

Other paratextual material underlines how the text continually reframes itself, reiterating its uncanny openness. The dedication of *Consolation* reads:

For Anne, Benjamin and Maxime

For Jane Jacobs and William Dendy

Raconter, c'est témoigner... (471)

The presence of two distinct dedications calls into question who is dedicating this work, as Genette has suggested "what would prevent the narrator-hero from shouldering responsibility for a dedication?" (130). The first statement here is clearly attributable to Redhill, given that those are the names of his wife and children. However, the second dedication, to two figures in memoriam, is more ambiguous with both figures being key social and urban writers in Toronto's recent history. The second dedication could just as easily be attributable to the fictional characters of John or David, who share the same connotative links as Redhill, and the dedicatees, of rediscovering the identity of the city. William Dendy's *Lost Toronto* also contains detailed study of the photographic panorama taken from the top of Rossin House by the firm Armstrong, Beere and Hime which is central to *Consolation*'s narrative. More than this, Dendy's *Lost Toronto* embodies the kind of project both the fictional characters and Redhill establish in *Consolation*, namely a reading of the present and the past of Toronto together. The dedication can then be seen to function by attempting to insert *Consolation* into a canon of intellectual, cultural and architectural writing on Toronto. The French phrase that follows the dedication is as much the ethos of Jane Jacobs's work as it is evocative of the main message of the novel, declaring "raconter, c'est témoigner" (471), which could be translated as 'to tell, is to testify'. Telling as testimony presumes a witness proving a truth. The implication here is that the act of telling and representation carries its own truth, a message which becomes vital in the world of the novel in both timelines. Jacobs' belief in every

citizen's perspective resonates with this claim. Indeed Jacobs' own work in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood in the 1970s echoes throughout *Consolation* – the area where Jem Hallam is depicted working will eventually become St. Lawrence. Claiming the power of testimony on behalf of fiction creates another uncanny slippage, caught between the 'unreal' and tangible. This claim is not so different to the disputed ideas around photography carrying a naturalistic truth, a representation closer to fact than current critical thought can allow. Such a belief has been termed by WJT Mitchell as "superstitious and naïve" (282), however Mitchell goes on to suggest that there may be "some real motive for a defence of the non-linguistic character of the photograph" (283). In turn, there may also be some value to asserting fiction's unique power in representing the city. This wish to give voice to the truth through the process of storytelling, the action of creating a slippage in perception, is the basis of Redhill's uncanny Toronto.

The preface opens with a more forceful sense of the uncanny, beginning with the suicide of the character central to the entire novel. David's death and the calm description of his final thoughts are portrayed realistically and remain focused on his views on the city. Impressed by the idea of the lonely, yet crucial, job of a nineteenth-century lighthouse keeper, David's last living thought is on the specific and expansive history of Toronto:

> He can see the whole city now, a crystalline shape glowing on the shoreline
> where once had been nothing but forest and swamp. After that, fires of local
> tribes, the creaking forts of the French, the garrisons and dirt roads and
> yellow-bricked churches of the English and Scots. It's only overwhelming if
> you try to take it all in at once, he thinks, if you try to see it whole. Otherwise,
> just a simple progression in time. (4)

David's reminder that the city is overwhelming when looked at as a whole resonates with Vidler's notion that the full restoration of the past is untenable. However, David's power to see these things that are 'not true,' the imagined past iterations of Toronto, indicates the uncanny standpoint being presented to the reader. This is an uncanny space extended by David's death and projected across the emotional geographies of the family. Recognising this process, Pilar Cuder-Domínguez compares the novel's portrayal of David's death to the sense of Margaret Atwood's short story a "Death by Landscape" (203). Atwood's story has also been seen as deeply uncanny in its depiction of death in familiar imagery (Bentley "UnCannyda"). According to Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, death itself is fundamentally uncanny being "something at once familiar … and absolutely unfamiliar, unthinkable, unimaginable" (40). Most of the novel proper shows David's family as they try to adapt to this recognition. John sees in David's death, as with the sensation of reading his monograph, a strong invitation to revisit the city's history. The contemporary narrative depicts John's attempts to trace the urban past, to take up David's profession. However, John's work is an amateur following, an acting of David's scholarship. The academic world may doubt David's monograph, but to get to his position David must have received years of specific training and experience in skilled research. John's pursuit of the same work is an awkward double – a playwright's research assistant – mimicking what he knows of David's profession, as John's playwright-friend Howard pointedly asks "what does Bridget think of your new hobby? What would you call it—?" (165). The familiarity with which John becomes immersed in a version of David's historical work suddenly becomes unfamiliar when asked to define it. *Consolation* thus provides a number of moments that can be said to be uncanny, when "the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred" (Freud 150).

The construction site of the new arena sits as a perfect crossroads to the themes in the novel, where commercial interests require a certain amount of excavation but only so much as allows further building work. This site's dual role, both construction site and potential excavation dig, sets a tone for the novel as a whole.

Both strands of the narrative suggest many personal experiences of the uncanny. Marianne's observation of the excavation site from a hotel room opens up many contradictions. Having sought out the anonymous 'empty space' of the hotel room, she proceeds to furnish the room with familiar objects to make it more homely (14). The room's windows seemingly allow a transparent and privileged view of the urban cityscape but also allow light in, creating reflections: "[s]he'd wrapped the cover of the little book [David's monograph] in a protective plastic sheeting, and when she sat at the desk at a certain angle – which she avoided doing – she could see her face in it" (15). Marianne attempts to avoid her reflection in the cover of the monograph, but at night her transparent view becomes a hall of mirrors as light reflects internally: "[t]he cast of light made a sharp blue shape in her window where her face was reflected, a Noh mask floating over the night" (172). Within the local, downtown hotel, Marianne's face, in reflection, invokes the image of a traditional Japanese theatrical mask. Such a reference is an unfamiliar transnational image of Marianne's self, physically set against the backdrop of Toronto's night skyline. The simple luminous act of self-reflection invokes not only the Noh mask's transnational cultural role, but also its traditional, fixed facial expression. Although fixed in expression The Noh Mask is more malleable than one might think. Research has shown that the expressions on such masks appear to change by virtue of the shifting visual perspective of the gaze: "Certain Noh masks, particularly those used to portray young female roles ... appear to change expression as the vertical inclination of the

mask changes" (Lyons 2239). In this manner suggesting Marianne's face to underlie the exaggerated cultural form of Noh Mask puts forward an uncanny shift in focus, whereby the onlooker might perceive emotional shifts uncontrolled by Marianne's choice. As Marianne is both the viewer and the viewed, she is outside and within herself as the estranged familiar, an uncanny image (dis)located in specific, local, Toronto space. Similarly, noises heard from the secluded space of the hotel room reinforce Marianne's night-time proximity to others, as the hotel takes on the eerie form of a body:

> Marianne lay in the bed in the near-dark, the faint bluey light from outside the only thing to see by. She shut her eyes and laid her hands palm down on the blanket and listened to the rooms around her. A woman's voice from two or three rooms away, talking on the phone. Unintelligible words separated by silences. In the walls, the sounds of water coursing in pipes above and beside her, an invisible body containing her. (179)

Marianne feels the definite weight of silences amidst the mixed noises of voices and running water.[2] The hotel room may seem to visitors and strangers a privileged, removed environment, but this privilege renders others only invisible and not inaudible. Far from being a stale or sealed environment, the hotel presents a complex system of guests, workers and maintenance. Though the physical fabric of the building is formulaic, its "invisible body" of plumbing, cleaning and dwelling continually leaves space for creative social interaction. Premised on temporary stays, on leaving and returning, the hotel is one vision of a microcosm of Toronto community. But in relation with the external city, such a synecdochic relationship with Toronto is uncanny. In Marianne's literal view of the city, the hotel encourages

reading a familiar ordering logic of Toronto's cityscape bound up in the unfamiliar 'neutrality' of the hotel suite.

As the narrator dwells on Marianne's perspective from the hotel room window, the construction site takes on the contradictions of Vidler's urban uncanny. Marianne looks out the window to see how others perceive the future whilst she herself also perceives the past:

> to the occupants of room 647 or 1147 or 3447 … the busy excavation was just some faint hint of the future, like all the holes in this city were that eventually generated condominiums and shopping centres and bank towers. Marianne was the only person in the hotel for whom the pit at the foot of the hotel meant the past. (9-10)

Marianne's experiential perspective, set aside from a mass perception, is championed for its unique insight. Influenced by a kind of faith and taking on the role of the urban visionary, Marianne's witnessing of Toronto becomes loaded with meaning. This mindset of faith, and focus on city-vision, echoes the work of one-time Torontonian Jacobs and her canonical urban exploration *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Jacobs' text studies the minutiae of city life: sidewalks, parks, mixed-use projects and road-traffic. In so doing she suggests that the text is an enjoiner to the reader to read their own cityscape as a means of illustration: "The scenes that illustrate this book are all about us. For illustrations, please look closely at real cities. While you are looking, you might as well also listen, linger, and think about what you see" (9). Jacobs suggests that the citizen-observer is vital to liveable cities transferring agency to the citizen from the strata of urban governance and planning authority that believes in top-down solutions. This enables Jacobs' theory to adapt to different places, perceiving some urban challenges to be both universal and negotiable in

differing local ways. The viewpoints that can aid such negotiation will come from individual perceptions of dwelling, often summed up in Jacobs' desire for diverse 'eyes on the street.' This turn towards experiential urban accounts is deeply engaged in urban theory however it prioritises multiple subjective geographies for their power. In *Consolation*, Marianne's focus on the construction site for both personal and urban notions of the past, rather than the future, depicts this power. In turn the recollection of David's response to the charges against his monograph champions such subjective power. David claims that neatly filed evidence would not serve his project: *"Proof lacks the power of conviction"* (12). Echoing the epigraph, the residue of David's advice on the city, left in his monograph, suggests a personal participation in discovery as the best method of city-engagement. Like Jacobs, David stands for a public who make their own judgements. In turn, the concept of proof given here echoes a similar discussion of proof by Richard Sennett, a sociologist heavily influenced by Jane Jacobs. Sennett suggests, like David, that proof, as the "canon of exhaustion of evidence," leads to an "[a]nesthetization of the intellect ... because it requires that no judgements be made until all the facts are in – some-time" (*The Fall* 43). David's failure to meet this desire for a canon of evidence leads officials at the city government to ignore his research. The monograph appears in their eyes disconnected from the literal city, as the narrator tells us: "faith in the 'city before we arrived' did not hold any allure to the municipal klatch" (*Consolation* 12).

In its very inconvenient suggestion of a returning past within the body of the city itself, David's monograph itself can be seen as uncanny, representing a repression and collusion by the collective populace of Toronto and its government. Vidler's own claims for the importance of the uncanny within this hegemonic world of modern urbanism, which refuses a hidden past, can be seen to illustrate the importance of

Marianne and John's understanding of David's document. The urban uncanny is

posited by Vidler as part of a "posturbanist sensibility that, from surrealism to

situationism, has stood against the tendency of modern urbanism to create so many

tabulae rasae for the building of cities without memory" (xiii). This is precisely the

role that John and Marianne fulfil in following David's work. David's position in

Consolation is certainly opposed to the modern urbanism that the municipal

government advocates, if not symbolises. More than this, David is put forward as an

heir to the situationist, surrealist trend of looking for traces of past or alternative

realities, given that "it used to anger David that people were ignorant of how places

they spent their lives in grew" (172). John's recollection of David defending his

monograph suggests parallels with Vidler's 'posturbanist' movement. David defends

a participation in searching for the past, over a static presentation of the past, stating:

> [y]ou can't be direct with people if there's something you want them to
>
> understand. If you say to them, *There is something here of great value*, they
>
> will stare at you until you produce it, and then they will wait for you to name
>
> it and catalogue it and square it away for them. But if you say, *I believe there*
>
> *may be something here*, then there is a chance, however faint, that they will
>
> want to look in to it for themselves …[t]hey're going to find something there.
>
> And it will matter to them simply because they chose to look. (*Consolation*
>
> 262-63)

In suggesting a collective search, David's stance puts forward an open invitation to

citizen-participation. The field of urban history is seen as a kind of democratic public

space through which strangers can join a common pursuit but crucially take away

different truths. This process of engagement is portrayed as necessarily personal and

somewhat communal, yet not everyone will experience the traces of the past in the

same way. Encouraging everyone to confront these strangely familiar traces of the past, David suggests a productive collective urban uncanny. *Consolation*'s own formal style and narrative drive complicates this by forcing the reader to intuit the benefits of such a project. However, this seems to come from Redhill's own drive to avoid what David fears – a cataloguing of the past. Such attempts at a catalogued and reconciled past would circumscribe engagement and prescribe a shallow, ultimately hollow, nostalgic sentiment.

     Consolation's portrayal of modern urbanism as separated from the city of the past critiques another well-known criticism of the commodification of history. In the situationist Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, history is taken to have become depthless through commodity consumerism:

> The history that is present in all the depths of society tends to become visible at the surface. The triumph of irreversible time is also its metamorphosis into a *time of things*, because the weapon that brought about its victory was the mass production of objects in accordance with the laws of commodity ... While the earlier cyclical time had supported an increasing degree of historical time lived by individuals and groups, the irreversible time of production tends to socially eliminate this lived time. (83)

Debord mourns the loss of diverse experiences of lived time due to this homogenous contemporary era of consumption. Although the concept of a past cyclical time and a contemporary period situated as 'irreversible time' seems somewhat oversimplified these are still binaries posed today. The similar "condominiums and shopping centres and bank towers" (9-10) seen by Marianne from the window of the Harbour Light Hotel show *Consolation* suggesting the potent force of Vidler's narrative of modern urbanism, creating *tabulae rasae* through the architecture of rapid economic

globalization. Nevertheless *Consolation* contrasts this sense of homogeneity with the visible traces of buildings and hidden histories of archival photography. Both narratives suggest that objects themselves, even products intended as commodities, still hold their own complex meanings that can disrupt any simple engagement with history.[3] David sees the simplification of history in the factual packages desired by the public: "No one cares about this. They want a list of wars and casualties, big numbers, historical roll call" (146). In so doing, David also alludes to the kinds of grand narratives which are still desired, and which can be seen to run counter to the 'small' histories of objects. Notably, the scale of historical importance need not always match the scale of physical space investigated.

David, John and Marianne's pursuit of the collection of photographs involves both the small histories of objects and the larger histories of place. In seeking the images, the Torontonians search for a familiar history in items that have become estranged. However, the objects themselves hold the power to counter such presumptive historical readings, rendering the familiar as truly unfamiliar. As do Vidler and Debord, Susan Stewart's study *On Longing* posits a similar decontextualising effect in the contemporary period's prevailing reading of history. Stewart's work examines how objects, such as souvenirs and collections, develop our attachment and become framed by our attitude to the past. These attachments can be seen as imbricated in the experiential dimension of Freud's and Vidler's notions of the uncanny.[4] Stewart hints at the kind of engagement many desire through the concept of the souvenir: "The souvenir is not simply an object appearing out of context, an object, from the past incongruously surviving in the present; rather, its function is to envelop the present within the past" (151). However, the desire to experience the present enveloped in the past is bound to failure, echoing a sentimental

attachment that reduces the value of the object's lived context. Nevertheless, Stewart

holds that through focusing on an individual object, the object itself retains some hints

of its context. This is if we are willing to view the object on its own terms. In contrast

to the singular object of the souvenir, Stewart posits the wider decontextualising

effect more prominently at work in 'the collection.' Stewart asserts that "the

collection does not displace attention to the past; rather, the past is at the service of

the collection ... the past lends authenticity to the collection" (151). The collection

becomes an organised, catalogued record of the past, and as a curated selection it

becomes highly mediated – if not authored. The collection itself subsumes any

meaning of the individual objects, difficult themselves to perceive alone, to the

present system into which it fits. By deploying David's invitation to pursue the

history of the nineteenth-century-photographs, *Consolation* opens up the disruption an

object or collection can, when filed and displayed, contain.

    Although *Consolation* can be seen as a series of narrative sections, the

structure's main function seems to be related to unfolding the dramatic storyline. Only

towards the end of the novel does the parallel narrative in the nineteenth-century

appear to have a deeper resonance with the contemporary narrative. Before this

particular resonance emerges, the narrative interruption of the excavation of lakeshore

with Jem Hallam's tale of nineteenth-century Toronto builds the novel's overall sense

of doubling, echoing and returning. At each turn the novel emphasises the disconnect

between time periods while paradoxically implying connection. The creation of

parallels between characters and actions, between thoughts and locations increases the

sense of the uncanny. Indeed, the very openness of *Consolation* can be seen in its

authorial indeterminacy. The style employed by the omniscient narrator alters in Jem

Hallam's Toronto. When Hallam's business seems to be slow, the narrative voice uses

a somewhat arcane vocabulary to explain his creative letter writing home: "His letters became more fulsome with news of his burgeoning affairs. He thought perhaps he could dream his life into existence by writing it down" (86). The term 'fulsome' best expresses the attempt here to construct a neo-Victorian subgenre. The OED suggests no examples of its usage in the twentieth century. However, looking closely at the word 'fulsome' reveals the potential shift in meaning from a standard perception of generous to being regarded as too excessive, as to be cloying or sickly. The word contains the hint that the abundant life Hallam wishes to write himself into will always be inauthentic.

When the eventual explanation for Hallam's poor trade emerges, the revelation relates to imperfect vision. The previous owner of the chemist had failing eyesight and as a result "killed, in succession, a child, an elderly woman and a pregnant woman ... Accidentally, of course" (89). Under the impression that he could still prescribe medicine the old chemist had "started guessing" (89), presenting another example of a familiar occupation rapidly becoming unfamiliar. Hallam's reaction to his shop's grim past creates a perfect sense of the uncanny. Discovering this to be the reason for his lack of custom Hallam "felt a powerful affection for the shop, which was his, his family's, and which suffered, as he did (he now understood), from ghosts" (92). Here Hallam's continual negotiation of a repressed past, having left his family for a new land, is mirrored in his shop's uncanny haunting. The parenthesis of the omniscient narrator invading Hallam's story and qualifying his response furthers the uncanny effect, with Hallam's 'understanding' seeming both authored and of his own volition. However, Hallam's feeling of kinship with this uncanny 'haunted' space seems to be consoling, with the fantastic projection of his

own suffering seemingly located in the shop as a whole. In contrast to this, Hallam's lack of customers suggests the shop's haunting does not console everyone.

Hallam's tale is interrupted by a letter from his father. Breaking with the narrator's antique prose, the page layout and narrative voice shift to insert the letter into the text. The appearance of Hallam's father's writing shifts the reader's perception of Hallam. The letter itself heightens a sense of the uncanny, presenting a new disembodied voice. In turn, the letter demonstrates how, as John Mullan has commented, letters in fiction present, "the truth through gaps, through what is not said" (255). In previous revelations of Hallam's character the reader has access to a formal man, a man who begins letters to his wife and children *"Bisous to the girls ... Tell them their papa is going to build them a house with green shutters"* (57). Hallam's middle-class, bourgeois formality extends to his habit of dining at Jewell & Clow's where he observes the waiter to be "well placed in his work" (53). The opening of Hallam's father's letter then indicates a more colloquial family background: "Use this money carefully as we are skint until the summer" (99). Hallam's father's vocabulary and his focus on salesmanship cast a new light on Hallam's seemingly Received Pronunciation. The letter suggests Hallam's father to be a man who dwells on direct commerce and wordplay derived from the marketplace: "There is nothing more counterproductive than making unwanted suggestions, and we do want your counter to be productive" (100). Hallam appears to be the social climber of the family, already on a course to become someone apart from the son his father knew. The letter also serves to affirm Hallam's shift to ordering silver nitrate for the Irish-Canadian photographer Sam Ennis. Certainly the narrator's insight into Hallam's receipt of the letter suggests a reading of the unwritten:

His father had been kind enough to fetch out a complimentary interpretation of the order, but realistic enough to provide him with passage home ... his father was telling him to give it four months, not six. (100)

These suppositions can only appear in Hallam's reading of the letter, and stand only on the basis of his prior knowledge of his father alongside the text. Here, reading between the lines, the narrator's proximity to Hallam's stance is boundless. The role of the narrator's voice as a double for Hallam grows in subsequent passages. As the acute insight of Hallam's mind is questioned, the questioner can be at once seen as the narrator and Hallam's own self-doubt.

The dual role of narration becomes important when Hallam is suggested to fear a ghost he has not seen:

He knew, somehow, that the form (if he'd had the courage to move to his window to look at it) would have white eyes glowing steadily underneath its hood, eyes of magnesium, and he began to fear this spectre he'd never seen. He sensed it was allied with the bottles and tins in his shop ... it was the manifestation of the stillness that had come to descend on the middle of his life. (101-102)

The narrative voice frames our own perception of Hallam suggesting, through the parenthetical interjection, an obscure instinctual fear and a lack of courage. This consistent re-examining of Hallam's position can be reconsidered in light of the novel's central plot twist. Towards the end of the novel, Marianne and Bridget are presented with a sheaf of papers written by John:

Marianne turned half the pile of paper over and they both stared at it. The line at the top of the page said, *As if beckoned by a strange gesture of hope, the*

spring came in earnest the week after Mrs. Rowe moved into Hallam's rooms.

Bridget looked up at her mother. "Who's Hallam?" (464-465)

The revelation that John is the author of Hallam's narrative revises the position of the past narrative's stances and expressions. Not only is John therefore responsible for the neo-Victorian construction, he might be seen as reflected or strangely doubled in Hallam's consistent re-examination. Although readers of *Consolation* do not have this information when reading Hallam's narrative the plot twist prompts a valid question. Who is Hallam? Hallam's tale is both narrated by and not narrated by John. In both senses, the strength of Hallam's life is its resonance with contemporary Toronto by way of mise en abyme. The continual reflection prompted by the co-existence of both time frames allows the reader's attempted connections between the two to become both familiar and unfamiliar.

The narrator of Hallam's tale draws attention to self-reflection in the moment when Hallam's foray into selling silver nitrate to Sam Ennis begins. In a surprisingly direct address to the reader, the narrator seemingly meditates on Hallam's life and the instances of representation that seek to preserve key moments:

> It has always been a popular pastime to think of the last moments of an old
> life, before two people set eyes on each other for the first time, or the instants
> before an unfortunate choice is made. All of past time is erased in tiny
> moments like this. (97)

In this passage the narrator speculates on how past time is subsumed into iconic 'tiny moments' or valued occasions. Playing with the expression 'pastime,' the narrator draws attention to received ideas of monumental history applied to a personal narrative. In such instances, the context of past time is lost as the event, as a possible immaterial souvenir, stands for more than itself. The instant is then the incidental

made monumental for a personal narrative. This again illustrates a potential affective moment of the uncanny smothered by the nostalgic impulse, where the mental image comes to stand for the perception of the past. An attempt to focus on one treasured moment, even though it is immaterial, can be seen within Stewart's terms on imagery. It is a highly significant manner of thinking at this point in *Consolation*, for it is a sensibility that lends itself to the enterprise Hallam has just entered into with Ennis, a partnership in photography. Hallam's popular conception of moments as souvenirs occurs just before he attempts to construct and fix such moments in material images, but both mental and physical images fit within Stewarts framing of souvenir and collection. At best "the souvenir speaks to a context of origin through a language of longing" (Stewart 135), as a metonymic symbol of a larger past whole. But, at worst "the souvenir displaces the point of authenticity as it itself becomes the point of origin for narrative" (136), and in this respect obscures the context that would give it value. This distinction becomes more pressing when Hallam and Ennis's photographs are open to be appropriated or traded.[5] The narrator's understanding underscores how instants, whether recorded in the mind or on paper, are always uncanny, as they are both loaded with and absent from the past.

Initially Hallam's entry into the world of photography is a financial rather than an artistic decision, and although worried of the role's respectability, Hallam believes training as a photographer with Samuel Ennis to be a business opportunity. With the assistance of former photographic model Mrs Claudia Rowe, Hallam and Ennis become a team. The "firm of Hallam, Ennis, and Rowe" (357) echo the nineteenth-century company of Armstrong, Beere and Hime, not least because the first names of two of the three photographers appear hidden from public records and one of the number may well have been a woman. Rowe's presence in the company echoes

Hallam's estranged state. Whilst Hallam is separated from his wife and family in England, Mrs Claudia Rowe's husband was lost at sea. Rowe's position in the eyes of the nation is more clearly uncanny, as the lack of evidence to prove her husband's death, and so collect compensation from his life insurance, leaves her married, for all intents and purposes, to a ghost. Hallam's initial responses to photography as a subject are decidedly irrational, seeing it as a communion or a projection of spirit onto the lens:

> Hallam fixed his eyes unmovingly on the lens and looked past it to concentrate all of himself on the plate. He pushed his tattered, flagging spirit along the wire of his gaze and embedded it, so Alice would have him, so their children would have him. (120)

Hallam continues to believe in such perceptions from the other side of the camera, feeling the uncanny in early photographs he takes of Samuel Ennis: "In them, Mr. Ennis appeared variously like a troll emerging from beneath a bridge, or a ghost evaporating at sunrise" (325). This belief does not abate when Hallam finally takes an accurate likeness: "[i]t was as if he'd spoken [Ennis's] name to the camera and now here was the picture, saying it back" (331). The preparation of the photograph is then erased when Ennis and Hallam dwell instead on the image, which is of course only a product. The intention to narrate, or describe each image, personalises the response to the image, and so avoids the unsettling fluidity of interpretation that a visual likeness, as object, presents.

Hallam's thoughts on the impact of accurate likenesses are interrupted by Ennis interpreting his own image:

'I look like a dead man in a chair,' Ennis said at last. 'Maybe you will be a phenomenological picture-taker, Mr. Jem Hallam. Your subjects will sit for you in the present, and you will produce pictures of their eternities...' (332)

This notion of the eternal image is found in both Freud's, and Vidler's uncanny, in the suggestion of the burial alive, or the exact replica. This replica of the human figure opens up a specifically temporal instability, capturing the moment in a tangible fragment that will appear to transcend time. The process of controlling and making is erased as the photograph encases this, claiming itself to be both representation and reality. It is the perfect example of what Freud describes as an uncanny effect, "when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolizes" (150). This animistic sense in which photographs show accurate likenesses of people then shades into a spatial sense of the uncanny when the photographs depict cityscapes and street scenes.

Hallam moves on from photographing the human figure, looking to Toronto for subject matter. The first indication of this comes in a letter addressed to his wife and children: "I have made you a portrait of myself in the form of the city" (335). Whilst this statement could be seen as hyperbole, exaggerating the representative capabilities of Hallam's newfound photographic profession, it serves as the sole motive for Hallam's initial photography of urban life, emphasising a personal attachment to the collective environment of Toronto – and a desire to share the environment with his family. Such reasoning can already be seen as quite complex. Hallam's hope that photographs of the city will represent him is quite ghostly, with his own body always outside the frame of the image. If he wishes the images to

convey something essential about himself, which cannot be communicated by other means, then perhaps it is how the city is changing him. The city which he lovingly frames and depicts has shaped his newly found artistic streak, capturing his departing even further from the son who struck off to look after a third apothecary abroad.

For the two pages following Hallam's letter we are treated to an account of two photographs Hallam has taken of Toronto. Usually this would be termed ekphrasis, what Mullan calls "the verbal representation of a visual representation – the description of an artwork" (263). However, ekphrasis in relation to photography is slightly different from traditional descriptions of paintings or sculptures. Photographs can claim a different position within society, no matter how composed or framed the image may actually be, often being regarded as accurate records rather than creative or artistic endeavours. Hallam's initial reaction to photography demonstrates that he views it as occupying this special position; as both a direct and spiritual medium. In the pages entitled 'Plate One' and 'Plate Two,' Hallam describes himself in the situation of photographer, willing both the reader and his family as audience to the originating scene. Here the attempt at ekphrasis breaks down, as well it should, when the reader is figured as overseeing correspondence, and an unseen image, addressed to another. Whereas the family would view the image in the context of Hallam's attempts to explain its meaning, the reader is left aware that Hallam's words may fail to do this. Even so, Hallam's rhetorical introduction, "come, enough now of words, they make flat aspects of the dailiness of things" (336), still proceeds with words, and thus signals a moment of what W.J.T. Mitchell terms "ekphrastic hope" (152) whereby "the impossibility of ekphrasis is overcome in imagination or metaphor, when we discover a 'sense' in which language can …[']make us see'" (152). Although Hallam sees words as flat, he relies on words and on ekphrastic hope to take

the reader to the essential truth beyond the surface of, but still contained within, the photograph. Hallam's meditations open up the time in which the photograph was taken, filling in sensory detail, and wishing to reanimate those figures with whom he has spoken.

The first photograph or 'plate' that Hallam attempts to describe is the view from his apartment window. Hallam reads the photograph and expands upon the information one might gain from a simple viewing of the image, pointing out details of the people and buildings: "you will see the little dog belonging to a gentle old couple whose names are Taylor. The dog is louder than they are" (336). Embellishing the photographs with details they could not possibly show, Hallam writes his family into his life as in a mutual act of consolation. This imaginative relocation of his family to Toronto might also shape his commentary. The narrative urge to form the ideal social space for family could distort the space itself rendering the imaginative engagement a fantasy. If this fantasy is meant to console Hallam such a document is then a strange consolation, an imagined closeness dispatched to England. The second plate takes us into the streetscape, announcing "we are standing in the street!" (337), before embellishing our understanding of the scene with lively literary imagination: "see how tightly nailed together the walk is? Not just a jumble of boards, is it? More like the oaken floor of a gentleman's club, as if some folk dancing a tarantella might come cascading down it..." (337). Hallam attempts to praise both the engineering and the life of the city as seen in this one street, but in the process Hallam assumes the role of guide. The reader and family-audience alike receive Hallam's attempts to describe and to domesticate the urban scene. As part of his wider storytelling project, Hallam's glosses therefore narrate his city, recovering personal attachments from what might seem programmatic or generic scenes. Another conflict is then inferred

between the city Hallam lives in and wishes to share, and the city that might signify differently through photography. Confronted with the underlying problems of reality and representation, Hallam agonises over the images and his commentary's power to be interpreted in multiple ways, to mean or fail to mean: "*This is me now*, said the pictures, and what they couldn't say was what he really meant" (340).

As Hallam progresses in photographing the city, more details emerge of the locations he chooses. These city spaces become subjects evoking controlled and tamed urban life, such as an estate where "the bishop's man had already cropped the lawns," "the wall in Clarence Square, with its purple clematis" or "huge willows hidden above the Davenport portage" (338). It becomes clear that photographing a version of Toronto that can stand in for his own spirit challenges Hallam's outlook on himself, the city and photography. Hallam had seen photography's power in its removed observation, and ease of depicting the familiar. However, in photographing Toronto's cityspace to stand in for himself, the familiar city, medium and his notion of himself are rendered unfamiliar. When producing the photographs for his family Hallam suggests that "a part of him felt an ugly certainty that he was creating a little dream for them, one neither they nor he would ever realize" (339). This suggestion resonates eerily with the novel's epigraphs. Most potently, following Borges' injunction that "the man who commits suicide remains in the world of dreams" (n. pag), Hallam's creation of a world of dreams for his family suggests he is also surrendering his connection to them in the process. Furthermore, following the epigraph from Paterson, Hallam's problematic experience of witnessing his idea of self, constructed through ideal cityscapes, has rendered himself "not true" or indeed both living and dead. It is here then where Hallam discovers photography as a creative act. His manipulation of city imagery attempts to protect both his family and 'his' city

from moral outrage, leaving out "the unexpected city: hunger, disease, violence" (339). Even so, in selecting particular scenes from the city, what Hallam creates is more invested with emotion than he believes it to be. Hallam suggests that the project is a "cowardly" thing, instead preferring the emotional capacity of words: "it felt cowardly enough to send these still images of a world she could not touch or smell. At least, in print, she could hear his voice" (340). Again this seems problematic giving more documentary power to voice emanating from print, in the act of reading. Although Hallam feels that words would be more direct, more capable of carrying personal contact, in choosing to narrate the photographs, combining the power of words and images, he arguably sends a more emotive package.

Fig. 1: Untitled (354) - referred to as 'Plate Nine' (355)

The novel continues to relate the letter home after a brief scene in Hallam's lodgings. Within the chronology of Hallam's narrative the letter has already been taken to the post office and should be on its way to London. However, re-emerging like a revenant is an image supposedly contained within the letter initially seen alone on a page with no explanation (354, see Figure 1 above). In the edition of *Consolation*

published in Great Britain by William Heinmann, the photograph appears on one page and Hallam's commentary directed towards, referring to it as 'Plate Nine' is on the subsequent page (355). The same layout appears in the Canadian edition published by Doubleday Canada. However, the American edition published by Little, Brown and Company positions the image on the same page as Hallam's text. Because of this, the image in the American edition appears to fulfil a different role. This inconsistency seems odd, and alters the meaning of how the only photograph to appear in the novel is read. Redhill's own opinion on this seems significant:

> I wanted the picture to appear on its own page. … the design of that page was essential. There should not have been any words on it. It needed its own space. Almost like a picture being hung. … suddenly there's this violent page with a real image on it from the period you've been reading about. It's meant to hit the reader on a different cognitive level. (Personal Interview)

The power of the photograph's framing, when isolated, is in the direct challenge to read a historical photograph of a Toronto street. The photograph is grainy but some store names can just be made out. A road in the photograph appears deserted and possibly damp from rain. How Hallam is supposed to have achieved the vantage point to take the image is unclear, as is the photograph's meaning. Without reading the commentary, the photograph is unmoored and unanchored, stranded a page away from its clinical label 'Plate Nine.' Stewart's description of the isolated photographic object as souvenir is useful in interpreting this image. Stewart highlights "[t]he silence of the photograph, its promise of visual intimacy" (138) and how without captions, narration, or "without marking, all ancestors become abstractions" (138). Without reference to the text, the photograph is both particular and related to a family of visual symbols. Without any markings the photograph becomes a metonym for period

photography of the city, showing conventional red brick Victorian shop fronts that could indeed be Toronto or any town of its vintage. This movement can also be seen as uncanny, deploying Vidler's account of when objects are removed from their original contexts:

> Returned from their proper burial, discovered in the wrong place, invested with an uncanny life of their own, they break the long process of deterioration and degradation that leads from the familiar, the ordinary, to the banal, returning once more to the status of the unhomely. (163)

The confrontation of the reader with the photograph in *Consolation* is akin to this experience of an item out of place. That is to say to encounter the photograph of Toronto on the "violent page" is to force the reader's awareness of the photograph's silence and indeed uncanny life of its own. The context of the novel renders the chance of encountering a photograph a familiar notion, but the reader without specialist archival knowledge would not possess a direct familiarity with the image. The text on the next page suggests that the image is King Street in Toronto after the rain. However, no further detail is given defining the precise photograph's meaning or actual narrative. The commentary following the image takes the form of an imaginary scenario in which Hallam's family are with him immediately after the photograph is taken. In this scenario a bear has appeared. The image becomes inspiration for a narrative. The photograph serves as the catalyst of a reverie for Hallam and with little narrative or description in the expected location the image provides an unsettling moment for the reader. The American edition of *Consolation* does not provide this indeterminacy, instead anchoring the image firmly into the text, which functions as a caption. Although all editions of *Consolation* leave the photograph's providence unattributed, the British and Canadian texts emphasise its presence as a fictional

element. Quite how the photograph functions seems to be part of the conceit of the novel's historical storyline, blurring a fictional and factual stance.[6]

Redhill has openly discussed his inspiration for focusing on a past-version of Toronto, echoing David in *Consolation*, with his love of traces and senses of the past that remain within the contemporary city. Redhill suggests that photographing the urban landscape would be a way of preserving these traces: "the power of this almost insignificant act of preservation is the ability to collect and keep safe a place that is doomed to die" ("Toronto the Dead" 321). In this model of photographic production, the image itself is both conserving Toronto and in need of conservation, situating the process as ongoing. *Consolation* amasses multiple meanings for the photographic process, within the nineteenth-century narrative, all inflected with this response to Toronto. One of these can be seen when Hallam receives an order from an insurer who sees photography as demonstrating "the original state of things recorded in good copy" (358). This view further underlines how the firm belief in the factual representation of the photograph allows the possibility of unfamiliarity and the uncanny. Aside from the visual aesthetic of the images, Hallam understands the implications in being employed to take photographs for insurers.[7] Here, the artefacts produced will be dictated by the market value of property, as Hallam realises that "no one would pay them to photograph the poor or their ramshackle houses" (358). Photographs like these will become implicated if not complicit with the forces of modernity, which will seek to redefine history by obscuring all traces of the urban poor. Paradoxically, similar images will become the inspiration for Redhill's archaeological reclamation of early Toronto's history. The uncanny sense of the city, as Vidler sees it, can reclaim erased histories of the city. In urging a rebellion against the controlled homogeneity of cityspace, Vidler's ideas can equally apply to images

of the city. Echoing the major classical use of landscape painting, photography is used in the nineteenth-century to create likenesses of wealth. Conversely the images themselves can also shift to represent the absence of such wealth, in this instance for example that the image outlasts the real property. What remains is a duplicate of a fleeting vision and can be seen in Freudian terms as a double. In outlasting the subject of its composition, the photograph as the double unmoored from the original becomes a truly uncanny item. A sense of unease surrounds the trace of the lost subject. When the lost subject is a city building or a part of the city environment, the potential audience for uncanny reaction is a collective – the city population. Buildings can be seen as a key part of collective experience, and so the images of lost subjects function as tangible items of collective memory.

In travelling the streets of the city, Hallam's live-in co-photographer, Claudia Rowe, suggests that Hallam and Rowe create a collection of city images for a potential civic archive. Rowe's perception of photographic value lies in a civic memorial, rather than any clear monetary value. These photographs are not considered as a normal commercial venture. In pursuing a comprehensive coverage the creative perspectives of both photographers are seen as complementary: "out of her sweeping vistas emerged his cornices and doorways" (366). Alongside these studies Hallam develops something of an understanding of the power these images may have for social change: "he turned his camera to the ground and stared at horrors. Tatterdemalion children worn out from eating hard bread; mad forms against lampposts, stinking of spirits and harbouring rumours" (366). In this sense, Hallam's concerns invoke historical journalist-photographers such as Jacob Riis.[8] Ennis in turn suggests that the streets emerging in the photographs of Rowe and Hallam are empty of people describing these as "images of a ghost city" (367). The oscillation between

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a ghostly city made up of architectural fabric and the full social spectrum of the highly populated city is mediated by a day's photography focusing on working men and mothers pushing prams. Upon presenting the archive to the mayor's deputy, Hallam and Rowe are met with an indication of the colonial relationship. The deputy questions the sense in recording Toronto's buildings, seeing the material environment itself as already an uncanny double of elsewhere: "the originals … were already *in* England in 1793" (372). The deputy's statement is an indication of the symbolic Toronto as inauthentic and uncanny, unmoored from, and impossible to load with, meaning. The images of such a city are, to the deputy, copies of doubles, suggesting the lived Toronto Hallam and Rowe attempted to communicate could only ever be an uncomfortable, pointless double.

This kind of distrustful institutional view of arts in Toronto is mirrored in the present narrative. In 1997, John visits a councillor in the New City Hall in Nathan Phillips Square. Despite the change of location and the passing of over 100 years, similar attitudes towards civic identity remain embedded in municipal power. In petitioning Councillor Jack Thomas to help investigate the wooden structure that has been found in the construction site at Union Arena, John and Marianne are met by indifference to heritage. Upon reading the paper's coverage, Thomas suggests that the mayor will not intervene:

> it's too late. Union Arena won't hear from his office, and whatever the thing is, it'll be wood chips by the time the *Star* sends someone to do a follow-up. If they do a follow-up. Page A-15 doesn't speak to this being a priority for the paper. (312)

The dominant view in the council offices is portrayed as one of monetary influence and what the supposed taste formers will think. Here, the media perspective replaces,

with little change, the views of the colonial rulers of the nineteenth century. Councillor Thomas is presumed to be overtly in thrall to the powerful and celebrities as the media, with his office displays of "the standard ceremonial shots of one-self with higher-ups" only interrupted by a photograph that Marianne identifies as Robertson Davies (311). The subsequent assurance Thomas gives Marianne that he had read a book by Davies is meant to play up both local, national and transnational artistic credentials; Davies being recognised internationally, nationally and within Toronto, having set a number of his own works in the city. The repetition of the same standpoint as the nineteenth century narrative conveys something of an a-historical institutional resistance to the perspectives of David, John and Marianne. Institutional bodies perpetuate safe and commodified versions of history, encouraging an anaesthetized response, and exactly evading the kind of uncertainty David champions.

Hallam's final task in the nineteenth-century narrative exposes his collusion with this mindset. He and Rowe are requested by an undersecretary to create a portrait of Toronto in photography to petition Queen Victoria for Toronto to become the capital of Canada. Uncertain how best to represent the city to its colonial master, Hallam is told to be "artful" (384). The slippage between artistic and artful – from being artistic to being technically clever – emphasises that the task at hand is to create images for the city's marketing campaign. Feeling ashamed of his earlier emotional connection to mediating the city, he muses "I want to photograph the city as it is. Not as an advertisement for emigration" (364). In rejecting the creation of well lit transcendental images, Hallam experiences the nature of the photographic lens, providing a quality similar to Freud's discussion of Coppola's eyeglass in Hoffmann's 'The Sand-Man.' Hallam's and Rowe's photographs provide an instance of "being robbed of one's eyes" (Freud 138), by both representing the city and their insistent

self-referentiality. The city external to the gaze of the lens is omitted, stealing the gaze of the viewer. In turn Rowe attempts to mediate this power, believing Hallam's increasing focus on signs of poverty to be both inappropriate for the project at hand and bordering on exploitative. Rowe first suggests Hallam's radical view of shacks in the foreground of an image to be ugly before finally invoking the propriety of such views for sharing: "Did you show this Toronto to your wife and daughters?" (392). Rowe suggests that photography should be aligned to the high art of the past, that the closed 'pure' body of the civic city is the only suitable subject matter. By now Hallam's array of reasons for taking photographs is rather complex: he is compromised by both the lived city where he increasingly empathises with the impoverished; the perceived city which the undersecretary wishes he could improve; and the new conception of the city requiring increased technical skill. These tensions are left suspended for the reader in the theoretical outcome of a set of images. Not being privy to how the set of images turn out, the reader's engagement is again sought in the act of imagining. This imagining is the key opening in the novel, with the missing visuals underpinning both narratives All that is related in the present day is that a panorama taken from the then new Rossin House Hotel survived in city archives.

The last the reader sees of Hallam is his lone departure for Britain carrying these photographs, which a contemporary reader realises did not go on to persuade Queen Victoria to select Toronto as capital of Canada. The contemporary narrative of *Consolation* suggests that Hallam returned and that the collection of photographs sank on a ship which is now buried on the lakeshore. These are the photographs that David sought, and now his remaining family fail to find. The photographs in this contemporary narrative become more than artefacts. They are a symbolic contact to

another time and the potential saviour of David's posthumous reputation in the present time. Parts of David's monograph are inserted into the narrative but fail to substantiate the content of the collection. Instead it invokes an uncanny semblance of their presence, citing them as a discovery to buttress our faith in what is termed "the city they lived in – it is just an intuition, a movement in the corner of the eye" (33). The absence of both these faith-instilling photographs and their narrative context leaves a continual uncanny haunting the present. David wishes this link, this eternal trace of memory, to offer itself as a consoling act. The possibility of such potent symbols existing is intended to reconcile the ignorant modern city dweller to their past. In this movement to reconciliation, the claim is then made that the city of the past can also be *their* past, and an alternative way of constructing their present space in the city. The reader's experience of photography stems from Hallam's narrative, which is also John's speculation on these images, their value and their context. If the photographs were ever taken they may well have intentionally shown the 'worst' of the city to prevent emigration or to give representation to the disenfranchised. Indeed both of these could be readings of the same images. Furthermore if the photographs had been filled with tatterdemalion children, they may not be what David and John would like to imagine. The truth with such photographs is that they would always be uncanny, as familiar as they were strange. Fiction as a consoling intervention could well be undercut by the uncanny language of photography.

The photograph as both document and explicit cultural icon lies between language and reality. The idea of a collection of photographs embodies the desire for history and the desire to reconstruct space as heterotopic space. The eventual revelation that Hallam's story is a fiction written in the present by John provides a challenge relevant to Freud's larger problem: What is fiction in reality? John's

uncanny document is a suitable demonstration of Freud's insight that fiction offers more scope for uncanny effects. Redhill's construction of David's and John's offers of consolation suggests that the uncanny can console but should resist closure. In doing so, Redhill also suggests consolation to be an ongoing and fundamentally uneasy way to exist. If we are again to see David's position as the posturbanist 'resisting the building of cities without memory,' it is also necessary to question the stability of living in a posturbanist fashion forever looking for traces and championing the individual's pursuit of a counter-narrative. Vidler suggests that this mode of living is unstable due to the absence of distinction between "the memorial inscription and its absence" (185). If you have to declare and publicise your found narrative, it potentially takes on the form of a memorial inscription and you at once are open to being co-opted into the hegemonic system. Redhill's novel, in championing the act of interpretation as much as the act of inscription, attempts to resist this conclusion. In leaving the investigation of Toronto's history as both open and essentially private, Redhill's text is resistant to definitive re-inscription or altering 'official' history. This outcome could be seen as futile; however accepting the futility of such posturbanist practices may well leave the convenient narrative of modern urbanism's blank city spaces unchallenged. Such narratives collude to evade questions of overwriting and multiple voices. Hallam's character is recording the city for the purpose of provoking a reading. Social consciousness vies with the archival idea of memorial photography in Hallam's project whilst the fiction and artifice of Hallam's supposed 'account' refuse closure. Perhaps this is what leads Vidler to suggest that living in a posturbanist society "would perhaps offer more inclusivity if less grand hope" (186). This does not account for the complexity of society, and indeed the complexity of

contested spaces within a place like Toronto. In turn, Vidler does not address local,

national and transnational desire for constant renegotiation of value.

Consolation can be seen as having a complex relationship with its subsequent

local audience, given that, as Redhill notes, shortly after the novel's publication it was

"quickly eviscerated in the local papers" ("Toronto the Dead" 323). In the wake of

such a poor local reception Redhill's essay, in a collection concerned with the cultural

life of Toronto, suggests that "Quite possibly it's not a good book and deserves its

fate, but part of me wonders if there's another reason a book about Toronto's paved-

over and forgotten past was met with such disgust. As a character in the novel says,

'No one wants to hear the story of a whore's childhood.'" (323). The subsequent local

success really only followed the novel's Man-Booker Longlisting in the UK.

Reflecting on this, Redhill suggests that transnational appreciation of the novel, if not

the assertion of colonial cultural power was at play: "once something in this country

[Canada] gets some attention paid it outside the country, people here redouble their

attention" (Personal Interview). In either respect the novel did eventually receive an

unprecedented amount of local engagement. The novel both inspired and became the

chosen text for the city of Toronto's "first annual community read". The Toronto

Public Library purchased an extra 2,000 copies of the book ("Toronto Public

Library"), and urged "all Torontonians to read *Consolation*" (Wise). In turn, the

library devised a number of projects to engage readers with the novel. The panorama

of real life photographs taken by the company Armstrong, Beere and Hime from the

top of Rossin House Hotel in 1856, the inspiration for Hallam's urban photography,

has been placed on display at Toronto Reference Library. Digital copies of the

panorama are available online.[9] In addition, two historical maps have been displayed

online. One is a nineteenth-century map from Toronto Reference Library collections

drawn by a surveyor that has had "places from Redhill's *Consolation*" superimposed upon it, distinguishing between 'fictional' and 'historical' sites ("Map of the City Toronto, 1858"). The other scanned document is a 1950s Toronto Planning Board map that shows actual outlines of the change of shore line between 1780 and 1957 as the city sprawled out onto Lake Ontario ("Toronto's Changing Shoreline, 1780-1957"). Some of the library's staff and reading public had their opinions recorded for a short documentary video. The video itself demonstrates how the photography and archival footage circulated by the library framed readers' perspectives on the novel. One reader, Frank Marshall, reports "it takes you back to a time when the lake was close at hand ... you can see this in the winter wind, and he [Redhill] describes February, which we're living through, and you really get a sense of the past" ("One Book"). The timing of the scheme, and the documents on display emphasise the window which *Consolation* is seen to offer to the past. Another interviewee, a member of staff at the library, Mary Rae Shantz, suggests the process of framing in which the library staff "scoured through the book and identified the places that we wanted to talk about" and then researched historical documentation to illustrate the nineteenth-century city evoked by Hallam's storyline.

In addition to custom researched material, meant to enhance the book to a library-going local public, Redhill himself contributed to the reading scheme.[10] In conjunction with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Redhill has written and recorded a downloadable audio commentary to a *Consolation*-themed walking tour of Toronto ("Walking Michael Redhill's *Consolation*"). The tour encourages people to walk the actual spaces of Toronto and then to pause to listen to Redhill reading sections of *Consolation* that relate to those spaces. This involvement of fiction into the material spaces of the city multiplies the readings and reinscriptions of

Consolation taking place. The role of the Toronto Reference Library in promoting the walking tour and the eventual selection of the book for One Book, One Toronto in 2007 gives one example of the dissonance these readings create. Although the reference library hosted displays and reading events for *Consolation*, the novel itself is less than complimentary to the physical building:

> Toronto's Central Reference Library had been built during a dark moment in the civic architecture. Made of red brick and glass on a design that seemed to be dreaming of cinder block, the structure rose on its street corner in ever-expanding layers, like an inverted rice paddy. (276)

However, it does appear that the spirit of a walking tour is in line with the characteristic comments made by John, following on from his experiences with David. Indeed the figure of John could be a model for tour participants: "John had listened to all of the stories, and there was never a single time present for him in Toronto anymore ... he would smell bread in the Don River Valley" (260). However, once these fictional perceptions of the city drafted by Redhill are institutionally sanctioned, the individual power to construct different narratives again seems suppressed. If John and David could be seen as idealistic in their sensory imagining of the bread smell from the brick works, the walking tour may doubly suppress one's thoughts on the actual rigours of working in the factory. Nevertheless, certain institutional projects could be seen to open a unique circulation for a text, rather than constraining the text's power to alter perceptions. Vickery Bowles, who worked on the One Book project at the Reference Library notes how the scheme did "involve us in a good debate in Toronto... of preservation versus development, and our lost city. We haven't paid enough attention to the history of our city" (Personal Interview). It seems apt that the first reading of *Consolation* within the scheme was how open the

novel was for debate, illustrating at first hand the evasion of closure in this generative

uncanny Toronto.

3.Toronto the Diasporic: Dionne Brand's *thirsty*

> These are the muscles of the subway's syrinx
> Vilnus, Dagupan, Shaowu, Valparaiso, Falmouth, and Asmara.
> The tunnel breathes in the coming train exhaling
> as minerals the grammar of Calcutta, Colombo,
> Jakarta, Mogila and Senhor do Bonfim, Ribeira Grande
> and Hong Kong, Mogadishu and the alias St. Petersburg
>
> the city keens its rough sonancy,
> you would be mistaken to take it as music
> it is the sound before music
> when the throat vomits prehistoric birds
> <div align="right">--- Dionne Brand, thirsty ("XI, ii" 20)</div>

Dionne Brand's *thirsty* (2002) portrays Toronto as a city of moving and moved inhabitants. The opening to the second section of the poem "XI" (20), one of a number of the poetic persona's meditations on the city, immediately blurs the material nature of the Toronto subway, drawing out its local and transnational connections. The subway is described as possessing a "syrinx," or lower trachea, and thus becomes part of a family of species stretching from the songbird to the theropod dinosaur. In its buried state, the subway might seem closer to a dinosaur, a primal creature mediating notions of origins.[1] Brand's persona emphasises how the subway creature's "rough sonancy" (20) is gained through a roll-call of foreign cities, from Lithuania, The Philippines, China, Chile, Jamaica and Eritrea. Toronto's ongoing connection to these international locations demonstrates how the city's subway reflects a wider transnational as much as multicultural population. The train's role in the syrinx is a mediator, a living composition of these places. How Brand intends this model of international influence to work becomes clearer when the make-up of the syrinx, and more particularly the role of muscles in the syrinx, is examined. According to Gabriel B. Mindlin and Rodrigo Laje, "Songbirds have intrinsic and extrinsic syringeal muscles; the former originate and insert completely within the syrinx, and the latter

originate or insert outside the syrinx" (44). The muscles of the syrinx are not then a simple surround, but are crucially inside and outside, operating in equal measure in both directions. The passengers on the subway train are not passive citizens of muscular international influence but are actively a part of these muscles, exerting their experiences of foreign locales in Toronto's own public spaces. The poem's injunction that "you would be mistaken to take it as music" ("XI, ii" 20) corrects any obvious understanding of the scene as harmonious instead evoking dissonance. Indeed, by not being music, Brand's description here amounts to synesthesia whereby the sounds of linguistic "grammar" register somatically, embedded as minerals in the make-up of the city's geology. Such fluid constructions of position and role, sensation and register, inhabitant and habitus, are crucial to how Brand's *thirsty* engages with the city of Toronto. This chapter examines *thirsty*'s understanding of Toronto's social space as hybrid and uneven, both hopeful and violent. Looking at the textual space of Brand's poetry in *thirsty*, seen as the meeting of social space in the material city and the poetry collection's formal space, the chapter critically examines the literary geography of the text. Drawing on Jenny Burman's model of Toronto as a diasporic city, the chapter looks at the role of agency in *thirsty*'s rhizomic interconnections, those pathways and structural movements which echo the diasporic image of the subway's syrinx.

It is a mark of the complexity of Brand's *thirsty* that its form has been described in varying ways. Leslie C. Sanders has posited that *thirsty* is a collection of poems addressing Toronto written in three distinct registers, firstly in a narrative centring on the story of a Jamaican-Canadian immigrant, Alan, and how his death affects his family and the city, secondly in the "poet/narrator, an inhabitant of the city like all the others" (xiii) who reflects on the story and finally a third "poetic eye and

voice" (xiii) which is distanced and dwells on the ethics of citizenship. Playing down the separation of these registers, both Heather Smyth and Jody Mason suggest that *thirsty* can be seen as a Canadian documentary long poem. Mason expands on this with reference to the long poem's predominant narrative function and the local historical context often deployed in long poems (787). In turn Smyth highlights the historical engagement in Brand's portrayal of Alan (97). In *thirsty* this local historical context forms the backdrop to the story of Alan's killing by police and the mourning by his wife Julia, his mother Chloe and his unnamed daughter. In the ongoing mourning for Alan, the narrative sense of *thirsty*, as well as its linguistic tenor, can also be seen as elegiac. Viewing *thirsty* as a long poem highlights this elegiac narrative but can be seen to emphasise it at the expense of the distinctive lyric voice in half the volume's poetry. Therefore, this chapter follows Priscilla Uppal's claim in a recent study of English-Canadian poetic elegies that, when noting the predominance of certain elegies to be viewed as long poems, "many of the characteristics and features of the long poem are also found in poetic sequences" (20). Viewing *thirsty* as a poetic sequence allows for the sense of narrative within the collection, taking in its affinity to the tradition of the Canadian long poem whilst also attending to the collection's distinct lyric poetic persona. Just under half of the poems in *thirsty* are voiced by the poetic persona, at times closely drawing on Brand's own autobiography, whilst consciously dwelling on themes of empathy and the embodying of other lives.

 thirsty is much cited in contemporary literature on diaspora. Rinaldo Walcott begins an article on Toronto and disapora by referring directly to "VIII": "Toronto is a quintessential diaspora city. Thus the poet and novelist Dionne Brand calls it 'a city that has never happened before'" (438). Brand's subsequent words in the poem

immediately qualify this statement, acknowledging the city's history but emphasising the ongoing process of intervention and creation: "and happened / though not ever like this" ("VIII" 11).[2] Jenny Burman's work on diaspora also uses a stanza from *thirsty* as an epigraph ("Co-Motion" 101). Although neither of these texts are direct studies of Brand's work, the resonance of *thirsty* seems to lend itself to a guiding tone for critical work on diaspora. Taking a brief look at recent scholarship on Brand's work, *thirsty* itself has received little direct attention. However, a great deal has been written on Brand's expansive body of writing, with most contemporary work focusing on the 2005 novel *What We All Long For*. The proximity of themes and settings between *thirsty* and *What We All Long For*, particularly in the evocation of Toronto as a global city, ensures that criticism of the novel often has much application to the previous collection of poetry. The first point Ian Rae makes in reviewing *thirsty* is also often made in regard to *What We All Long For*, whereby Brand's Toronto "seems to be the main character in *thirsty*" (17). How *thirsty* posits a strong, complex image of Toronto is one of this chapter's primary concerns. Rae goes on to suggest *thirsty* is in stark contrast to Brand's earlier work: "Brand no longer depicts life in Toronto as a regrettable, economic necessity (although Scarborough still feels her wrath). Rather, the city seethes with contradictory energies" (18). Rae's review also underlines Brand's continuing emphasis on doorway imagery, and so anticipates Jody Mason's article "Searching for the Door*way* in *thirsty*." Mason's analysis draws on Brand's wider writing in order to show *thirsty*'s charged usage of doors and doorway imagery. In turn, Mason's discussion of the structural shifts within *thirsty* indicates a discourse of framing and fluidity. This analysis underpins this chapter's understanding of how the local and global are imbricated in *thirsty*'s representation of Toronto.

D.M.R. Bentley has also addressed *thirsty*, seeking to understand this representation of Toronto as part of a history of Canadian poetry that addresses architecture or, as Bentley refers to these works, "Canadian Architexts." In doing so, Bentley suggests that Brand's literary imaginary of Toronto is bound up in a project of counter-mapping, or counter-cartography:

> An important component of Brand's "counter-cartography" of Toronto is the identification of landmarks whose presence and significance are not registered on maps that are insensitive to matters of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. (*Canadian Architexts* 310)

For Bentley, drawing on early short stories and works of autobiography, this project seems to occur throughout Brand's oeuvre, creating an overall sense of Brand's Toronto. Although Bentley does allow that Brand's more recent work seems more celebratory of Toronto than her earlier work, the working assumption of Bentley's analysis is that Brand continues to be rooted in a margin and writing back to a centre. In addressing *thirsty*, it could be more profitable to set aside Brand's wider writing, not least given the multiple forms Brand's writing takes. Bentley's aim to portray "Brand's Toronto" by alluding to all of her work leaves us with a necessarily confusing portrait, as Brand's essays mingle with character viewpoints and insights from poetic personas. Bentley's identification of *thirsty*'s celebration of liminal spaces is positive in moving beyond the basic premise of counter-cartography, and can be extended when set into dialogue with *thirsty*'s equal concern with violence, waste and power. Emily Johansen's article on Brand's latest novel, *What We All Long For*, portrays this sense of complexity in Brand's literary imaginary of Toronto. Johansen suggests that Brand's recent writing addresses:

'territorialized cosmopolitan' subjectivities – subjectivities with multiple
affiliations across axes of gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality which are not
unrooted or free-floating but are principally and firmly located in the
physicality of Toronto. (49)

Part of the large body of work now building on Brand's novel, Johansen's criticism
here seems to have valid application when looking to avoid a centre/margin analysis
of Brand's *thirsty*. However, Johansen's article demonstrates the difficulty of
sustaining such a frame of reference, going on to discuss how Brand "decentres the
dominant economic and cultural places of Toronto and brings the so-called margins
into a central position" (50). This kind of analysis, where the corporate or presumed
central "(white) power centres of Toronto" (Johansen 51) are seen as oppositional to
Brand's current writing project, only serves to use old models of interpretation for a
more complex literary imaginary.

Johansen's use of margin and centre highlights the problem of vocabulary in
addressing Brand's "territorialized cosmopolitan subjectivities" (49). Part of this issue
relates to static concepts or metaphors for territory and place, preventing a wider
sense of the Toronto community evoked in Brand's writing. In approaching *thirsty* it
is useful to consider the divergent senses in which community can be established.
Affiliations to a community are linked to territory but are better defined by Thomas
Bender as "social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds" where such
bonds "may or may not be coterminous with a specific contiguous territory" (7).
thirsty's ideas of subjectivity in Toronto need to be viewed through the ongoing
interactions, the terms of mutuality, that the social space produced within the city
provides. This must entail acknowledging the kinds of global linkages Saskia Sassen
implies in her analysis of global cities whereby "the local, because locally sited, is

actually a transformed condition in that it is imbricated with non-local dynamics or is a localization of global processes" ("Reading the City" 252). Reading Sassen's work with reference to *thirsty* draws out the entwined global and local dimensions to Brand's spatial representation of Toronto. Brand can be seen to negotiate the prominence of the global and local within what is still also national space.

Jenny Burman has addressed the lived implications of Sassen's global city, emphasising how Brand's writing reflects Toronto's experience as a "diasporic city" ("Co-Motion" 101). Burman articulates the broad impact that diaspora has had on contemporary Toronto's cityspace by illustrating how "diasporic conditions texture the lives of not only transmigrant subjects but *all* city residents" (104). Burman's work looks to shift the understanding of diasporic discourse in order to reduce the emphasis on direct relationships with place of origin. Instead, Burman asserts that only "mediated diasporic discourses" (107) can be detected whereby terms of relation to origins or former homes are seen in the context of the wider contemporary lived experience. Burman's theorising of the diasporic city is also important for its engagement with absence, removal, death or the impact that the threat of these fates has on contemporary city-life. This chapter will employ Burman's work in order to further understand the narrative and formal implications of absence and presence in *thirsty*'s textual space. Drawing on Burman's rubric of diaspora, the chapter also looks to apply the similarly transnational framework to community used by Diana Brydon in her analysis of Brand's 2006 poetry collection *Inventory*, where global relations are seen as a key part of Brand's "affective citizenship" (990). Brydon's reference to Brand's writing as a part of "emerging global complicities" (990) seems to resonate with Burman's take on a material experience of diasporic cityspace.

In discounting centre-periphery models of analysis, I do not wish to empty out the importance of location but rather to understand the complexity of contemporary linkages in the urban environment. Terms such as 'diaspora' or 'liminal' have previously been criticised for setting out to adopt radical revisionist aims only to be co-opted by a mainstream discourse and, more pointedly, been taken to task for their ambivalence to material space (Mitchell). For this reason, this analysis of *thirsty*'s textual space needs to be attuned to material space. Physical movement through the city is clearly important in *thirsty*, reliant as it is on the notion of the street-level witness. In the second stanza of the first poem in *thirsty* Brand's poetic persona emphasises the role of this material presence: "let me say / standing here in eyelashes, in / invisible breasts, in the shrinking lake / in the tiny shops of untrue recollections, / the brittle, gnawed life we live, / I am held, and held" ("I" 1). Hinting by synecdoche at a commodified female body "in eyelashes" and "breasts", but also rendered "invisible," the persona takes up a position similar to Walter Benjamin's *flâneur* of Paris in the *Arcades Project*. Here, Brand's persona reflects on the collective life "we live" and mirrors Benjamin's concern for arcade facades with an equal attention to Toronto's shops. This parallel is alluded to by Bentley and an extended essay by the Canadian writer Aritha van Herk. van Herk terms Brand's persona here as a "contemporary *flâneuse*" of the city (22), something Janet Wolff claimed impossible in modernity given the dominant masculine urban gaze, which assumed the female street-walker to be either immoral or destitute. van Herk's essay discusses the possibilities for the *flâneuse* in the contemporary city, viewing Brand's *thirsty* as both a call for radical female involvement in cities and led by a "mourning *flâneuse* [who] patrols the street in search of justice for a man murdered by his city" (32). Contrary to this second suggestion, Brand's persona as *flâneuse* can be seen as more equanimical

in her role, as suggested by her repetition "I am held, and held" ("I" 1). Indeed, the repetition of the word 'held' here evokes openness, both being acted upon and therefore in the middle of some fixed engagement but also repeatedly open to redefining what it is that may be acting. Such open statements ensure the persona is anchored to the material life of standing in the city and also being held by actors, events, or simply time in a fixed and intense relationship. Although Brand's persona could then be said to street-haunt, the shifting associations and audiences constructed through each poem seems to evade the persona's portrayal as a *flâneuse*. In this respect, *thirsty* actually enacts Wolff's recent suggestion where, by questioning the make-up of public space and overlooking the male-centred discourse of *flânerie*, "the question of female *flânerie* loses all importance and, at the same time, women become entirely visible in their own particular practices and experiences" ("Gender" 28). The shifting construction of audience in varying pronouns can then unmoor classic oppositional discourses.

The opening poem in *thirsty* concludes with a pronoun shift, as the poetic persona moved from "I" to "We". Anticipating the poetic sequence's engagement with personal contact in the particularised Toronto cityscape, Brand's language addresses the nature of chance meetings and public performance:

> we meet in careless intervals,
>
> in coffee bars, gas stations, in prosthetic
>
> conversations, lotteries, untranslatable
>
> mouths, in versions of what we may be,
>
> a tremor of the hand in the realization
>
> of endings, a glancing blow of tears
>
> on skin, the keen dismissal of speed ("I" 1)

Acknowledging the reader as possible fellow urbanite and as receiver of the poetic sequence the persona suggests moments of contact as "careless intervals" before gesturing towards venues which are not arbitrary. The "coffee bars [and] gas stations" are areas of sociability packed with important everyday needs, desires and exchanges ("I" 1). The dialogue might be "prosthetic" or artificial, but these accidental or custom-based encounters are also revealed as "version of what we may be" ("I" 1). The word "prosthetic" then also carries the connotations of those artificialities necessary for social movement. Suggesting the image of prosthetic limbs, conversations are located enactments of conventions but for sociable purposes. Even so, such personal encounters with deliberate artifice triggers parallel selves and the opportunity for multiple futures. The same hope and promise of each self or "version" is transmitted to the poetic sequence, as the text itself is compared to a public space, serving as an invitation to inhabit the subjectivities and places deployed in *thirsty* ("I" 1). When the lyric voice of the poetic persona next appears in the sequence, there is an intimation that it is also Brand's voice: "That north burnt country ran me down / to the city, mordant as it is" ("III" 5). This line echoes Brand's biography. Brand lived in Burnt Country, Ontario in the mid-1990s before returning to live in Toronto ("List of Fonds and Archives").[3] Before the persona becomes too settled, the poem shifts pronouns quickly to the second-person: "the whole / terror of nights with yourself" ("III" 5). This shift reframes Brand's biography, using the second-person both to address the initial confessional stance and to direct attention to the reader: "you surrender your heart" ("III" 5). These shifts invite the reader to cross paths with the initial persona, opening up the personal to wider universal concerns. In turn the sentiment of the poem's second stanza reiterates the split selves and multiple subjectivities that are being enacted in *thirsty*: "the body convulsive with disguises /

abandonments" (5). Jordana Greenblatt has noted this fluidity, showing how *thirsty* places demands on readers to produce part of its meaning by suggesting "a model of community wherein our complicity involves agency" (95). These convulsions of the body are both intangible in their disassociation, and tangible in the very real bodily relationship to disguise and the results of abandonment. As readers, the choice of path through the text reveals our complicity.

When Brand's poetic register shifts to narrate the story of Alan's family, mourning his death, we also encounter a narrative reflecting the local historical context of a police killing in Toronto in the 1970s. Mason, like Sanders, identifies Alan with "Albert Johnson, a Jamaican Canadian who was shot and killed in his home by Toronto police in 1979" (786). This would certainly agree with Brand's own accounts of how Johnson's killing affected her personally and her participation in black activism in Toronto.[4] In turn, Brand's recollection of Johnson's death in *Bread Out of Stone* mirrors scenes depicted in *thirsty*: "When Albert Johnson's sister sang 'By The Rivers of Babylon', water came to your eyes. We've been weeping ever since. One killing after another, one police acquittal after another" (75). Although as with Alan's standing for Johnson, *thirsty* reflects this recollection in the character of Chloe, Alan's mother: "Chloe sang *By the Rivers of Babylon*, / then broke like cake into tears" ("XXI" 38). The narrative resonance of this song also embodies a contradiction, drawn out in Ted Chamberlin's observation, that the song and psalm it is based upon both question the power of language to console the singer before the singer proceeds in "singing a song that is still giving solace" (75). Therefore the narrative of Chloe, Julia and the unnamed daughter mourning Alan attempts to use parts of Albert Johnson's death to inscribe a symbolic narrative. Further details relating to Johnson subtly shift in the depiction of Alan. Whereas Johnson's house

was on Manchester Avenue (Blatchford A7), Alan's is described as "still there, on Hallam Street, / still half-sleeping" ("XXI" 38). Although clearly not the same street, Hallam Street is parallel to Manchester Avenue in Toronto and the narrative clearly draws a comparison in Brand's poetry.

The ethical issues attached to this parallel are striking. Using elements of a factual case – in which a black man was shot and killed in his own home leads to the trial of polices offices for manslaughter – is politically charged. Constructing perspectives based around roles in the events could be seen as closer to a kind of appropriation. Earlier in Brand's career she is clear in her position on the lively discussions surrounding the wider idea of 'appropriation':

> Look, this appropriation shit is not about me. It's just for liberal white folks …
> getting upset that maybe just maybe they oughtta check out what they saying
> before they say it and maybe just maybe they don't know what the hell they're
> talking about when they talk about anybody who ain't them. ("Who Can
> Speak for Whom?" 14-15)

Although these comments are written nine years before *thirsty*, and I do not wish to read Brand's ethical positions solely from her own prose writing, her viewpoint appears to be that appropriation is a concern when the author themselves has anxiety about what little knowledge they may possess of their writing's subject. Brand's statement then looks to defend the ability of the author to see into, and write about, the lives of others. Brand's position here might also be influenced by her academic history. Having previously published interviews with black women who worked in Toronto in the early part of the twentieth century as part of wider research into Ontario's history,[5] and having produced academic work using these interviews in the field of oral history,[6] Brand has critical experience in approaching the use of life

narratives. In this respect, Brand's rebuttal to any charges of appropriation is a defence of authorial and academic freedom, as well as a greater statement about the scope of human empathy.

Thinking of Brand's earlier assertion on appropriation in terms of *thirsty*'s poetic sequence, Brand seems to suggest that a diverse audience, constructed in the lyric poetry of the poetic persona, can and should feel what Johnson's death was like. History is then mobilised to retain the names and stories of important Torontonians, and to refine a public sense of civic memorial with a wider understanding of the events that take place in the city. Brand can also be seen to adapt her own politically charged sense of public space in Toronto in telling Alan's story. When *thirsty* refers to the community response to Alan's death a crowd is described gathered in a Toronto park: "the procession not anything like mourning, but / a fury took her father's incline at Christie Pits" ("XXI" 38). Christie Pits was where Alan preached his biblical sermons, and so the daughter's terming the steep sloped park "her father's incline" allows for notions of the favour he would have had for the spot, the reverent image of a bowed head and the topography of the "former sand quarry" (Mays 48). It is notable that in giving Christie Pits familiar associations for Alan and his daughter, Brand avoids using the term 'Henson-Garvey park' throughout *thirsty*. This is her own politicised term developed for Christie Pits when formerly practising what Bentley sees as her counter-mapping (312). Indeed, Brand used this very term when recalling the real-life rally between Johnson's home and Christie Pits (*Bread out of Stone* 74). The avoidance of what could be seen as part of Brand's ecolect – a term used to refer to private discourses, especially place-names, which evoke selective group understanding – demonstrates Brand's wish to appeal to common names and therefore a wider audience.[7] Common names here are the names of the local official symbolic

economy, appearing on maps and plans made by architects and the city government alike. Using an actual place-name over her political ecolect allows this event to resonate with a specific history for the reader. This suggests Brand's openness to engaging with, and writing into, the public history of Christie Pits. The park was notably the site of one of the city's largest race riots in 1933, when Italian-Canadians and Jewish-Canadians were embroiled in a fight with Nazi-sympathisers. Brand's writing resonates with this history.[8]

Through this process, Brand's construction of Alan and his family is interwoven in Toronto's ongoing history and, as a civil memorial, is recognised as a vital part of that history. This echoes the project of an earlier collection of poetry by Dennis Lee. Whilst Lee's *Civil Elegies* are primarily known for their relation to debates on Canadian national identity and national conceptions of civic space, the collection also looks to past Torontonians to attempt to establish authentic notions of local civic space. Lee's poetic persona inhabits the administrative space of Nathan Phillips Square, outside the City Council offices, and recalls the first mayor of Toronto, William Lyon Mackenzie.[9] Lee's poetic elegies to Toronto, its former inhabitants and its lost pathways still resonate in Toronto today by way of his appointment as the first poet laureate of the city from 2001 to 2004. Indeed, in this role, Lee's activity came closer to using poetry and poets in physical counter-mapping strategies than Brand's earlier writing. It was Lee's chief project as poet laureate to enact the 'Cultural Legacy Program,' which seeks to name "streets, squares, parks, and other public places after outstanding Toronto artists and thinkers" (Warkentin 39). Such parks have included the space at Bloor Street and Spadina being remodelled and renamed Matt Cohen Park. As of 2009, Brand became the third poet to take the same title of poet laureate of Toronto. At Brand's unveiling she used words from

thirsty in praising Toronto "[because] its multiplicity... is constantly rich and surprising. I've written this about it in *thirsty* — that wild waiting at traffic lights off the end of the world, where nothing is simple, nothing, in the city there is no simple love or simple fidelity, the heart is slippery" (qtd. in Soupcoff). In line with this public judgement on the city, Brand has continued the engagement in Toronto's streetscapes shown by Lee, but with a nuanced approach demonstrable in the project 'Poetry is Public is Poetry'. The project aims to construct a number of installations deploying poetry as public art.[10] If anything Brand's initiative to use others' work in public space is less invasive than the naming project begun by Lee.

By accepting the role of poet laureate for Toronto, like Lee, Brand assumes a public civic persona. In turn this has meant a wider readership for Brand's work, and scrutiny of her politics. Marni Soupcoff reported on Brand's appointment as Toronto's poet-laureate by broadly attacking municipal spending on such a position, and claiming that she "fulfils every stereotype of the identity-obsessed activist insider who turns normal workaday people of all races and genders off of poetry in the first place".[11] In turn, Soupcoff dismissed the section of *thirsty* cited in Brand's acceptance of the position:

> I can't tell you what she's talking about because I have no idea. I can, however, clarify that *thirsty* is a Brand book of poetry about a black immigrant father shot by Toronto police in his own front yard. I'm sure our boys in blue are giddy with excitement about getting to share the city payroll with the new laureate. ("Dionne Brand: Agitator Laureate")

Telling here is Soupcoff's attempt to construct a restrictive community, by deploying the term "our police," suggesting that Brand must be seen as an outsider. Acknowledging Soupcoff's position as reactionary and therefore purposefully

inflammatory, particularly in her somewhat pejorative use of Brand's name in terming *thirsty* a "Brand book of poetry," Brand's appointment should be seen clearly as a civic endorsement of her creative work, including her treatment of the Toronto police. *thirsty*'s narrative is a reflection on incidents of the late 1970s and early 1980s, removing the text from a direct comment on officers working in the city today, but neither is *thirsty*'s overall attitude to the police simple. "XXVI" narrates a presumed portrayal of a police hearing into the killing of Alan, but in doing so notes the police officer's construction through the media "his head centred in the television / cameras against / scales of justice" (48). Further noting the police officer's likeness to a model or a narrative cowboy, Brand pins her criticism to formulaic media portrayals: "captured by several television networks / a vulgarity to it, a sybaritic languor" (48). The media narratives posited by Brand are seen to be luxuriating in the police's institutional racism and in turn demonstrating their own pre-conceived racial formulas for depicting such news. In light of Soupcoff's comments on Brand's appointment this observation seems all the more relevant.

The public persona Brand adopts in the role of laureate is also very much a register present in *thirsty*. It is the lyric persona that frames a diurnal form to the poetic sequence, from the city's waking early in the collection to its eventual embrace of "spring darkness" ("XXX" 57). Ruminating on the city's darkness, Brand's poetic persona also reflects on the varying temporal structures to the day, noting both clock-time and routines shaped by the sun, whereby the reader is drawn "to get outside to witness another illumined hour" ("XXX" 57). The unity of viewing through such a frame is emphasised when the poetic persona announces that "days are perfect" and suggests the echoes of selfhood and the poetic form by stating "I expect each molecule of my substance to imitate that" ("XXX" 57). This awareness of daily life

reflects on the subsequent portrayal of nighttime and Toronto's specific time-geography, as the city is abandoned by commuters and open to differing forms of labour and leisure (a similar observation of the city's temporal geographies is made in Maggie Helwig's *Girls Fall Down*, see chapter five). It is in this mood that the lyric voice returns to the everyday, and everynight, role of the police. In *thirsty*'s final poem Brand's lyric persona frames the narrative section by imagining the role of the siren in the city's soundscape: "From time to time...frequently, always / there is the arcing wail of a siren, as seas / hidden in the ordinariness of the city" ("XXXIII" 63). The empathy of the poetic persona ties with the reader in imagining the circumstances that trigger such a siren. Urbanist Charles Landry notes the role these sirens play in alerting us to our environment: "the sound of a police siren may provoke comfort, fear, anxiety or even excitement, depending on the context. As travel and migration increase, there is a greater awareness of soundscapes but we accept too passively what we have at home" (59). When such sirens become familiar they naturally blend into accustomed everyday lives, but the sounds of each siren are distinct, with the sound of police, fire or ambulance vehicles indicating differing situations. The immediacy and the social reach of the siren are emphasised in Brand's work, with the persona describing the siren by "its emotion. Its prophecy. Even at a great distance / you sense its moral discoveries" ("XXXIII" 63). The siren becomes an allegory for the transition of an individual into another temporary network, a system of care. As a public service, the emergency services mediate between notions of self and other.

Historical figures appear in *thirsty* as another kind of mediation between self and other. "XXIX" looks to situate the local history of the house in which Alan had lived, suggesting that Toronto's transnational affiliations ensure that "A house in this city is a witness box / of every kind of human foolishness" (54). In exploring the

sensory life of this particular house, the narrative of the poem indicates the turnover of such significant lives. In particular the poem details a past inhabitant, an Italian-Canadian girl who died from Leukaemia ("XXIX" 54). The girl is described as having been viewed by others as supernatural: "in sickness her beauty was so convincing / they could not open her casket for fear / she would come alive again through beauty" ("XXIX" 54). Mason suggests that this girl, and indeed Alan, appear in *thirsty* as ghostly hauntings (792). In turn Mason believes Brand is "disingenuous" (793) in the following short stanza of the poem: "It isn't a haunting. That would be too fabulous. / It happened and what happened, happened" (54). However Brand can be seen as far from disingenuous here, given her adamant denial of haunting and the supernatural connotation of ghosts this brings with it. Instead, Brand is dwelling on how natural this trace of memory is, and how the narratives of other lives are a physical part of the city's public and private spaces. These lives can be seen and detected from the material evidence they leave, both in the houses they inhabit and the various ways in which lives are continually recorded, including oral history. This qualification aside, Mason's reading of *thirsty*'s 'ghosts', which discusses the tension between the fixity and fluidity of such narrative remembrances, still has wider application for all the recalled factual and fictional figures in *thirsty*. Mason suggests that as ghosts these figures "bear witness to the conditions that create them, [and that] they are not reducible to these conditions" (793). Positing both a material connection to place and a function to the latter day characters of *thirsty*, Mason positions the ghosts as 'structures of feeling' echoing Raymond Williams. In so doing, the figures come to play a significant role in the contemporary period whilst being embedded in the past of the narrative. This need not be viewed as haunting, but it can certainly be seen as

an emergent approach to relating to local and communal histories, both evoking and repositioning loss. In doing so, Brand deepens the elegiac function of *thirsty*.

In citing not simply names and events, but the works, words and lived spaces of historical figures, Brand adopts what Uppal sees as the function of the elegiac voice:

> Elegies for places provide the poet with the opportunity to connect with past
> and future landscapes and past and future histories, thereby constructing the
> individual "I" of the poet as a convergence of the collected memories of
> ancestors who live, or have lived at the intersection of "here." (120)

Serving as the arbiter of Mason's ghosts, Brand's lyric voice is the site of negotiation and "convergence," selecting the viable "ancestors" for this portrait of contemporary Toronto. In line with the sequences wider aims to portray a diasporic city, with links to both Toronto and elsewhere, Brand's historical figures are open to a wide association by the readership. In "XX" the lyric voice examines the roles of two painters, Arthur Lismer and Tom Thomson, both widely known for their involvement in what would become the Group of Seven, and therefore their role in creating symbolic imagery of Canadian national identity. Thomson is initially depicted to starkly contrast such idealised imagery with the present day threat of suburban sprawl spreading out from Toronto: "Thomson would have snatched his *Burnt Country* away from here, / knowing that it would vanish. This suburban parching would dry bog" ("XX" 36). Providing another echo of the sequence's thirst, this comment resonates with Brand's persona's earlier reflections on living in "north burnt country" ("III" 5). Lismer has his work named as another signifier of canonical Canadian art before he is reread as "the immigrant from Sheffield" ("XX" 36). This revises the frequent nationalist association between Lismer's work and Canada, recalling instead his lived

experience as a British immigrant to Toronto. Lismer is then posited as a part of a

diaspora, removed from his home in Sheffield, England, with "new memory" ("XX"

36). Canadian identity, lived within the city spaces of Toronto, and expressed in

painting, is revised by this diasporic understanding. The same revision of nationalist

imagery can be seen in the "plans / for an arranged marriage, a red bride, a white

garlanded groom, the // Gurdwara on Weston Road" ("XX" 36). [12] The colours of the

Canadian flag are made to echo an arranged Sikh marriage, a distinct part of religious

life that emphasises the multicultural practices taking part in Toronto.

The movement in *thirsty*'s alignment of historical figures becomes more

significant in the affinity suggested between Lismer and Violet Blackman. Lismer, the

English painter, is compared to a contemporary in the city, Violet Blackman, one of

the black working women interviewed as a part of Brand's oral history project in the

early 1990s. Blackman is framed by Brand's interviews as both a part of 'everyday'

experience of Toronto's social history, and also a significant part of the history of the

United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Toronto (*No Burden* 17). [13]

thirsty's positing of Lismer and Blackman's possible mutual understanding is based in

their mutual experience of diasporic living in Toronto, pointing to the wider

connections and diverse histories that should be read in order to establish ancestors to

contemporary Torontonians: "Lismer paints Sackville River with the same new

memory as Violet / Blackman, her gesso was that wood floor in Rosedale" ("XX"

36). Blackman's work as a domestic servant in the Rosedale neighbourhood marks a

low class position and gestures towards the imbrication of race and class in Toronto.

However, this line also positions Blackman's labour as similarly creative to Lismer's,

on the "gesso," the preparation for gilding and painting alike, on the "wood floor".

The poem's move to expand on the period in which Blackman was a servant appears

to be voiced by the poem's lyric persona: "1920, when Toronto was just a village and all her labour, all her / time" ("XX" 36). Yet, this sentiment is closely derived from Blackman's own words describing the period, a fact that becomes apparent when compared to Blackman's account in *No Burden To Carry*: "that was 1920; then Toronto was just a village" (*No Burden* 37). The use of Blackman's words in *thirsty* could appear ethically dubious, given that there are no markers to indicate the borrowed nature of the speech. On the other hand, in using these accounts Brand's persona embodies the historical perspectives more firmly, deploying the very words the subject used to describe the city. In 1921, Toronto housed half a million people, and the sensory perception of the 1920s city as a village could be seen as the impact of recalling the period from the late 1980s when Blackman states this (Careless 1947). However, it is important to view this perception as a lived reference to notions of community, with village sensibilities being more fluid than simple head counts. DMR Bentley suggests this borrowing of words can be seen as a kind of "bricolage" (312) and part of Brand's wider postmodern project. In Bentley's argument it is our understanding of a univocal authorship that is called into question, and enjoined to be revised, by such a use of another's words.

Given *thirsty*'s attention to place, it is surprising that the suburbs of Toronto are dismissed so quickly in "XX". The poem lists "North York and Scarborough and Pickering, / those suburbs undifferentiated, prefabricated from no great / narrative, except cash, there is no truth to their names // they don't even vaguely resemble the small damp villages / of their etymology" ("XX" 36). The financial motive behind constructing these suburbs is just as much a human need as a corporate one, given that so many families and lives depend on living and working in these places. The critique of suburbs as vacuous is in some senses legitimate, given mid-twentieth century local

governance struggles to provide both water and education to inhabitants (Solomon 57). However to say that the suburbs are a narrative of money and the middle-class is to neglect the social stories that Richard Harris highlights, those suburbanites who worked in local industry, in 'blue-collar jobs' and self-built housing in the suburbs (17). Brand's observation of the perceived lack of "truth" in the suburbs gestures towards their colonial inheritance; the suburbs take their names from towns in Northern England ("XX" 36).[14] Such a perspective again seems to deny the complexity of these settlements' histories. This is in stark contrast to Brand's focus on revising Rosedale's history through the use of Blackman's accounts. Although perceived as a downtown neighbourhood, Rosedale was also seen in its nineteenth-century inception as "a beautifully situated suburb" (Mulvany 262), if not now understood as "Toronto's first suburb" (Harris *Toronto, The City* 71). In this way Brand's historical interest in the contemporary city's downtown echoes Michael Redhill's temporal perspective set out in chapter two. Brand's value of truth in naming could equally be seen to gesture to the complexity of Toronto's etymology, bound up on competing interpretations of Native influence.[15] Yet, Brand's focus on the names of the newer suburbs seems to deny that the complex diasporic fluidity emphasised in *thirsty*'s Toronto could also be felt in these contemporary suburbs. This is particularly pertinent since the amalgamation of North York, Etobicoke, Scarborough, York and East York into the larger City of Toronto in 1998.

In the distinct engagement with road names and intersections in Toronto's downtown area, *thirsty*'s references to spatial affiliation are pronounced. When subway stops for commuters refer to the city's financial district, the attitudes of those commuters are read against the stations' spatial co-ordinates:

in the subway though these separate dreamers are a mass of silences.

They are echo chambers for the voices of gods of

cities. Glass, money, goods. They sit in a universe of halted breaths

waiting for this stop Bay and that stop Yonge and that one St. Patrick ("XX"

37).

The stops for Bay, Yonge and St. Patrick do not concretely map onto the area

understood as the financial district but the streets of Bay and Yonge are symbolic of

business in the local notions of official representations of space. Bay Street is often

used as a metonym for the financial sector of Toronto. More significantly, the poem's

indication that passengers are given over to a worship of capitalist concerns is mapped

to St. Patrick, stretching associations to take in the nearby seat of municipal

governance Toronto City Hall. From these shifting associations *thirsty* moves on to

reference specific intersections. A key manner of wayfinding in Toronto, due to its

historic grid system, is to refer to such intersections. The lyric voice implies that these

locations have more transformative power in the summer, when the pedestrian is more

accommodated above ground:

summer teems, College and Bathurst, Queen and Yonge,

St. Clair and Dufferin, Eglinton to the Highway,

at these crossroads transient selves flare

in the individual drama, in the faith of translation, ("XXII" 40)

People are seen to "teem" in the summer at these locations. Each is a node in the

classic sense of Kevin Lynch's work on wayfinding, in that they are "the strategic

spots in a city into which an observer can enter" (47). Lynch suggests they can also be

"a crossing or convergence of paths" (47). Viewing intersections as convergences of

routes is important for *thirsty* given the nodes or sites posited in the text. The power

of naming College and Bathurst indicates the varying shifts in neighbourhood open to being encountered depending on which direction a pedestrian is to pursue, either on foot or on each road's streetcar. To the west of this intersection lies the neighbourhood of Little Italy, to the east is Kensington Market, to the north lies Honest Ed's at Bloor and Bathurst, to the south are the bars and shops of Queen St. West. Each pathway ensures a different cultural influence. Mason has commented that "[t]he crossroads are transgressed: the use of the provocative verb 'flare' for human movement suggests flame-like mobility" (797), and in turn has read those transient selves to mean mobile groups. The crossroads are sites of movement, and they do demarcate low-level senses of boundary crossing, however the real boundaries being crossed here seem to be personal and subjective. Rather than the flare moving out from the centre of the intersection, it might be more plausible to see the flaring of transient selves from the centre of the subject. In this sense, multiple selves are envisioned resting on the departure made, and each is afforded the perception of authenticity. Furthermore, the crossroads cited echo *thirsty*'s consistent optimism that our empathy can be constructed coherently to ancestors and contemporaries because there are radically different "versions of what we may be" ("I" 2).

The entry of the reader is crucial in *thirsty*'s portrayal of Toronto as diasporic city. The multiple selves inferred amidst the model of empathy that allows Lismer and Blackman to be equal ancestors for contemporary Torontonians develops a sense of responsibility, and indeed a sense of the consequences of multiple affiliations by way of its implication of the reader. Greenblatt's notion of complicity in *thirsty* underlines that such an implication ensures that the text, and indeed *thirsty*'s model of community is not free-floating, or borderless. Analysing a number of the lyric poems where punctuation is minimal, Greenblatt suggests that "[t]he spaces between each

word are potential breaths, yet, robbed of the commas we depend on to separate thing and thing, we must choose where to breathe, and thus select the borders of each desire" (87). In being responsible for choosing the meaning, *thirsty* ensures that the complicity of the reader is bound up in both hope and violence, echoing the multiple implications of diverse subjectivities in the global city. Greenblatt observes that *thirsty* is full of such "fissures," or "unsoldered break[s]" (85) and similarly, Franca Bernabei has commented on the reflective position of these openings, suggesting they "endow the poetic as well as the urban text with an asyndetic but interactive structural convergence" (57). Such openness can be found in *thirsty*'s overall structure and in individual poems. Structurally twelve blank pages intersect the poetic sequence. These pages are dispersed at irregular points in the text, separating groups of poems, but on three occasions book-end individual poems, "IX," "X," and "XXIX". Each of these poems is therefore physically framed by absence, "IX" looking at Alan's childhood, "X" witnessing the unnamed daughter's departure and "XXIX" examining the house as a constant site of remembrance and forgetting. In turn, the reader is forced to encounter absence at each blank page, and to insert their accumulating perspectives into the poetic sequence. Following this invitation, the shifting alignment between the reader and the composite lyric persona is reiterated in "XI". Here, the lyric "I" tells of witnessing a "toxic sunset" before examining how "steel weeps / with the sense of bodies, pressed, another passion / we become other humans" ("XI, I" 20). Even the streets, hinted at by the steel of buildings, react to the presence of bodies. In turn, the reader is enjoined to join the communal "we", reacting to the presence of others and to "become other humans". This sentence is particularly striking for its invitation to compress many fluid notions of empathy and shifting subjectivity. "Become" could mean to grow into, slowly shifting our sensibilities, or in turn it

could mean that we fit, flatter or improve other people. Such a notion is an inherently optimistic view of social interaction. As with the flaring selves of the crossroads, the plurality of "humans" need not refer to a community but instead to a group of possible better futures for each reader. The theme is again the potential spaces in which the city allows its citizens and the readers of *thirsty* to insert themselves into.

Constraining the hope of *thirsty*'s literary imaginary of Toronto are those transnational narratives of media representation. The media restricts Julia's self-image by attempting to depict her mourning Alan. Although for Julia, her complex relationship with Alan rendered his death "beyond any small drama of tears // Newsprint would record her dry eyes" ("XVI" 26). The "record" of news media is one public expression of mourning, but one that comes with customs and stock narratives for local, national and international stories. Brand's narrator compares Julia's image from the funeral to the work of pointillist painter Seurat, in turn emphasising the constructed and deconstructed nature of mass imagery. Specifically Julia symbolises "the concept of emptiness / selvedged with the science of darkness and light" ("XVI" 27). This alludes to the mass acceptance of newspaper photography as documentary despite its overt framing, here hemming or "selvedged" from the halftone process of reproduction. Halftone traditionally replicates the strategy of pointillist art to cheaply produce and transmit imagery; it is the basis of communicating complex imagery through systems designed for simple messages. The process therefore represents a restrictive form of categorisation. The city suggests escapes to Julia in the form of overwritten and underwritten spaces. It is in the aftermath of her daughter's departure that Julia considers: "If she would suddenly walk to the corner of Yonge / and Bloor / supposing there the incessant movement of her hand / would subside // or melt in the solitary flights, the syllables of weeping / collected there " ("XXIV" 44). To alleviate

the weight of mourning, Julia sees the extreme amount of diverse lives which cross and have crossed at Yonge Street and Bloor Street as consoling. The sense that diverse kinds of mourning, loss and hope could gather in the lively bustle of a city intersection proves a resonant source of hope. Another site of the city's possible consolation is aligned with the Toronto Islands: "she should follow / a ride on the ferry to Hanlan's Point, nakedness / she needed / could find some place to be naked" ("XXIV" 45). Hanlan's Point is home to "Toronto's clothing-optional beach" which Shawn Micallef posits as the "ultimate manifestation of the kind of freedom Toronto represents: everybody can simply be how they like without segregation or categorization" (*Stroll* 44).

Another correlative to the hopeful imaginary of Toronto is provided in the local, national and global narratives of violence. When Alan's sermons at Christie Pits are recalled in "IX", the narrative time of the poem shifts to the violence done since Alan's death, suggesting the continuing local inheritance of past sermons and ongoing national and international events:

All the dreadfulness that happened in America had happened

his inspired sermons at Christie Pits steamed,

a baby found in a microwave, a baby shaken to death,

fourteen girls murdered in a college, people kidnapped,

Black men dragged, two, three young girls tortured

and raped and killed by a sweet blond boy,

bodies found in lakes and forests, bodies in car trunks,

bodies god knows where in disappearances, ("IX, ii" 14)

The "fourteen girls" seems to refer to the massacre of young women at the École Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989. In turn, Ian Rae suggests that the "sweet blond boy" refers to the Canadian serial killer Paul Bernardo who operated in Scarborough in the early 1990s (Rev. of *thirsty* 18). The "black men dragged" seems to refer race murders committed in America such as that of James Byrd in Texas in 1998 ("Third Defendant is Convicted in Dragging Death in Texas"). The tragic connotations of this list become apparent when trying to find a specific event to tie each act of violence to, given the multiple occasions where similar acts of violence have occurred. The global reach of news media ensures that eruptions of violence are irrevocably tied to everyday life often regardless of locality or notions of local interest. Whilst this ensures that solidarity against certain hate crimes spreads globally, the unfortunate side effect is a spreading of the very same hate crimes. The open-ended list of violence in the poem resolves only that hate can attach to multiple subjects. The implications of such hatred are felt in *thirsty*'s narrative strand, as the tangible weight mourning practices entail is seen in Julia and Chloe's lives.

Perhaps the unifying desire that draws together the narrative's characters and the anonymous citizens can be found by returning to another connotation of 'syrinx'. Syrinx was the name of a dryad in classical myth who, when pursued by Pan, dived into a river to evade capture. In various versions of the myth Syrinx transforms into reeds, and eventually pan pipes. Pan goes on to use these pipes, known as syrinx in Greek, to test the purity or impurity of those playing.[16] Brand's literary imaginary of Toronto emphasises these associations, between purity and impurity, desire and drowning, when the title word *thirsty* appears. At the moment of Alan's death his last word is seemingly thirsty: "when he had fallen, '...thirsty...'" ("II" 4). In "XII", where Alan is referred to as "jeremiad at the door holding the rough bible" (21),

already hinting at biblical downfall, the poem ends "he felt dry, 'Jesus…thirsty…' he called, falling" (21). Mason suggests this thirst is "a state of both physical and spiritual deprivation" and a conscious echo of Christ's words before the Crucifixion (789). This does add a religious sense to the lyric persona's treatment of thirst, where it is framed as something "hereditary" and shared "he was thirsty, as I" ("XIII" 22). However, Brand borrows the bodily relation of thirst from Christian depictions to suggest a powerful metaphor for communal unity. The sequential form of poetry is crucial to establishing this definition of 'thirsty' when two of Brand's poems overrun their formal boundaries, "XXI" ending with "'…thirsty…'" (39), before "XXII" opens "which is to say, human." (40). The power of thirst is to recognise communal desires, and in turn that these desires find spaces for expression in Toronto. Conversely, the homeless drug-addicted woman who witnessed Chloe and Julia on the street is positioned opposite this thirst: "She would love to stop / her own breath and the story it drowns in" ("XIX" 34). Without the thirst or desire for anything but her drugs she is closed off from the world. Importantly for Brand's portrayal of the city, she is still a witness, and part of the inclusivity demonstrated in the collection's view of possible diasporic linkages. However, thirst is seen as a connective force, an argument for grounded association.

thirsty relates a version of Toronto's history and geography, and emphasises that these provide the reader with "versions of what we may be" ("I" 2). The diasporic city in *thirsty*'s Toronto enables multiple connections to be made across time, race and place. Brand's textual space looks to a public to insert themselves into the logics and pathways of other lives, and to remain aware that poetry can be a public space for this engagement. Through poetry, *thirsty* develops a notion of affinity, to provide connections briefly and tangentially to those who desire an affectual community. In

this way, *thirsty* emphasises not a simple de-centring, but a potential all-embracing of

Toronto's many connections. *thirsty* is still critical in its engagement with others,

wary of the violence and difference that lies behind subject positions. However,

Brand's text demonstrates the hope that counteracts violence and can be found

produced as social space in the material space of Toronto

4. Toronto the Mobile: Stephen Marche's *Raymond and Hannah*

> I dream about Toronto. Moodless city at the margins of the earth. City for the fish that slipped through parts of the net that are broken. In that open grid, those open neighbourhoods, there's nothing that can't be resolved. Fuck, there's nothing to resolve. But that's what I dream of.
> --- Stephen Marche, *Raymond and Hannah* (197)

In Stephen Marche's novel, *Raymond and Hannah* (2005), the titular Hannah recalls Toronto from the site of her spiritual pilgrimage, Jerusalem. Hannah's Toronto is described in biblical terms, as a city for those cast out from elsewhere, as a margin, and as a site of comparative insignificance. Rob Shields explains that cities when figured as "marginal places ... are not necessarily on geographical peripheries but, first and foremost, they have been placed on the periphery of cultural systems of space in which places are ranked relative to each other" (*Places* 3). This relativity is invoked by Hannah to align Toronto to a global network of cities. In this network, Toronto is a "city at the margins" or a "city for" the diasporic and the mobile. Whether Hannah's comparison of cities configures a hierarchy or a network of equally valued cities is unclear, but each model is attached to the dynamics of the "cultural system" of ranking cities. Hannah's judgement echoes the patterns through which geographers and economists have attempted to understand the contemporary city, gesturing towards the model of the global city whilst simultaneously attempting to order or tier a hierarchy of globalness. Saskia Sassen's original definition of economically important and highly networked cities as "global cities" sought to define the emerging relationship between globalization and urban areas. Researchers following Sassen's lead have sought to explain global inequalities by establishing league tables and hierarchies of global cities.[1] This research enables Toronto to be portrayed as both on the margin of a network of the world's most powerful cities and

simultaneously as a global centre of connectivity. Neil Brenner and Roger Keil assert this global and regional perspective: "While Toronto is not situated within the top tier of the global urban hierarchy, it does serve as the urban core of a second-tier global financial, cultural and manufacturing region" (3). Such attention ensures that Toronto's globalness or, to use John Rennie Short's term –Toronto as "globalizing city" (74) –gains recognition for its transnational connections. The circulation of goods, communications and economic transactions that links Toronto to other global locations occurs alongside international travel, which enables Hannah's reflection on the city at a remove from it. This chapter addresses how Marche's novel depicts Toronto in juxtaposition with Jerusalem, and through Hannah and Raymond's relationship, the negotiation and resolution of twenty-first-century Torontonians' increasingly "mobile lives" (Elliot and Urry x). Examining the novel's literary influences, its form, the use of email and the overarching portrayal of globalization, this chapter analyses how a mobile Toronto is depicted.

Marche's novel is set in Toronto in late summer and, with no historical events to judge against, in what appears to be the first decade of the twenty-first century. The novel's two protagonists are both university-educated twenty-somethings who meet at a house party. Raymond, now a graduate student, is writing his doctorate on the seventeenth-century text by Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Hannah is a university graduate with a history degree who has drifted between part-time arts jobs. When they meet Hannah has already planned to leave the city for a nine-month trip to Jerusalem to study at a yeshiva, an Orthodox Jewish institute. The couple only have a week together before her departure. Subsequently, the novel shifts to include bursts of e-mail correspondence, interlaced with first and third-person sketches of Raymond and Hannah's lives in different cities. Noting the couple's separation, and the

increasing frequency of such situations, Raywat Deonandan has termed the novel "a modern romance for the age of globalization" (63). In form too, the text echoes the pace and rhythm of global flows of information, as alternating styles and viewpoints are employed in a succession of fragmented scenes. Some scenes are akin to prose poetry, in a lyric narrative voice, whilst other passages depict a direct address by the characters, invade their thoughts or display short bursts of dialogue. Resembling a cross between a film script and an annotated manuscript, the continuous marginalia adds another disembodied voice to the narrative. This layout fractures any notion of a narrator, avoiding a consistent sense of a narrative perspective on this contemporary urban love story.

When Stephen Marche describes the potential in writing about contemporary Toronto, he perceives a disconnection between the forms that have been deployed and the content of the multicultural, global city:

All we have done so far is write 19th-century English novels about the various ethnicities that have congregated here. The result has been the masses of pedestrian exotica that win literary prizes. But what is going to happen when we start to integrate the history of the world's styles into our writing? ("Here, Now")

Marche's words draw a clear distinction between traditional notions of literary form and the content of Toronto's present. Although Toronto has changed drastically since Northrop Frye's 1977 essay "Culture as Interpenetration," Frye makes the very same distinction and suggests the same remedy as Marche for Canadian writing. To "genuinely" represent place in literature for Frye necessitates an "interpenetration" of form and content ("Culture" 529). Despite Frye's consistent assertion that content cannot influence form, articulate content when joined with inarticulate form are seen

to collaborate in a mature work of art. Going on to cite the example of William Faulkner, Frye suggests that the best writing can find the universal in the specific. Part of that universal engagement is in the form. As outlined in chapter one, Frye sees the shape of writing as something beholden to market readership, and therefore part of "an international idiom, and the capitals where that idiom is established are still, as they have always been, the big centres, London, Paris, New York" ("Culture" 530). Frye's views here are taken from an address to the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences in Montreal, and are therefore framed for an international audience. However, it is striking that Frye's notion of a universal, international realm of literary form, is actually located in American and European cities. Perhaps it was inconceivable in the aftermath of cultural nationalism's support of the publishing industry in Canada that Canadian centres could also shape this international idiom. As seen in the introduction to this thesis, Stephen Henighan suggests that the decline in cultural nationalism ensures that these external international centres continue to overly shape literary form. Marche, in contrast to Frye and Henighan, posits that formal innovation can come from an 'integration' of international form and Canadian writing, citing the work of AM Klein and Michael Ondaatje ("Here, Now").

Of particular relevance to an analysis of *Raymond and Hannah* is Marche's description of Klein's achievements. Gesturing to Klein's novel, *The Second Scroll*, Marche praises how Klein "thinking of his Montreal childhood, turned to Talmudic glosses" ("Here, Now"). *The Second Scroll* mimics the structure of the Torah in its first five chapters, and then adopts these Talmudic glosses in the final five sections. Marche's novel seems to be greatly influenced by this structure, adopting Klein's juxtaposition of different kinds of text. In the glosses of *The Second Scroll*, poetry and

religious lessons accompany a dialogue, "Gloss Dalid" (Klein 108) followed by a letter, "Gloss Gimel" (97). The letter itself contains quotations that interrupt the main text, in a manner similar to Talmudic commentary. Marche attempts a similar juxtaposition between poetry, dialogue, essay, journal and accompanying marginalia. In a review of the novel for *Canadian Jewish News*, Anna Morgan also notes how Marche's text has a "Talmudic layout" (45). Morgan goes on to suggest that *Raymond and Hannah*'s engagement with Jewish culture derives from Marche's autobiographical influence on the text.[2] Although this pursues a useful angle on the text, it is also important to see the form as deliberately divergent from conventional autobiographical materials and indeed novels. As an illustration of this, Megan Daum has suggested that the novel reads as "less a chronicle of events than an assortment of dramatically charged moments" ("'Raymond and Hannah': A Seven-Night Stand"), indicating the feeling of a gathered miscellany produced by the combination of these textual styles. Marche himself has drawn links between his own and Klein's work, citing him as an influence on his desire to create a more storied urban landscape in Canadian writing:

> I think the novels I was really thinking about were Leonard Cohen... were Montreal Novels. In particular AM Klein's *The Second Scroll*. That was the biggest influence on it [*Raymond and Hannah*] by far. (Personal Interview)

Cohen and Klein's influence are both relevant to *Raymond and Hannah*'s formal innovation, evident in the novel's use of the lyric voice to tell a poetic urban love story. In turn, whilst Raymond in Marche's novel is engaged in studying the seventeenth-century scholar of melancholia, Robert Burton, Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* conducts a conversation with the same century through the figure of Catherine Tekakwitha. Furthermore, Cohen's novel was widely seen as handling graphic

material, with John Moss asserting it "plays on obscenity and profanity" (172), and Ian Rae more recently deeming it a "pornographic novel" (*From Cohen* 41). Morgan similarly warns readers approaching *Raymond and Hannah* that: "the first 27 pages contain explicit sexual content and reveal an honesty that the author never turns away from" (45). Cohen and Klein's use of bodies in depicting place is also evident in Marche's text, as the city's sexual geography is foregrounded. Often this can be seen in the novel's passages of prose poetry.

After Hannah and Raymond's first night together, a lyric voice takes over for a paragraph. The marginalia comments that this passage constitutes a "Toronto Aubade" heightening our awareness of the formal shift to prose poetry. The aubade, according to MW Rowe, is "a piece of music, song or poem either about, or to be sung, recited or played at, dawn" (185). Developing from French troubadour lyric song, Rowe goes on to suggest that the aubade is usually without dialogue and refers to the imminent separation of lovers, or the praise of dawn for its religious or erotic blessing. In considering the lovers' parting for a day's work, Billy Mills suggests that the importance of the aubade's use is in how "the conventions are adapted to reflect the lives of ordinary people" ("Poster Poems: Aubade"). For Marche, the aubade illustrates how the characters of Raymond and Hannah could intersect with working lives in early morning Toronto. Also, Marche's aubade imagines the city's own time-geography empty of commuters, but full of freighting of goods and cleaners slowing down to allow the peace and tranquillity of the downtown attic to spread into the daytime:

> Transport trucks, go slowly. Pull yourself over on the side of the road. Bring
>
> the night with you into your bunks. Let Raymond and Hannah anticipate
>
> endlessly on stairs up to attics. Nights in August in Toronto are too short

besides. And go slowly, street-washing men. Just let the dirt be dirty for now.

Let the streets seize with filth. Let your engines stall, and stop the morning

from coming. And more slowly, smokestacks; in fact, completely shut

yourselves down. Nights in August in Toronto are too full of light besides. For

once let all the power in you not flow, and leave Raymond and Hannah asleep

in bed alone. (9)

This aubade allows a demonstration of the incantatory power of anaphora, with the

repetition of "let" and "Nights in August in Toronto" willing an external force, or the

reader, to imagine relinquishing hold of a schedule and therefore time slowing down

for the lovers. In the subsequent passage the prose voice jars by introducing a

repetition of "here" to resonate with the stark immediacy of action: "Here come the

Scarborough cars. Here come the cars from Oakville" (9). The mention of

Scarborough and Oakville highlights these locations as the beginning of the suburban

commute into the downtown, and its reliance on the noise of cars. This is a much

rowdier, individualistic sense of Toronto in the early hours than Dionne Brand's

portrayal of the drifting, organic commute in *thirsty* (see the opening of chapter

three). The corresponding marginal note "Cities don't listen" relates to the failure of

the aubade to be heard by the city, and the prospective din of the cars that are

consensually ignored.

The marginalia throughout *Raymond and Hannah* bear closer examination,

particularly given their association with an authorial voice. Jim Bartley expresses a

frustration with Marche's marginalia:

When Marche's signposts are trivial or redundant, they're merely distracting.

More irksome is that some are needed to make sense of the text. Ignoring them

all leaves you occasionally bewildered. Reading them all serves only to blur

and fragment Marche's otherwise lucid and compact prose" ("Jerusalem, mon amour").

For Bentley then, the marginalia serve as an intrusion or an unwelcome commentary, further aggravating the reader when this commentary rises above the subordinate position it is assumed to have. More common in edited texts, and so medieval script or translation, the presence of marginalia asserts a second indication of authority on the page. That this marginal presence is fictional, and reflexive with the centre text, deepens the mystery surrounding its authority. Gérard Gennette attests that authorial marginalia in fiction generally plays a "corroborative role" (332) however when the novel's marginalia receives careful attention they can reveal compelling strategies of echoing, mnemonics and shifting diegetic levels. Such effects ensure that the corroborative function of marginalia is redefined to allow for what William Slights terms a "multicentred" page, where the adjacent text merits its own attention (81). An example of the novel's multicentred page can be seen below in figure 2. The first two marginalia in *Raymond and Hannah* act akin to speech marks, as "Hannah thinks about the night" is followed by "Raymond thinks about the night" (1).[3] Corresponding passages to the binding-side of the page are unencumbered by additional punctuation and are taken as stream-of-consciousness insights into each character. For Raymond, this enables fragments or lists of thoughts: "Why you've been eating so much. All that cheese. All the beef" (1). Another type of use for the marginalia occurs in the form of the "how to" guide, echoing the format of the recipe or lifestyle magazine article. In this instance, the marginalia takes on the role of the heading, instructing "How to attend" (2) or "How to look at an apartment in Jerusalem" (52). Such experiments add to the occasionally detached nature of the text. In other marginalia the text seems to précis the central passage, as if summarising a scene. At times this maps the staging

of the scene within the city: "at the Harbourfront stage" (30). When the main narrative

depicts Raymond and Hannah recalling these early moments in their relationship,

such marginalia serve as mnemonic devices for the places in the city when these

moments took place. Later in the novel Marche's marginalia become embedded in the

diegetic narrative, taking on the lyrics of a song playing in the background of

Raymond and Hannah's bar in the Israeli city of Elat: "A sailboat in the moonlight

and you" (179). Whilst the main passages speak of Raymond and Hannah's angst-

ridden introspection, these lyrics from the song continue alongside four pages of split

passages. This clash of moods on the page reflects the presence of differing cultural

flows. The novel is both a cultural space of exchange between the two settings,

between Toronto and Israel, and a textual site of cultural flows from varying sources.

The lyrics of an American song written in 1937 find themselves strung alongside the

argument of a Canadian couple having personal and religious differences on the edge

of the Red Sea. Although such occurrences of cultural montage are characteristic of

much older histories of travel, this scene is another example of the novel's awareness

of increasing cultural hybridity present under globalization.

There was a month in there somewhere. Not the slightest memory of it but Burton. Principally as a matter of scholarly research, Raymond, concede to take Burton's advice. And what is that? Go to the party. That lovely girl Lara will be there. Where is it again? A harbourfront bar. Jesus fuck Christ. Wear a suit jacket. Look nice. Check out the action. The action, yes. That's what your youth is for. Drink it, don't pour it in the sand.

Raymond prepares to go to a party

Date: March 27 (6:14:39 pm)
Subject: Call x 2

Call x 2

Ray,
I think I missed you again last night. A group from the Institute took over a Yemeni restaurant and feasted. Please call me. I need to hear your voice tell me that things are still okay between us.
    Four weeks and counting.
Love you,
H.

Sleek, long zinc and frail, tall teak. Lara in that same red dress smiling from the perch of the back of a chair, oh hello, and it is an interesting opportunity, opportune moment. She looks at you, Raymond, as if you were a man. Ashtray, cigar smoke and your heart beating. Aren't you lucky? Hello again.

Raymond thinks his way through the party

1) Raymond, seeing Lara at the other end of the bar, nods and waves. She smiles in return. He sidles over.

Two scenes

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Fig. 2: An example of the page layout in *Raymond and Hannah* (147).

The marginalia highlight a number of passages that take the city for their subject, focusing on the Robarts Library at the University of Toronto and an overarching view of Toronto. The text adjoining a discussion of the Robarts Library is simply "Robarts Library" (107). This may seem unnecessarily referential, yet it also avoids the common shift to Raymond's point of view. Therefore the passage becomes a narrator's insight, akin to a passage from a guidebook:

> Built in the mid-sixties and reportedly a cause of several of its architects'
> suicides, the Robarts Library building is a grotesquerie parodying scholarship:
> it supposedly imitates a peacock (with a hundred vigilant eyes) but looks more
> like a turkey. Raymond's routine is formed by this architecture. (107)

Anecdotally, the information surrounding the peacock/turkey resemblance is common parlance amongst students at the university, and Mary Lou Lobsinger gestures to the peacock semblance in her defence of the building as part of Toronto's brutalist architectural history (164). This is not the first time Marche's novel draws attention to architecture in the city only to dismiss it. However, in other passages it is Raymond who undertakes this, gesturing to the cityscape by way of "the concrete" (66). In the above passage, the interjection is Marche as narrator. The tone of this passage is more conversational than those of the lyric voice, indicating that the narrator is also undergoing stylistic shifts in representing the city. Partly this functions to balance the beautiful and the ugly. Marche, in interview, has highlighted the importance of celebrating an idea of Toronto's "ugliness":

> I didn't want to play a game where I was trying to find symbolic resonance.
> Like, I was trying to pretend the CN tower had the same resonance as the
> Brooklyn Bridge, the Canadian version of the Brooklyn Bridge. I wanted to

revel in the ugliness and the irrelevance, because that's what makes it

[Toronto] so liveable. (Personal Interview)

Reminiscent of Michael Redhill's criticism of the architecture of Toronto Public

Library and New City Hall in *Consolation*, there is perhaps something strangely

homely in ridiculing civic architecture (see the discussion of this in chapter two).

However, Marche's understanding of relating Toronto is here freighted with the same

concerns outlined in the introduction to this thesis over Toronto's symbolic economy,

at local, national and global levels. To lionise a local architectural landmark like the

CN Tower might be to overwrite it with national levels of meaning. The immediate

comparison drawn here is to the American meaning resonating from a New York

landmark. Marche's comparison thereby draws in the national symbolism assumed of

both cities and the underlying fear that invoking local symbolism might draw in an

inauthentic national, or worse a derivative form of symbolism drawn from an

American source. Again this plays into the fear that Toronto is, as Wyndham Lewis

recorded, the "most American of Canadian cities" (77). A more overt ambivalence

can be seen in the brief passage that accompanies the marginalia text "In Toronto," –

where "[i]t's quite easy to forget you're anywhere at all" (123). Although there are

virtues to the freedom such a place might bring, it also provokes a reiteration of the

absence of distinct experience. This is commonly associated with Edward Relph's

term 'placelessness' and Marc Augé's more recent suggestion of the 'non-place' (as

discussed in chapter one and two, and finds application in chapter five). Augé's own

definition of non-place seems too relative to address to an entire city, given that, as

with place, the non-place "never exists in pure form: places reconstitute themselves in

it; relations are restored and resumed in it" (78). Marche's interjection here is again

hyperbolic, deliberately resonating with a sense of Toronto as marginal. For

Raymond, the sense of Toronto as a distinct place has value because it is where he is studying and because it is not his hometown in Nova Scotia (18), and for most of the novel, because being in Toronto means not being in Jerusalem. The novel's fragmented narrative voices also work outside of Raymond and Hannah's point of view in portraying a sense of Toronto.

The city's ravines are the subject of a distinct prose passage in the novel, accompanied by the marginalia text "Ravines" (144):

> Through this anonymous city, through its commodious ugliness, its moodlessness, wild ravines run. It's as if in the rush outward to decimate the wilderness, the city incurred its own losses. Crazy wildflowers grow there, and in the spring the children run down into them to commit dangers. The adolescents follow to bushfuck and bushdrink, and the smell of the green, pocketed with snow, clears the brain of the other city dwellers. All come back up with wilderness crevices in their urban selves. (144-145)

Through the ravines, the proximity of nature lends Toronto further definition. Marche's use of the ravines then follows the observation by Hugh Hood, and echoed by WJ Keith and Philip Marchand, that the ravines and their bridges are "the most important imaginative properties on the Toronto scene" (10). Hood's attention to the ravines insists that they are both a distinctive part of the city and inherently literary: "To the poet the labyrinthine ways are those of his own mind. In Toronto there are real labyrinths" (12).[4] The extension of the ravines from material to local symbolic also comes with national literary allusions. The "wilderness" in the sharp gorges that exist alongside urban streets resonates with and amends that "Canadian sensibility" alluded to in Northrop Frye's *The Bush Garden* (x). Also echoing the Margaret Atwood poem "Dream 1: Bush Garden" from which the phrase 'bush garden'

emerged, Marche's Torontonians appropriate the wilderness within the urban to "bushfuck and bushdrink" (144).[5] Whilst the classic sensibility of Canadian writing located the wilderness outside of the garrison-like settlement, Marche's writing not only demonstrates the blurred nature of wild space in Toronto but the extent to which it is both illicit and socially active. The novel's sexual geography is then highlighted when Hannah maps these "wilderness crevices" onto her recollections of Raymond's body (145). Raymond is imagined walking "beside Lake Ontario" (43) and described as "lighthearted, hungry for the world, worldly hungered, like a city running with ravines" (43). Whilst the worldly nature of Toronto serves as an obvious allusion to its role as a global city, Raymond can equally be seen to be alive to this worldliness in his desire for exotic food and travel. Mapping the topographical city over Raymond's body produces sexual signification, with the illicit connotations of the ravines sensually inscribing themselves across Raymond's body. Where the city as body is a familiar mechanistic image in planning terms and therefore what Lefebvre would term a 'Representation of Space,' Marche's text clearly engages with the artistic scope of spaces of representation, whereby the perception and conception of space are uniquely amended. Raymond and Hannah's affective relationship to the city is emphasised by this emotional, sexual mapping. It is, after all, Hannah's perception of Raymond that is described through the mediating template of the city's topography. More than mediating Hannah's feelings, the city adapts and adopts Raymond's bodily shapes to become these ravines, closely fitting such a purpose in their frequent reference in sociology and urban literature as lungs or veins. As an artistic response Marche renders an intimate portrait, a city in the lovers' image. Indeed, this is an image the text returns to in its epilogue.

Whilst Hannah is in Jerusalem, the lovers' correspondence is conducted in a series of emails, interspersed with thoughts, reflections and routines. Jon Kertzer criticises Marche's construction of email communication, decrying "the bland email style of the lovers' correspondence" (180), however what Kertzer sees as bland can also be read as the innovative and subtle mimicking of everyday correspondence. The quotidian depicted is also loaded with meaning. The emails constructed by Marche are symbolic of the kind of time-space compression that David Harvey suggests is characteristic of globalization. As one of the new communications technologies of the contemporary period, email symbolises instaneity, rapidity and inexpensive transmission of information over great distances. Although bearing relation to postal services, email correspondents need not wait for the carriage of their message.[6] Whilst Hannah is on a flight to Jerusalem, Raymond sends her two emails reflecting on their week together, knowing that she will not receive them until she lands. The second of these labelled "Me again" functions on rapid delivery and receipt for its context: "Hannah, that was fantastic. What was that?" (45). Such a reliance on contextual foreknowledge is the mark of email, given that, as John Urry notes, email is a distinct example of communication, carrying its own form: "Email -- which is neither writing nor speech -- is highly informal and often involves a curiously confessional style" (*Sociology Beyond Societies*, 74). The confessional style of Raymond and Hannah's email is heightened to depict their intimacy. In turn, the reader cannot be sure that all the diegetic email correspondence is being displayed. In one instance, a message is said by Raymond to have been half-received: "Cut off at the word 'identity' for a cosmic, technical joke" (62). This does not refer to a message the reader has been privy to, and leads to a suspicion that the couple are emailing more outside of the correspondence shown. Given that Hannah's stay at the yeshiva is nine-months

Marche can perhaps be forgiven for giving an impressionistic experience of what would in reality be a more copious body of communication, which would surely be excessively challenging to a reader.

Few contemporary novels have sustained periods of email conversation.[7] Perhaps it is ephemerality in ubiquity and the danger that Kertzer points to of a "bland" style that has restrained the use of email in literature. American novelist John Crowley could be seen to extend Urry's observation, putting the absence of such fiction down to the difficult hybrid form of email:

> an email novel has to almost combine the qualities of talk and writing, since they are usually written so quickly and thoughtlessly, and replied to so instantly. [It would have] to be thought of almost as creating character through dialogue. ("Author interview with John Crowley")

Here, Crowley traces how email causes speech registers to merge and how the notion of speed can alter the content of messages. Urry also highlights the symbolism of email's "instantaneity" (70), however in examining the material traces of email and their use in *Raymond and Hannah* it is equally important to note their converse tendency to be obviously composed. In this light, email can also be seen as similar to letters, and in fiction shown to operate similarly to the epistolary novel. James How underscores how email's instantaneity need not cause us to shift our critical paradigm so quickly, given that:

> Like epistolary spaces, cyberspaces are based not on asynchronous but rather on real-time communication. After all – in terms of communication between human and human – any technology that works faster than the speed of human thought is next to useless. (177)

For all their instantaneity, the human-to-human qualities emphasised by How underline how spatial reference remains important to correspondence. However, unlike in epistolary narratives, where the textual cues for the location of a writer and recipient are often given in the formal manner of addressing a letter, email narratives are concerned with addresses unmoored from a real-world location. Emails force the reader to determine the writer's location from spatial textual cues in the message body, creating a different reading experience in relation to the spaces of correspondence.

The spatial reference made by email is complex. The power of space in email is heightened by Marche's deployment of the form. Email can adopt the epistolary quality where a communiqué "represents or substitutes for the lover" (Beebee, 290). One example of this is the first email Raymond sends to Hannah after she leaves Toronto for Jerusalem

Date: August 31 (4:14:27 pm)

Subject: Next nine months

Dear Hannah,

Right now, you're somewhere in the lithosphere, I think, looking down on the coast of France, and I'm full of fragments of meals, sex, talk. Meeting you over champagne. The bath. A piece of liver. Rain on the lakeshore. That drawing of Salome. It seems like we did nothing but eat and screw. The bed was an island, and we made sorties for food. Now we go to the opposite extreme, I guess.

I love you.

Raymond (44)

The email departs from the conventional location of the addressee with Hannah being doubly present, both as the imagined presence at the time of writing and as the real-time reader of the email on the ground, in Jerusalem. In creating this doubling, the email ensures that an understanding of mutual location and intense emotion is placed in a shared space. Although Raymond laments a loss of intimacy in the disappearance of shared space in Toronto, email provides something other than the "opposite extreme" he foresees. The reader gains more access to the relationship's intimacy in witnessing the emails that form this transnational narrative. Raymond also displays his shaky grasp of geology and the atmosphere – "the lithosphere" actually relates to the earth's crust. This could be a way of saying out in the world, using scientific rhetoric, however the following comment about "looking down on the coast of France" seals the mismatching of the term. This mismatch could also be read as betraying the overt attempts and problems in constructing an email. Raymond comments on how this care could translate as artifice in the email experience, resonating with Sunka Simon's suggestion that email is "associated with the realm of the uncanny … as prostheses of the reluctant cyborg" (228). Raymond's thoughts on having sent the email to Hannah question the medium: "what kind of mixed blessing is it that when I really feel like communicating (struggled with that word), I can write to an infinitely complex series of wires spinning entirely to themselves?" (44). The medium's technology, and its implied reduction of space to a kind of 'globalized' closed circuit, belies the actual extension of human experience of time and space. The continuing physical absence portrayed by the novel's ongoing email correspondence leads Raymond to compare his relationship with Hannah to another famous epistolary narrative: "Now we're Abelard and Eloise" (129).[8]

The depiction of email performs an intimate communication across local, national and global space within a formulaic sense of textual space. An audience increasingly aware of shifts in technology has since questioned the realism of this relationship's use of communication. Marche notes that only a few years after the book was published a group of students suggested how this aspect of the novel appeared dated:

> I went and talked to students about it, and they were liked 'if it had been written today, in 2007, it would have all been in i.m. [instant messenger]'. It made me feel like Fanny Burney. It made me feel antiquated. (Personal Interview)

This perception of technology and dominant trends of communication illustrates a number of issues. The widespread use of new instant messaging services and internet communication services such as Skype could be perceived as reducing the prevalence of email conversation. Within this technological schematic, emails are perceived as long-form communication in comparison to newer ways to send shorter informal messages. However, this perception carries with it a sense of technological bias, in that levels of technological education, and internet provision, limit the avenues of communication. Email is still one of the basic parts of an internet education, however the provision of internet across Canada is governed by both the ability to pay and the option to pay for broadband. Even if individuals are able to pay for the internet, Canadian telecommunications companies often provide better services in urban over rural areas creating a real life geography of disparity over Canadian internet use (Marlow and McNish).

The urban concentration of the internet, and its rapid shift in usage also aligns email alongside a wider sense of the city's fast development of cultural signification,

often perceived from a distance as simple fashions or trends. The use of fast communication could be seen as one distinct trait of urban life in line with those novelist Russell Smith suggests have been neglected in Canadian literature. Detecting a shift in Canadian city-life, Smith posits:

> The new city is neither urb nor rus, neither under nor beside the old. Its culture floats somewhere above the city, in the media broadcasts that are international in origin. The new city - the current landscape of Canada, everywhere people live - is thus a supra-urb or perhaps an extra-urb. … The great Canadian novel of the new century will have to admit this landscape, and describe our country the way it is. (R5)

In rebutting Smith's suggestion, Eva-Marie Kröller is robust: "Smith's description of the urban novel suggests that he has a cloning of his own and perhaps Douglas Coupland's books in mind, that is, novels pre-occupied with the semiotics of 'cool'" ("The City" 5). If *Raymond and Hannah*'s depiction of urban usage of email can be construed as also representing a transnational culture of media and communications hubs, it might also be thought to deal in the "semiotics of 'cool'". Although Raymond's emails show no signs of adopting specialist language, which has developed solely from new technology, they are pronounced in their brevity and conversational referentiality of message. Raymond is seen to email Hannah and receive a response only to quickly respond:

> Date: October 4 (3:22:13 pm)
>
> Subject re: re: re: re: Toronto now
>
>
> Tell me more. (68)

Such content could be seen as part of Raymond's floating cultural use of media and communications. Similar arguments towards urban semiotics of fashion could be made over the novel's documenting of urban sociability, with marginalia documenting foods eaten at a meal "Conversation over 3) spring rolls (vegetarian)" (14), or indeed at the party where Raymond and Hannah first meet as the marginalia "Other kitchen conversations" refers to the bind-side text: "Where to get the best pork dumplings. The merits of Echinacea. The poetics of automobile advertising. Che Guevara" (3). In trying to find a semiotics of cool in the novel, each aspect only begins to accumulate more symbolic meaning for its location. The conversations and behaviour at a party, or the food eaten at a downtown restaurant may strike some readers as depthless but for others these are markers of culturally grounded languages of association. The listing of Chinese food that Raymond and Hannah eat also points to the intimacy of sharing meals. The signification of Che Guevera asserts a different political and aesthetic tone within the contemporary circulation of his image on t-shirts (Larson and Lizardo). The fashionable popular culture signification of Che Guevera lends this passing reference a wholly different meaning to any literary work from an earlier period. A semiotics of cool, which circulates both within the city and between cities, then saturates Marche's novel and thus enhances a critical reading of mobile lives. To avoid the mobility of cool within contemporary literature is then to perpetuate what Karis Shearer terms a critical "stigma against popular culture in contemporary fiction" and a broader part of the disjunct between academic study and the contemporary Canadian literature being produced (9).

Raymond and Hannah further blurs conventional traits in its attention to Toronto as an urban space invaded by nature and the urban wild. In addition to its focus on the ravines, the novel references flocks of pigeons in Toronto and Jerusalem.

This is significant given how recent Canadian animal stories gesture towards intensified urbanisation, concluding that the increase in city-dwellers has led to an increase of urbanites "decisively removed from nature" ("The Animals" 7). The integration of pigeons within the novel's depiction of Toronto's urban landscape questions the firm preconception of what urban space is. Pigeons appear to function as a case study for the novel's desire for increased mobility in already mobile lives. An initial section is set beside the marginal text "Pigeons in Jerusalem":

> The pigeons fly into Jerusalem from Hebron, from Beirut, from the Golan
> from Gaza, from Tel Aviv, from Cairo. They can't tell the difference. They do
> not even have the intelligence to revere the holy places. ... their judgement is
> indifferent: they shit on the heads of Jews, Muslims and Christians, Greeks,
> Arabs and Armenians. (48)

Although this geographic blindness is projected onto the pigeons and attributed to stupidity, the recurrence of the same stance in a following passage adjacent to "Pigeons in Toronto" hints at a deeper sense of symbolism: "It all looks the same to them. They circle over Chinese, Italian, WASP, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Korean, Pakistani, Caribbean neighbourhoods, too stupid to tell the difference" (108). Recent research has actually suggested that pigeons can recognise human faces, and therefore can discern difference in cities ("Pigeons discriminate between human feeders"). Marche's portrayal is distinctly anthropomorphic in its use of the pigeon, looking to encode their presence with an idea of liberal mobility, and to suggest theirs as an enviable position. In the novel's epilogue, the identification encouraged by these two passages is more clearly stated, as it is suggested Raymond, Hannah and the readership of the novel embrace the pigeon's stance:

Jerusalem has doves. Pigeons are Canadian doves. We are pigeons, multicoloured, rustling against each other in all the public places, and the twenty-first century belongs to the colour smudge. (205)

The symbolism of mobility and the outward blur of colour may well seem to fit a flexible urban Canada for the contemporary period but, in Toronto, pigeons live a far from utopian life. Pigeons regularly die in collisions with the glass in downtown office blocks. It is for this reason that the Fatal Light Awareness Program (FLAP) advocates for office buildings in the city to switch off their lights at night. In turn, air pollution, migratory birds of prey and public perceptions that pigeons are inauthentic wildlife can have serious local consequences. Deploying the metaphor of the pigeon is therefore a way in which the text engages with perceived contemporary mobility only to overlook the concrete barriers and material impediments that such mobilities can encounter in a cultural space.

This ambivalent attitude towards mobility and circulation can also be seen in Marche's construction of Raymond's views on multicultural Toronto. The first-person narratives that intersect between emails display a confessional aspect, portraying more vividly Hannah and Raymond's everyday thoughts. For Raymond, these veer between musing on academic life and observations on Toronto. These observations on the city often dwell on multiculturalism. One such section is labelled "Raymond considers feminism and multiculturalism":

without multiculturalism, glory, glory, hallelujah, there wouldn't be those ultra-polished bejewelled Italian women lounging half-naked in bar windows, nor those rafts of Greek women like shots of olive oil and fresh orange afterwards. And what about those Chinese women, like reeds, suggestively handling red peppers in the open markets? None of them. None of the tough

Jamaican women smoking outside the Marxist-Leninist bookstore, as beautiful

as stainless steel. Imagine the city before them. It makes you want to weep –

no, more, to produce a lamentation. (142-43)

Here Raymond's sexualised view of multiculturalism articulates Toronto as a

cosmopolitan space. The signalled awareness of discourses of multiculturalism and

feminism allow the passage to be received as ironic. However, the passage also

signals an aesthetic engagement with difference that is reminiscent of the championed

pigeon-eye view, in which complexity is only positioned on the surface. Raymond's

commentary clearly details an aspect of the global city that Short terms 'The Erotic

City' whereby globlization is literally embodied in the global city: "global cities now

contain a variety of body types; the rich variety of skin colours body shapes, sizes and

weights now form part of the visual texture of a truly global city. Cosmopolitan cities

have a variegated stock of bodies" (142). Yet this exoticisation and eroticisation of

bodies is highly reductive and hints at a dubious consumer attitude. The multiple

female bodies become items to be consumed (just as the homeless in Toronto are seen

by Alex's "cannibal eye" in *Girls Fall Down*, see chapter five). The reverse reading

of these embodied global flows must recognise the difficulties and inequalities of

history and contemporary experience that lie beyond the surface. In turn, the

standpoint from which this difference is witnessed and eroticised must itself be

examined as a construct, particularly if this is meant to be the site of Canadian or

Torontonian identity. The last observation in Raymond's list seems to make a cloaked

reference to Dionne Brand, both linking to the Toronto Women's Bookstore on

College Street, and Brand's own activist history in the community the store serves.[9]

Indeed the suggestion of "lamentation" reflects *thirsty*'s own rhetorical use of elegy

and threnody (see chapter three).

The surface recognition of multiculturalism in parts of *Raymond and Hannah* is balanced by more lyrical and nuanced understandings of its historical complexity. One such passage highlights "The history of love in Toronto" (37) utilizing the concept of the exchange of love in order to reveal the historic power imbalances in the city:

> Love came from France and England. It murdered. It lied. It covered blankets with smallpox and sold them. It wasn't needed. It survived.
>
> Love changed slowly, kept coming, straining, rising. It was poor. It was proud. Everybody minded. Love brought strange dishes, new hatreds, new forms of exercise. It ruined everything. It survived.
>
> And love keeps pouring into Toronto from everywhere it's despised, ruining everything, with no end in sight. (38)

Here, the Canadian national history involved in Toronto's creation is an active referent in how the city deals with immigration. Although not explicit, this is also the closest the novel comes to recognising Native claims to the city, and to their persecution by colonial forces. In turn the adaptation of love, in the form of binding together, recognises the city now welcomes immigrants from "everywhere." This welcoming process is complicated by understanding the contraction of "it's," given that Toronto might be welcoming those from places *it has* "despised", or places where *it is* "despised". This contradiction serves to underline the continuing process of this history. Just as this love is paradoxical in its combination of disease and hatred, so then is the power of "ruining" celebrated, for its physical suggestion of breaking down barriers. The articulation of a mixed-faith relationship within the novel also addresses this theme, as Raymond's own atheism conflicts with Hannah's growing sense of Jewish identity in Jerusalem. Indeed, Raymond is consistently placed as

other himself within this frame, experiencing what the marginalia terms "the embarrassment of the goy" (169). Marche's own autobiographical experience of intermarriage is equally resonant in his understanding of the challenges and mobilities of contemporary Toronto life.[10] Therefore, it becomes hard to balance the characterisation of Toronto multiculturalism in the novel alongside Marche's corresponding depthless focus on sex: "Here, people really sleep with each other. A lot. I read an article that said 70% of third-generation immigrants are in mixed-race marriages" (Personal Interview).[11]

The shaping of Raymond's character impacts upon the text via his academic life. Punctuating Hannah's emails and descriptions of Jerusalem are passages relating to Raymond's academic year in Toronto. Despite the privileged position study affords Raymond, both in terms of wealth and mobility, his separation from Hannah ensures that, in loneliness, he engages with Toronto The marginalia makes this process clear: "Raymond thinks of something to write Hannah" (117). This something invariably turns out to be a perception of the city he wishes to share: "what would [Robert] Burton say about the McDonald's on Markham Street I pass every day, the one filled with old people nursing free refills of coffee from six to eleven?" (117). Burton's influence extends beyond Raymond's perception of Toronto. Mirroring the formal textual influence of the Talmud in the novel, and Hannah's engagement with it, Raymond's careful study of Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is also clearly illustrated. Sections of Raymond's thesis work are juxtaposed with the couple's correspondence, with each section citing a part of Burton's text before developing what Burton's thoughts might mean for Raymond's own personal situation. One section on "this Treatise of Love-Melancholy" (115) mimics the subjective stance of Raymond and omits another section of Burton that goes on to echo the novel as a

whole's structure. Burton develops his thoughts on love-melancholy by understanding the dramatic form of his own text, and deciding:

> boldly to show myself in this common stage, and in this tragic-comedy of love to act several parts, some satirically, some comically, some in a mixed tone, as the subject I have in hand gives occasion, and present scene shall required or offer itself. (93)

Burton's own view on *The Anatomy of Melancholy*'s form is reflected in Marche's textual structure, constituting a number of passages shifting from inhabiting comic or tragic stances to romantic stances. The influence of Burton is not the only academic overflow into the narrative, as other passages purport to transcribe meetings with review boards and even a PhD supervision. Marche's representation of academic life at the University of Toronto (U of T) develops into a knowing satire, heightened by the fact that Marche himself was a Graduate Student at the U of T when he was writing *Raymond and Hannah*.[12] The language Raymond deploys in an academic context sometimes affects his usage of email. The nature of an email dialogue maintaining a long-distance relationship clearly carries more weight than the popular instant, ephemeral perception of the form. Even so, the frequent emailing Raymond conducts with his supervisor leads to one problematic use of register. In one telling example, Raymond signs off an email to Hannah with "best regards" (110). Hannah responds "'Best regards'!!?? Look over that last message" (111), and almost instantly, judging by the timestamp of the email, receives an apology:

> Date: January 14 (5:45:07 pm)
>
> Subject: re: re: re: Dates and package

I'm so sorry. These sign-offs can get to be such a habitual thing. I'm just

hoping I didn't sign off to my supervisor "Love, Ray." (111)

This initial slip in formality acquires a deeper meaning later in the narrative. Despite behaving chastely over the detailed, cold winter, by March, Raymond commits infidelity. He then phones Hannah to tell her what has happened. When Hannah decides she will still let Raymond visit her in Jerusalem, her email to him pointedly signs off "Best regards" (157).

Hannah's experiences of Jerusalem draw comparison to the only other city she has lived in, Toronto. The first instance of this is seen in Hannah's feelings of alienation in Jerusalem. Finding herself alone for Rosh Hashanah, she laments having "nowhere to celebrate, nowhere to go. In Toronto, she could have found a dozen services within walking distance, but not in Jerusalem" (54). Whilst Toronto might not be the place to obtain an orthodox understanding of Judaism, in Jerusalem Hannah realises the extent to which Toronto contains a Jewish community.[13] In turn, Jerusalem-as-city supersedes her perception of Jerusalem as religious symbol. This realisation can be traced in Hannah's initial response to the orthodox Jewish institute:

The Institute is located on a wide street far in the city's south, a street of

dealerships and discount outlets mostly. Mercedes-Benz has a huge warehouse

on the corner, and there's a bulk grocery club and smaller strip mall

storefronts selling mattresses, cellphones and guns. Every pedestrian under the

age of thirty heads toward one particular door, so Hannah knows it's the one.

There's also a small bronze sign over the lintel to distinguish it from the other

outlets.

It sells a product too: the atmosphere of authentic but non-threatening

Judaism. (56)

Hannah judges the institute as being caught up in the cultures of consumption of its locality. Here, alongside the distinctive multinational companies like Mercedes-Benz, and the open selling of firearms, is another form of multinational organisation – religion. The clash of consumerism and violence are again a contradiction of the different kinds of city that exist within the city. Sassen calls these "the multiple cities that inhabit each city" (xi), suggesting that violently polarised coexistences illustrate the restructuring of city space under globalization. Certainly here, the religious city is seen as existing alongside the commercial city, the domestic city and the city in conflict. These multiple networks of circulation continue to be defined once Hannah has stepped inside the institute. After a brief speech there is a break for brunch where Hannah figures the building and people outside an idealised, authentic version of Israeli citizenship: "An Israeli would be out of place here, in the English-speaking, synagogue basement-style rooms filled with United States citizens … Ivy League, Jewish-American youth has found a pocket in the City of God" (57-8). Just as Hannah has an idealised version of Israeli identity, she also attempts to square each new circuit of existence with the religious city, her 'City of God.' Another glimpse of this tendency comes when she expresses her surprise in an email to Raymond that Jerusalem has a "hip part of town" (62). Such classification of urban areas seems a familiar conceit in Toronto but clashes with her idealised vision of Jerusalem.

Both Toronto and Jerusalem, and Raymond and Hannah are juxtaposed in the novel's epilogue, where marginalia are dispensed with. Instead, the poetic third-person voice, familiar from deployment in sections such as the aubade, returns to dwell upon the enigmatic future for the couple. Reintroducing the motif of the city as body, and here as bodies, Marche sets the mood for a passage where the pair's bodies are transposed across the city's topography: "Their bodies were as beautiful as a city

not cared for much. His belly and hers were two bridges facing each other across a ravine" (205). For the lyric voice, the physicality of the protagonists begins to stand in for Toronto. The lovers bodies are the city, echoing the poetic tradition of figuring the lovers' world as the only world, discounting all thought of other citizens. The stance required by the lyric voice here, to be able to see the city as two bodies, gestures to both a poetic inheritance and to perceptions developed upon in urban studies. The language of AM Klein resonates with Marche's epilogue, drawing upon Klein's poem 'Portrait of the Poet as Landscape' where the poet's body is mapped: "Item by exciting item – / air to his lungs, and pressured blood to his heart. – / they are pulsated, and breathed, until they map, / not the world's, but his own body's chart!" (19). Klein's poem addresses the place of the poet in the social landscape, but furthermore aligns the tangible poet's body to both the land and language. Marche's use of Klein echoes this alignment whilst shifting referents to inscribe the bodies in the specific urban environment of Toronto, a topography of ravines and bridges ghosting the intimate curve of "[h]is belly and hers" (205). The standpoint required of the poet echoes the novel's advocacy of the pigeon-eye view, and thereby discusses an aerial view of the city as authoritative. This is the same perspective from which Michel de Certeau conceives "the transformation of the urban *fact* into the *concept* of a city" (94). For de Certeau this perspective is a "celestial" viewpoint and is therefore imbued with the negative implications of seeking to see the city as a unified body (92). Late nineteenth and early twentieth-century architects and planners Frederick Law Olmsted, Ebeneezer Howard and Le Corbusier deployed similar language for the city-as-body.[14] Olmsted claimed that public parkland could provide the lungs of the city (Fisher 87), and influenced by modernism's obsession with the body, Howard and Le Corbusier's plans pathologised, as well as implicitly racialized and gendered

the city-as-body (Pinder 77). The same use of striking bodily language can be seen in nineteenth-century Toronto, as Charles Pelham Mulvany describes the city in terms of having arteries, a brain, arms, lungs and even a pulse (*Toronto: Past and Present*). All of these conceptions are subtly revised by Marche's viewpoint here. Despite the unity of the body being mapped over Toronto, there is a complexity to two fluid bodies who "ran like water, like the subway, from one end of the city to the other" (205). The implied negotiation of Raymond's atheism and Hannah's Judaism enters into this two-bodied symbolic literary imaginary of Toronto.

The epilogue resonates equally with the novel's textual form. Despite the disappearance of marginalia in favour of the heading "The Bodies of Raymond and Hannah" (205), this section follows the previous marginal text "The end" (204). Marche's epilogue then seems to draw on multiple images, and phrases, taken from the main body of the novel as a compressed, lyric mode of retelling the core narrative. Again, Toronto is figured as the "city for the fish who slipped through the parts of the net that are broken" (205), drawing from Hannah's recollection of the city whilst in Jerusalem. Again, the city's complex relationship with multicultural recognition is abridged:

> The most anyone says in Toronto is, 'Look, here were Native, then English, then Jewish, Italian, Portuguese, Vietnamese, and other nations will take their place in a few generations.' The most anyone says is, 'Look at the Muslims praying in the rush of Kennedy subway station.' 'Look, we will lose even the idea of mother tongue or nation.' There is a dream of interpenetration, and a dream of a city that war never visits. (205)

Such a summary reiterates the shifting neighbourhoods and immigration patterns Raymond, Hannah and the lyric voice have alluded to throughout the novel. In turn,

this epilogue can be seen to function as a gloss, similar to the final sections of Klein's *The Second Scroll*. As in Klein's novel, Marche's text is serving a compressed description on the core text's imaginary of Toronto as a mobile city. In Marche's Toronto, difference merits both recognition and amnesia to allow for the "dream of interpenetration" and the negotiation of space to function. Marche's text reiterates the lesson function of Klein's Talmudic gloss, but adapts it to shape an address to Toronto.

In summarising the narrative, the epilogue makes distinct comparison between the ideas and realities of Jerusalem and Toronto. Toronto is summarised as "a city of parking lots and exile and imaginary Jerusalems" (206). In this description Jerusalem is seen to be present within Toronto. Such a claim expands out from the lives of Raymond and Hannah to those living diasporic lives, and ultimately to the multicultural city's hold on places afar. These 'imaginary Jerusalems' are not intangible, airy illusions, rather they are the shaped contemporary habits which create heterotopic spaces in Toronto, examples of Sassen's cities within cities. Notably, Marche goes on to assert that such imaginary cities are also tempered by "so many destroyed ones" (206), beginning to acknowledge the multiple types of immigration, from voluntary movement to exile, that shape the creation of such cities within cities. Jerusalem itself is then figured as a city which contains violence and reverence in equal measure, as the disembodied voice of the epilogue conceives Hannah's body only to increase the sense of a tentative geography: "Her brain was filled with ricocheting bullets, and stray sacks of bombs were picked up by thieves on her beaches. Everything on her body had its place, but be careful where you step" (206). The epilogue then draws this violence back to Toronto, via Hannah's body, adding complexity to the communal imagining of Jerusalem within the city. Hannah is both

seen as poetic device and a literal example of how the marked increase in global communication, and migration, increases the negotiation of these multiple lived imaginaries, in a visceral, corporeal sense.

The concluding line of the epilogue's second passage looks back to the notion of bodies overlapping as a defining image of Toronto suggesting the city to be a "dream of interpenetration" (205). This concept seems to echo much of the rhetoric of urban globalization, conjuring with the concepts of integration and fragmentation at one and the same time. In turn, the term looks to evoke the recognition of agency alongside a mature sense of negotiation. The novel as a whole vacillates in its adherence to this image, often engaging on a surface level with multiculturalism whilst examining the depth of difference represented by Jewish identity. This contradiction is neatly summed up by the utopian "dream of interpenetration," which is also "a dream of a city that war never visits" (205). Accepting Toronto to be caught in multiple transnational histories and trajectories of movement, the concomitant movement and implication of modern warfare cannot be held back. Citizens marked by or connected with war inflect Toronto's everyday life. In turn, Toronto is lyrically addressed as inclusive, as a city where "he felt the world's six billion" and where "[e]very part requires every part" (207), and yet inclusivity also implies violence and hatred which reside alongside love. The contradiction is that Toronto is both depicted as welcoming to the world and distinct in its ability to negotiate this welcoming. Marche's Toronto is both anonymous or moodless, open to the anxieties and transits of the world's populations through virtual and real transit. However, Marche's Toronto is also a definite article, it is "the moodless city" (206) or, oxymoronically, "this anonymous city" (144). *Raymond and Hannah* then portrays Toronto as a city engaged in multiple discourses of mobility. Caught up in the increasing global

transactions of globalization, the narrative offers a lived glimpse of a relationship depicting what Urry sees as our contemporary "mobile lives". The impact of global communications are illustrated on the lives of Raymond and Hannah, and in turn their relationship provides an insight into Toronto as a mobile city, a city that necessitates a complex negotiation of global imaginaries at a local material level.

5. Toronto the Terror-tory: Maggie Helwig's *Girls Fall Down*

> The home that the territory provides cannot be thought apart from terror itself, the terror sponsored by the threat of expulsion as much as the terror of remaining, unsettled, in the settlement. As an unsettled settlement, territory is not entirely distinguishable from what could be called a "terror-tory."
>
> --- Gerhard Richter, *Thought-images*
>
> (114)

In *Girls Fall Down* (2008), Maggie Helwig portrays a Toronto that appears to be in the middle of a terrorist attack. As a crisis takes hold of the city's residents, the incident of one girl falling on a subway platform is heralded variously as bioterror, an apocalyptic plague or met with feigned indifference. In establishing this crisis in Toronto, Helwig articulates the city's spaces through terror, or as this chapter argues using the term coined by Gerhard Richter, a spatial form of terror – 'terror-tory.' With reference to Siegfried Kracauer's work, Richter notes, "the homey comforts of territory cannot be distinguished from the terror that resides within it" (114). Echoing Henri Lefebvre's observation that space "lays down the law because it implies a certain order – and hence also a certain disorder (just as what may be seen defines what is obscene)" (143), Richter asserts the same may be true of a territory or place. If territory is delineable then it is at once inseparable from a distinct terror at its delineation, what Richter terms "terror-tory" (114). *Girls Fall Down* focuses on the particular fears of everyday life in Toronto, in turn highlighting how, under globalization, place mediates between local, national and transnational senses of identity. Looking first at global terrorism's relationship to place, this chapter engages with criticism of literature dealing with terror in the post-9/11 world. Using this, the chapter seeks to re-orient perceptions of terror as both external and internal to place, as global trajectories are interwoven with local vernaculars. This chapter analyses Helwig's construction of Toronto's terror-tory through the use of Marlene Goldman's

work on Canadian rewritings of the apocalypse, and Alex Houen's studies on terror and literature. Both Goldman and Houen draw on the role of the everyday, material world in the overlapping discourses of terrorism and the apocalypse. Helwig's novel shows how these discourses overlap, shifting between a synchronic lens of terror, casting everything as a possible threat, and a wider diachronic semiotics of the apocalypse, emphasising a sense of predetermined history. Taking *Girls Fall Down*'s treatment of terror and apocalyptic discourse as expressions of Toronto's terror-tory, this chapter emphasises the multiple productions of space and power that shape everyday Toronto.

Girls Fall Down is a novel about terror, presenting a distinctly contemporary Toronto under threat from what appears to be a virus outbreak. Although *The Cambridge History of Canadian Literature* lists the novel in its chronology of notable works produced in Canada (Howells and Kröller xlv), *Girls Fall Down* has yet to be the subject of published academic work. Reviewed widely in Canada, the novel was also shortlisted for the Toronto City Book Awards and invites comparisons to many previous award nominees.[1] The novel is set predominantly in 2002, and presented in two major strands. There is a mysterious viral outbreak in the city. The virus seems solely to affect young girls, causing them to collapse. The protagonist Alex Deveney witnesses the 'first girl to fall' in a subway car, whilst taking the subway home. In the subsequent evacuation of Yonge and Bloor subway station he bumps into an old friend, Adrian, who tells him that a former love interest, Susie, is living in Toronto again. Alex attempts to behave indifferently both to this news and to his encounter with a possible terror attack, but cannot help but reflect on his history with Susie and the possibility of terrorists. Interspersed with Alex's narrative, the omniscient narrator dispassionately reflects on the lives of other Toronto citizens in their responses to

terror, and hints at the global history of terrorism. Alex's life in the city is played out against the backdrop of a city in crisis. He is a thirty-nine-year-old photographer working at a downtown hospital. Suzanne, Susie, or Susie-Paul, is the same age as Alex and is completing a PhD in Sociology, researching the networks of homeless people in the city. Alex and Susie originally met twelve years previously in Toronto, whilst working together on a protest-group newspaper. At that time they covered protests outside an abortion clinic.[2] Since then, Susie has moved to Vancouver and back, been married and divorced, and Alex has been told that as a result of chronic diabetes his eyesight is quickly deteriorating. Susie enlists Alex to help find her missing brother Derek, leading the narrative through the city's homeless communities and in turn suggesting a number of reasons for the girls' falling.

The oft-cited term "global terrorism" provides the backdrop for Helwig's novel, manifested in contemporary Toronto. Graham Huggan has recently suggested that contemporary global terrorism must be seen in terms of globalization, in that "terrorism ... is the 'dark side of globalization'" (*Extreme Pursuits* 11). Huggan provides further context for this, terming terrorism the unsettling side of an otherwise optimistic "deterritorialised world" (11). Ulrich Beck sees similar connections between Terror and globalization. Beck reads terrorism as the current danger in a long history of global threats. Believing that the "human condition has itself become cosmopolitan" and to a certain extent borderless, Beck posits the rise of terrorism as a demonstration of such embodied fluidity: "the most recent avatar in the genealogy of global risks, the threat of terror, also knows no borders" (2). The immense spread of the threat of terror is seen by Beck as further evidence of rapid global flows of ideas, commodities and practices that constitute the age of globalization. Whilst aware that these flows are spatial both Beck and Huggan caution that tangible networks of terror

are elusive, given the corporeal complexity of crossing territorial borders. Therefore, whilst actions which constitute terrorism are real and located, retaining violent centres, increasingly their influence is felt at a much larger distance. In turn such located events can inform and construct diverse global publics.

Significantly Beck's understanding of terror provides a temporal check to any ahistorical understanding of global terrorism. Although the rapid transnational impact of terrorism under globalization is new, acts of terrorism themselves are part of a long history of loaded acts of violence. Jeffory Clymer has approached this history with regard to twentieth-century acts of terror in America and American literature, but suggests that this history has largely "faded from [the American] national consciousness" (212). Building on this, Clymer addresses 9/11 as a point above and beyond its historical trajectory: "From now on in American history, there will always be a terrible moment that can be pointed to as the day that terrorism was brought to the United States. Indeed, it is already widely agreed that America and the world have entered a decidedly new and different era" (212). Such bracketing of an 'era' is freighted with notions of how history is written, and of a monopolizing American worldview. Furthermore, Clymer's elevation of 9/11 suggests that terrorism has in some way been imported from elsewhere. Positioning terrorism as solely exogenous in this way neglects the frequently cited internal, or endogenous, dimension. Nevertheless, 9/11 as a temporal marker has been widely adopted, as by Clymer, by virtue of its significance to global terrorism. Critics have looked to frame literary criticism by referring to this cultural and temporal marker. Cara Cilano notes how diverse literary narratives illustrate how "nations and peoples outside the US contend with 9/11 and its aftermath" (15).[3] Furthermore, the editors of *Modern Fiction Studies* have recently asked "to what extent might all fiction written after 9/11 in some sense

be 'about' 9/11?" (Duvall and Marzec 229). The insistent bracketing of the contemporary as influenced by 9/11, if not influenced by global responses to 9/11, necessitates a contextual acknowledgement when approaching contemporary depictions of terror.

The events of 9/11 and subsequent international responses to the 'War on Terror' underscore how acts of terror resonate more widely in the underlying everyday experience of a globalized world. The threat of terror and narratives of terror frequently cross national boundaries. In turn, the specific depiction of terror in literature has become an important focus for criticism. Studies of terror and contemporary literature are increasing in number and frequently draw upon the symbolism of 9/11. One of the first critical studies to emerge post-9/11 is Alex Houen's *Terrorism and Modern Literature*. Although Houen's study rereads twentieth-century texts, pre-9/11, for representations of terror, the project is framed through a discussion of the significance of literature to 9/11. Houen notes how newspapers and magazines consulted literary authors in the wake of 9/11 and how the authors themselves came to be seen as aids to retrieving legibility and meaning from the disturbing acts of terrorism. Furthermore, Houen's study notes "the issues of mediation and cultural contagion" (18) involved when specific groups or individuals are labelled as terrorists. Such narratives are also addressed by Margaret Scanlan. Scanlan's *Plotting Terror* is a touchstone for Houen's study, thereby emphasising the insight gained from late twentieth-century literature and the prescience of writing by authors such as Don DeLillo or Doris Lessing.[4] Scanlan's own study emphasises how the literary process of 'plotting' terror, which a novelist goes through, impacts on our conception of literature and terror alike. Furthermore, Scanlan questions how these literary representations of terror "measure terrorism's impact against its own

possibilities for changing political and social reality" (*Plotting* 13). In Scanlan's work

and subsequently in Houen's, the challenge is to address individual acts of terror as

real violence with real victims and specific contexts, whilst also acknowledging the

challenging implications for their literary reimaginings. The ethics of analysing

literary engagements with terror must therefore acknowledge the "paradoxical

affiliation between our violence and our fictions" (Scanlan *Plotting* 1). Houen has

developed his own framework further by addressing recent literary responses to

terrorism, suggesting that the worldwide potential for novelistic responses to terror

serves as a space of liberating critique ("Novel Spaces").

Scanlan and Houen's studies have since been built on by a number of

collections and monographs examining terrorism in contemporary literature.[5] These

studies of terror and contemporary literature have coalesced around 9/11 as a

chronological departure point, although most have focused solely on representations

of 9/11 in British and American fiction. Richard Gray's most recent study departs

from this, broadening attention to the aftermath of 9/11 in the last decade of American

literature. Gray suggests that successful contemporary American writers possess the

tools to

> represent the reality of their culture as multiple, complex and internally
>
> antagonistic. They can achieve a realization of both synchrony and diachrony:
>
> a demonstration of both the structural continuities between past and present
>
> and the processes by which those continuities are challenged, dissolved and
>
> reconstituted. (19)

Given that representing terrorism encourages this same tussle for meaning, regardless

of the nationality of the writer, Gray's comments can also be applied to transnational

engagements with global terrorism. Cautious steps are being made in acknowledging

the international implications of post-9/11 literary representations of terrorism. Dominic Head has attempted to articulate this by suggesting a broader transnational frame of reference. Analysing 'Terrorism in Transatlantic Perspective' in contemporary literature, Head notes that the wider "discussion of postcolonial and multicultural issues [intersects] inevitably, with the attack on America in September 2001" (99). The events of 9/11 have a legacy in time, not least through the subsequent actions of individual nations and the North American Treaty Organisation (NATO) in pursuing a 'War on Terror'. Recent history's dominance by a rhetoric of global terrorism permeates contemporary literature and straddles scholarly disciplines.[6] Literary scholarship on representations of terror need not be constrained by a sense that the immediate American local and national context of 9/11 are the sole topics for discussion.

Discussions of contemporary Canadian literature must also address the realities of the political moment. There are clear national and local factors which affect Canadian literature's response to the threat of terror. Smaro Kamboureli and Heike Härting acknowledge this in a recent issue of *University of Toronto Quarterly* as they seek to examine the dynamics of "security as a particular national discourse that pervades [Canadian] cultural production" (668). Somewhat provocatively, they state that this special issue "was conceived as a project based on the observation that recent critical attention to discourses of security tends to suffer from a kind of presentism, preoccupied as it is in the aftermath of 9/11 with the kind of 'national security fundamentalism'" (681). Much of the scholarship which Härting and Kamboureli perceive as presentist is located in the fields of American political science and international relations. Whilst discussing terror and the contemporary moment, this chapter seeks to avoid similar charges of presentism, engaging with the

synchronic and diachronic contexts of terror in Toronto evoked in *Girls Fall Down*.

Härting and Kamboureli's focus on discourses of security goes on to deconstruct

Canada's constructed image of peacekeeper by highlighting the nation's involvement

in warfare. In turn the authors see it as symptomatic that "a number of [contemporary]

Canadian literary and cultural productions have turned to narratives of war and

humanitarian intervention" (674). Up until Härting and Kamboureli's study, Canadian

literary criticism had failed to discuss the impact of terror on contemporary literature.[7]

In one sense this is because of the diffuse influence of terror on Canadian society, and

its myriad reflections in contemporary Canadian literature. In another light, this is a

critical deficit and is involved with how concepts and cultures of disciplinary

discourse evolve. As it is often bound up in the narrative of globalization, discussions

of terror may be an undercurrent to contemporary trends towards transnational

frameworks in Canadian literary criticism.

Discussing Canadian literature and terror is therefore also a project of

renegotiating place, as global, local and national understandings of identity are

invoked in a search for meaning. Margaret Scanlan's recent article discussing

terrorism in Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000) suggests ways in which place

and context are treated in the existing analysis of Canadian literature. Scanlan

downplays the Canadian context of Ondaatje's writing, instead focusing on the

novel's evocation of Sri Lanka. From a position of hindsight Scanlan sees the

Taliban's actions in Afghanistan echoed in Ondaatje's setting, a place she goes on to

speculate is "the landscape of contemporary terrorism itself" ("Terrorism's Time"

302). Responding to Ondaatje's claim that the novel evokes a broader sense of global

terrorism, comparable to Bosnia or Northern Ireland, Scanlan suggests that "[o]ne

obvious difference ... between Sri Lanka and these other trouble spots, at least for

North American readers is its unfamiliarity" ("Terrorism's Time" 303). Furthermore, Scanlan's engagement with place refuses this global reading of the novel out of respect for the real history and politics of Sri Lanka. The Canadian societal context for writing and publication of *Anil's Ghost* and Ondaatje's citizenship are negated in favour of the literary imaginary, and a restrictive idea of place. If this criticism were followed to its logical conclusion it would deny the transnational resonance of representations of terrorism.[8]

Canadian literary criticism's conception of terror has traditionally engaged more with nature than with the urban, where contemporary notions of global terror are more commonly experienced.[9] This balance is, as this thesis responds to at length, a wider pattern in Canadian literary criticism (see introduction and chapter one). It is, however, at the fore in a review of *Girls Fall Down* for *Quill and Quire*, where Steven Beattie suggests that

> [C]ontemporary urban experience is not a subject that dominates Canadian
>
> fiction. ... There are exceptions, of course, but on the whole, the urban
>
> experience has escaped the notice of most major Canadian fiction writers,
>
> editors, and maybe even readers. ("City of Fear")

Even if literary critics acknowledge Canadian urban experience as a site where mediated narratives of global terror are received, the framing of such acknowledgements can also become too simplified. Janice Fiamengo speculates that changing relationships between place and people are increasingly reflected in Canadian literary urban imaginaries, but in doing so elides the specificity of response to terror:

> These places ... reflect Canadians' increasingly diverse circumstances: as
>
> Asian Canadian families move back and forth between Hong Kong and

Vancouver; as Muslim and Jewish Canadians experience the repercussions of global terrorism. (261)

Such shorthand misunderstandings of transnational processes in Canadian cities bracket off global terrorism as either exogenous, or affecting only certain segments of the Canadian population. It is clear that terror attacks and global terrorism do not simply affect Muslim and Jewish Canadians, but rather affect an indiscriminate audience, as depicted in *Girls Fall Down*. Canadian writers have a large societal discourse of terror to respond to in transnational events and national discourses of counter-terrorism or security. Canada's continued presence in NATO operations in Afghanistan has a wider bearing on geo-political threats. Furthermore, there have been several terror-related arrests in Canada after 9/11 for planning domestic attacks and financing international terrorism. These circumstances are reflected in contemporary Canadian literature as writers engage with domestic perceptions of crisis and diverse representations of global terrorism.

In Toronto, two twenty-first-century crises are notable for both local and transnational characteristics: the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2002 and the electricity blackout experienced across the Midwestern United States and Ontario in 2003. Although neither were acts of terrorism, both events shared characteristics with terror attacks. Both events constituted violent disruptions of everyday life at a local level, whilst containing links to a wider, transnational community. SARS caused 44 deaths out of an estimated 438 cases ("Learning from SARS") and impacted on a local economy that relies on business travel and tourism. Moreover, a citywide electricity blackout or a disease pandemic is hard to distinguish from a deliberate terror attack at the level of lived experience. The cultural flow of terrorist images and narratives in an age of globalization ensures that

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such events recall other urban crises, not least the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Tangible occurrences of crisis in Canadian society such as the SARS outbreak or the blackout crystallise the contemporary Canadian response to terror, and provide marked events to reference in representing or imagining terror in Canadian literature.[10] Maggie Helwig's *Girls Fall Down* alludes to both the SARS outbreak and 9/11 as it depicts what appears to be a terrorist attack in Toronto. These events are developed in the novel at both formal and thematic levels by invocations of apocalyptic rhetoric and imagery. Such a balance between attention to terror and the apocalyptic continually shifts the temporal focus of the novel from the synchronic to the diachronic. Furthermore, the presence of apocalyptic imagery raises questions about the function of a religious narrative in Helwig's literary Toronto.

Apocalyptic imagery is the subject of Marlene Goldman's recent study, which observes that the 'apocalyptic paradigm' pervades Canadian fiction (3). Goldman asserts that the basic structure and grammar of biblical apocalypse is borrowed and rewritten as "Canadian authors introduce particular twists to the familiar myth of the end by challenging rather than embracing apocalypse's key features" (6). Goldman's study is clearly influenced by a view of the contemporary period as one of crisis but does not reflect on post-millennial literature. Even so, Goldman's study is crucial in discussing contemporary Canadian representations of terror. Drawing on Linda Hutcheon's argument that Canadian writers adopt an 'ex-centric' position, Goldman analyses a number of fictions that "adopt a characteristically Canadian approach and convey the experience of the disenfranchised, those denied entry into the new paradise and condemned to die" (4). As such, Goldman argues that this apocalyptic paradigm in Canadian literature signals a kind of crisis literature, enabling attention to a variety of groups who have experienced oppression such as Native North Americans

and Japanese-Canadians. Although the narratives analysed by Goldman are seen by many as canonical, these apocalyptic narratives are hailed as resisting the establishment by offering an alternative view on the world. Importantly, these rewritten apocalyptic narratives take a prophetic stance rather than an overt apocalyptic stance, enabling transformation in plain language, in the everyday world "on Earth and by an earthly community" (15). Maggie Helwig considers the value of apocalyptic narratives in a 1993 essay collection entitled *Apocalypse Jazz*, and concurs with Goldman's view of prophetic eschatology: "The apocalypse, the Eschaton, the Last Thing, is … not so much an end as a transformation of the world, in which we must finally take responsibility for what we have become and what we can choose to become" (*Apocalypse Jazz* 19). However in Helwig's more recent comments the problems of such narratives become apparent:

> I think the power of apocalyptic thinking is quite dangerous, and I think I've become more aware of the dangers of it over the intervening period [in the fifteen years between *Apocalypse Jazz* and *Girls Fall Down*]. The power of apocalyptic thinking is in transformation, in thinking things do not have to be as they are. It's a tool for thinking of things as different, even radically different to how they are. (Personal Interview)

A reading of apocalypse in *Girls Fall Down* must be attentive to the real, material violence that is invoked by its representation. The apocalyptic paradigm is one way in which the novel articulates Toronto's terror-tory.

Goldman's basic narrative template for the apocalyptic paradigm deployed in Canadian literature is a useful tool in analysing the attitude towards terror portrayed in *Girls Fall Down*. The template consists of the basic characteristics derived from biblical revelation: "its reliance on intertexts and allegory, its dependence on the

revelation of something hidden, its portrayal of stark opposition between good and evil – an opposition that culminates in the sudden and violent destruction of the non-elect – and its status as 'crisis literature'" (11). Reading this apocalyptic paradigm in *Girls Fall Down* leads to an understanding of each action or event as part of a diachronic narrative. However, the role of crisis within the apocalyptic paradigm is opposed to this overall temporal outlook, emphasising a synchronic perspective. This presents crisis as an elusive concept. Goldman's own touchstone for the role of crisis in literature is Frank Kermode's *Sense of an Ending*. Kermode perceives crisis in terms of a continuous history of crises:

> It is commonplace to talk about our historical situation as uniquely terrible and in a way privileged, a cardinal point of time. But can it really be so? It seems doubtful that our crisis, our relation to future and to the past, is one of the important differences between us and our predecessors. ... Perhaps if we have a terrible privilege it is merely that we are alive and are going to die, all at once or one at a time. Other people have noticed this, and expressed their feelings about it in images different from ours, armies in the sky, for example, or a palpable Antichrist; and these we have discarded. But it would be childish to argue, in a discussion of how people behave under eschatological threat, that nuclear bombs are more real and make one experience more authentic crisis-feelings than armies in the sky. (95)

It is in the terrorised perception of the apocalyptic crisis that Kermode senses that we have the potential to become not simply synchronic in our mode of seeing but also presentist. It is this kind of presentism that Kamboureli and Härting suggest we resist. Experiences of a current apocalyptic crisis serve as another in a long list of such crises and at the same time give a perception of terror of equal magnitude. In Kermode's

view, the contemporary period is not 'uniquely terrible' but rather feels unique when experienced as terrible. The experience of terror provokes this tug between the diachronic perception of the 'apocalyptic paradigm' and the utterly disruptive event of terror itself. As Houen suggests, reflecting on the recent commentary of Slavoj Žižek and Jean Baudrillard, terror "is tantamount to a form of hyperbolic materialization that ruptures our fundamental coordinates of everyday experience" ("Novel Spaces" 419). The contemporary period makes terror neither more real, more 'terrible', nor more authentic. However, the increased global coverage that acts of terror achieve establishes a wider imaginary of terror in lived experience, and therefore also increases the sense of Toronto's latent terror-tory.

Girls Fall Down has much in common with Timothy Findley's *Headhunter* (1993). Both novels are eschatological narratives of disease outbreak and both are explicitly set in Toronto. Goldman reads *Headhunter* as a rewritten apocalyptic narrative by highlighting the text's "transcendent temporal perspective" (33). The novel is seen by Goldman to characterise the apocalyptic paradigm, by setting a narrative position outside of time, where one achieves a "panoramic vision" of past, present and the predicted future (19). Similarly, *Girls Fall Down* establishes a transcendent perspective: written after the SARS outbreak in Toronto, but set before it, the narrative necessarily situates the reader in a position of foreknowledge. The omniscient narrator shares this insightful position, opening the narrative by emphasising the city's place in a deeper temporal scheme:

> It is a city that burrows, tunnels, turns underground. It has built strata of malls
>
> and pathways and inhabited spaces like the layers in an archaeological dig, a
>
> body below the earth, flowing with light. (7)

From this transcendent position Helwig renders Toronto's urban morphology as a character, an animated body and as a creature that has established its territory over time. Helwig uses a particular geographical rhetoric to figure the city as this body. In suggesting the city has a "strata of malls" and the profile of an "archaeological dig," Helwig seems to borrow scientific language reserved for the interaction of human bodies and the earth witnessed from a 'transcendent temporal perspective'. In doing so, Helwig is able to construct a narrative standpoint of temporal omniscience that adds a mythic quality to her image of the city. This mythic approach seems to reiterate how Redhill's Toronto in *Consolation* frames an understanding of the city through excavation (see chapter two). Echoing Redhill's work, Helwig establishes Toronto's identity as subterranean however *Girls Fall Down* departs from *Consolation*'s concerns by embracing the urban modern represented by the "strata of malls." Helwig's use of the subterranean for mythic purposes also follows a pattern traced by Claire Omhovère, with reference to geology and Toronto in the work of Anne Michaels, whereby Canadian literature makes "use for aesthetic effect [of] the scientific vocabulary devised by geographers to describe and analyse variations on the earth's surface and the forces that have shaped them" (13-14). The effect of Helwig's use of such terms can be seen as drawing on the passive, objective stance of the geologist, but also portraying human development as a natural process. In this language the city is produced on the earth's surface over vast spans of time (as also seen in *thirsty*'s use of syrinx imagery in chapter three). As if using time-lapse photography, the discourse creates a temporal and spatial distance where the city can be perceived as one body rather than a mass of complex individuals.

The omniscient narrator requires further attention, concluding the opening passage in an ominous tone: "It is hard to imagine this city being damaged by

something from the sky. The dangers to this city enter the bloodstream, move through interior channels" (7).[11] This holistic perspective suggests a historical awareness of the city's threats, and importantly its weaknesses, but with no precedents cited past threats are not centre-stage. Instead, here Helwig's narrator reveals the goal and the burden of imagining Toronto's 'terror-tory.' Representing the city in a specific encounter with perceived terrorism, the narrative contends with its own reality. As Houen notes, literary depictions of terror "are not mere abstractions. Bound up with the very relations of force and discourse that they engage with, they also present their own power of performativity and critique" (*Terrorism* 18). The city's own unique patterns of everyday life link to the power of imagining their disruption. In effect, Helwig is trying to establish Toronto's own particular nightmare, drawn from these specific lived experiences and paths of desire. Creating a powerful idea of insidious internal antagonism, located within Toronto, comes with ethical questions. The novel foregrounds this as the narrator and individual characters become involved in scripting terror as much as responding to terror, as this chapter will elucidate.

The imaginary of terror in the text does allude to past interior threats in Toronto. When the narrative follows Alex's perspective, the same apocalyptic tenor haunts his observations as those of the more omniscient narration. Although the narrative observations are often deeply involved in the present, the reader's perspective remains one of 'panoramic vision,' aware of the city's actual experience of SARS. To draw on Goldman's paradigm, this locates the reader as a kind of "elect," whereby characters are unaware of the signs present for the reader. Much of the tension then centres on the visible or detectable, which is particularly pertinent in the case of SARS. In their 2006 study, S. Harris Ali and Roger Keil link shifts in world industries, communication and movement to the SARS outbreak in Canada.

Referencing work on globalizing forces by noted theorists such as Anthony Giddens and David Harvey, Ali and Keil suggest a number of reasons for globalization affecting infectious disease outbreaks in Toronto. Many of these reasons hinge on Toronto emerging as what Ali and Keil term "Canada's global city" (491).[12] Mapping what they term 'disease spaces,' Ali and Keil posit global cities as new topographies that shape the travel of disease.[13] The prolonged incubation period of SARS poses a particular threat. Quick global travel prevents symptoms emerging during transit, and bypasses any quarantine facilities that have traditionally been located near airports. The sheer speed of infection is increased due to this combination of delayed detection and increased human transit. This renders SARS as possibly present even when there are no symptoms. Alex's narrative attempts to survey Toronto for signs of the disease outbreak are clearly influenced by this extra-textual experience. The day after Alex has witnessed a girl fall on the subway he gets on a streetcar, where "[t]here were no visible effects of the subway incident, but he thought people did know somehow, fragments and rumours" (16). Attempting to understand the localised threat, Alex's search for signs of danger actually triggers his own imagining of Toronto's 'terror-tory': "a slight modulation in the atmosphere, a measure of silence, glances of quiet complicity between the Portuguese housewives and the Asian teenagers" (16). Alex's semiotic reading shows one of the dangers of imagining terror, the urge to identify symbols as in or out of place, and the subsequent proximity to xenophobia.

Notions of visibility in *Girls Fall Down* extend beyond the apocalyptic standpoint of the omniscient narrator and the informed context of the reader. Complications of vision are also a tangible fact of Alex's life. He has been told by doctors that, due to his chronic diabetes, he may well lose his sight. The deterioration is registered by small blindspots in his eyesight, which he refers to as 'floaters' or

blood spots (54). These present Alex with his own personal sense of an ending, given that "this [retinopathy] is potentially the bad kind. The kind people go blind with" (54). Understandably this overshadows Alex's life in the city. As a photographer, he resolves to spend his spare time preserving a collection of views of the city before the possible blindness makes it impossible. The largely solitary pursuit of photographing Toronto suggests a need to consider Alex's standpoint, or subjective role in this process. In photographing Toronto, Alex seeks to depict downtown urban spaces which he feels have been aesthetically neglected. These spaces are either out of traditional circulation, like the Cloud Gardens, or are direct places of circulation, like the city's malls, plazas and banks, which are usually seen as banal and functional. Overshadowed by the personal threat to vision, Alex sees himself as less privileged than his relative wealth and photographic subjects might imply. This is underscored in his daytime job as a medical photographer and in his recollections of past friendships: "Alex's real position was then, as ever, at the margin, a half-observed watcher of the greater dramas" (19). This occupation of a 'margin' is still a place of privilege, allowing both a view into other people's lives and a shedding of responsibility by perceiving to be only "half-observed" in return. Drawing on this observation, it is useful to consider if those damned or shunned Canadians in Goldman's ex-centric paradigm are more central than they might imagine.

The aesthetic implications of the ex-centric standpoint become clear in Alex's attempt to record the city, or "[a]s many parts of it as I have time for" (53). This impulse to record is both a private act and a public intervention. Alex wishes to collect and control an image of the city for himself, but he does not see the effect that such an intervention may have on the city itself. Instead, Alex sees photography as something of a one-way process. Initially this can be questioned by the symbolic

power of the built environment Alex seeks to capture. When Susie first accompanies

him, Alex surveys the underground plazas in the city's PATH system at night:

> "People think urban photography is all big-eyed kids in housing projects.
>
> Which, I mean, yeah, housing projects are part of it too. And police stations
>
> and stuff. But so is this …" he waved his arm around, "…this whatever. Is this
>
> a hotel?"
>
> "I can't even tell. It's all much the same down here." (49)

Whilst Alex seeks to justify the meaning behind the same tabula rasae Vidler

identifies in the city spaces created by urban modernity (see chapter two for a fuller

explanation of Vidler), Susie's response is reminiscent of Marc Augé's widely cited

study on the large expanses of 'supermodern' architecture. Alex attempts to

demonstrate that socially conscious photography might also document banks and

closed shops.[14] The underground PATH system, and its representation in Helwig's

text, seems to fit Augé's definition of 'non-places' such as the airport lounge or the

supermarket (96).[15] For Susie, the underground tunnels are all the same. For Alex, the

qualities of these spaces may be confusing but they are overtly produced and located

in place. As underground tunnels, they are markers of the downtown core's function

as commercial and office space. Another reminder of the PATH system and its

adjoining spaces as distinctive lives spaces comes when it is revealed there are people

sleeping in part of a foyer adjoining Metro Hall. Homeless people are sheltered by

and use the PATH tunnels as living space, which should shift the perception of the

system. Instead, Alex's photographic framing of these subjects is a continuation of his

attention to the built environment, with only the barest acknowledgement of their

subjectivity: "He shouldn't do this, shouldn't photograph people who were asleep,

helpless to give permission, but his cannibal eye demanded the picture, and he didn't

really try to resist" (50). In devouring the aesthetics of the scene, Alex removes the

rights of the homeless to frame themselves, reducing their identities to bodies in

space. As a researcher into homeless networks, Susie might be assumed to perceive

the ethics of this situation. Instead, Susie's own response is to reflect on the

movement "from retail space to civic space" and judge the civic space serving the

homeless people as "a less censored environment" (50). However, Susie and Alex's

behaviour could be seen to enforce a kind of censorship in reading the homeless

people, refusing the specific and located issues that lie behind their presence.

The ethical issues of Alex's photographs arise because of when and where he

can spend time on the project. Working during the day at the hospital, Alex

predominantly takes photographs at night-time and in the downtown core, still a close

walk or streetcar ride to his apartment. In this pattern, Alex encounters what Richard

Sennett has termed a distinct 'time geography.' Sennett asserts that a certain kind of

space is present in cities that have mimicked the British London Underground system.

Toronto's mass transit system and its expansion into previously self-contained urban

areas echoes London's own expansion.[16] Indeed in the Toronto Transit Commission's

(TTC) one-price journey across the city, as opposed to London's zoned fare, there is

an even larger freedom to inhabit neighbourhoods outside the downtown. Alongside

this expansion comes a change in how people circulate within a city's confines.

Rather than a simple increase in speed of travel, the increase of travel in a city

produced by the transit system realigns what Sennett terms its 'time geography':

> With mass transit on the model of the Underground, the time geography of the
>
> modern urban center had now taken form: density and diversity by day,
>
> sparsity and homogeneity by night. And that mixture by day implicated no

strong human contact between the classes. People worked and shopped and

then left for home. (*Flesh and Stone* 338)

What Alex ends up photographing is what Sennett terms the city's "homogeneity by

night," rather than the heterogenous make-up of Toronto in the day. Susie partially

grasps this by questioning Alex about the kind of narrative he is recording

underground in shopping arcades at night: "I can see it during the day. When things

are open. It's not exactly picturesque, but retail's part of the urban experience, I get

that. But retail that's closed for the night?" (47). Susie's suggestion that closed retail

spaces presents the city as featureless, mechanistic or dehumanised reiterates

Sennett's perception of the downtown as largely vacant, and therefore homogenous, at

night. Alex rebuts the claims looking to assert the meaning and power of located

buildings, suggesting that homogeneity of any kind cannot overpower a trace of

individuality. When Alex attempts to make this claim for a bank, Susie is

contemptuous: "So it's a bank. So this is just money trying to look good" (48). Of

course, the presence of the homeless in the novel suggests that even during the peak

of Toronto's homogenous time-space, there is resistance to this narrative. As the

narrative goes on to focus on the lives of the homeless, the heterogeneity of night-

time public spaces that evades Alex's photography is revealed.[17]

Susie's personal engagement with the homeless is a key part of Helwig's

rewriting of the apocalyptic paradigm. Goldman suggests that in using the paradigm it

is "crucial to distinguish between two distinct approaches: prophetic and apocalyptic

eschatology" (15). The conventional apocalyptic narrative sees hope "in the belief

that God will bring an end to the profane world and create an entirely new one";

however, the Canadian rewritings Goldman traces deploy a secular prophetic

eschatology where restoration and hope occur within a human time frame envisioning

change "within the *here and now*" (15). In *Girls Fall Down*, Susie's pursuit of her

missing brother, Derek, and her PhD research are part of the novel's overall status as

what Walker Percy has termed "diagnostic fiction" (qtd. in Bull 153). These narrative

desires construct a diagnostic viewpoint to the text, perpetually seeking to solve a

crisis rather than accept one. Motivated by Derek's loss, Susie's doctorate is focused

on the underprivileged side of the city, where she is writing an "[a]nalysis of

relationship networks among the homeless and underhoused" (45). Undertaking this

means Susie traces the socially marginalised not on the margins but by re-exploring

the inner city. In this project, the novel focuses on members of society who are not

often represented. This further corresponds to Goldman's analysis of the

disenfranchised in contemporary Canadian literature, whereby the marginal or ex-

centric are represented in the apocalyptic terms of the non-elect. At this point it is

useful to emphasise how the elect and non-elect would be treated in Goldman's

understanding of strictly apocalyptic or prophetic (rewritten) eschatology. For

Goldman, apocalyptic narratives are firm in their division into a chosen elect and a

damned non-elect: "In apocalyptic narratives, no hope exists for national repentance

that could lead to purification; only 'a bloody purge'" (25). It is also notable that

Goldman understands the real world, where apocalyptic narratives might be rewritten

to be worked out, to be a fundamentally national one. In this rewriting, the binary

terms of 'elect/good, non-elect/evil' are open to blurring given the eventual earthly

reconciliation that the sensed end promises. Helwig's emphasis on representing the

homeless rewrites the apocalyptic narrative, resisting the exclusionary practices of the

contemporary city whilst engaging with the fundamentally local issues of

homelessness alongside the city's national and transnational connections.

The majority of the homeless people encountered in the novel live on the street, and use a drop-in centre at a local church. Most of the characters Alex encounters speak in highly coded language, appearing mentally disturbed. Within this coded language, there is also an intertextual and prophetic overtone. One man in the drop-in relays to Alex how a "schizophrenic guy took [a tap] off because he thought somebody was watching him through it. Mr. Sandman, he tells me" (87). This mention of Mr. Sandman alludes to the song, and its primary role in another Toronto novel, Barbara Gowdy's *Mister Sandman* (1995). In Gowdy's novel, the small daughter, Joan, is rumoured to be an idiot savant and can communicate only by playing the 1950s Pat Ballard song 'Mr. Sandman' (103). As explored in the second chapter of this thesis, the image of Mr. Sandman is also densely woven into Freud's essay on the uncanny, where he explores the meaning of the uncanny using a German short story by E.T.A. Hoffmann ("The Uncanny"). In the context of *Girls Fall Down*, all these uneasy ideas of vision are drawn upon to underline the power of the gaze. Whether it is the photographic lens or the gaze of Alex or Susie, the way the city is figured is shown to be far from objective. The homeless people who seem to lack clarity of expression represent the violence done by supposedly clear-eyed, administrative vision. In turn the homeless are people who turn this blindness upon themselves, perpetuating violence upon themselves under the logic of coded practices. Derek contracts meningitis because one of his necessary coded practices is to visit prostitutes, this forms a significant part of how "Derek Rae's life in the ravine is, after its manner, a life well-organized" (149). Similar senses of coding and hidden meanings can be seen in the conversation of a homeless man on Alex's street: "I hate to trouble you sir, but I'm being held hostage by terrorists" (16). This could naturally seem hyperbolic, but acknowledging terrorism as Houen describes it, as an enacted

"rupture *of* history" (*Terrorism* 14) or a challenge to everydayness, the man is clearly hostage to forces that resemble this within his life. As a subtle local insight, this appropriates the grander global narratives of terrorism. Indeed, when this homeless man reappears again asking for change he shows evidence that he is aware of wider events in the city. On this occasion his attitude towards victims of a potential disease outbreak is distanced, couched in logical rather than empathic terms, reflecting the rhetoric that is employed publicly to address homelessness: "I think maybe there was a breakdown in the system a while ago ... What really confused me was when the pretty people were falling from the sky. We need to think about that in an analytical way" (60). This message seems to allude to both 9/11 and the Toronto narrative's titular falling girls. In turn this rhetoric operates as code, echoing the position of the biblical visionary Goldman points to in Revelation, where the secret message is revealed in a politically charged, heavily allegorical set of images (18). These messages are necessarily confused to those who do not receive the visions, serving as a dividing line for the elect and the non-elect. Here, a potential visionary message is received by someone positioned as marginal and disenfranchised. In rewriting the apocalyptic paradigm, Helwig appears to reverse the roles of the elect and the non-elect in line with Goldman's suggested prophetic narrative of crisis.

When the novel dwells upon Derek, he too is described as possessing secret information. Living in a small tent in a ravine to the east of the city, Derek is described by the omniscient narrator as "closer to the heart of the problem than anyone thinks" (149). Moreover, the omniscience of the narrator allows a further insight into Derek's life, resisting the easy administrative dismissal of anyone living in the urban wild:

None of this represents Derek's soul, scraped bloody, howling, fighting always to hang on, a solitary superhuman ordeal, unacknowledged by the world, unrewarded.

These things are known. Somewhere, they are known. But they are not to be spoken of. (150)

This narrative standpoint emphasises aspects of Derek's life that could be perceived if someone were willing to witness them. This representation of a victim of mental illness shows Derek as physically isolated but with the possibility to be understood within our own systems of communication. This perspective does not dismiss Derek's obvious health issues. Instead this standpoint retains a sense that his soul is still present, and known to be, but unseen. The question of where knowledge of Derek is located, and the reference to Derek as superhuman, gestures to how he exceeds life and creates a sense of a grander narrative. The incoherence of this grand narrative frustrates any simple solution to the text's drive to diagnose the problems afflicting Toronto. The reader experiences a similar incoherence when Derek's direct communication is cited in the novel:

not even to get into the subject of the suicide missions they are asking me to undertake, but i say, no, we are not going in that direction. to the undertaker ha ha. all in little pieces. with involvement of the following persons, mr kofi annan, mr vladimir putin. (167)

Nonetheless, the tone and content of Derek's communications are related closely to the novel's construction of Toronto's terror-tory. Here, Derek invokes a threat of suicide missions dramatising the possible thoughts of self-harm that have afflicted him. In turn, Derek's citing of Kofi Annan, then Secretary-General of the United Nations and Vladimir Putin, the then Russian President, shows an awareness of the

global community's role in ensuring contemporary security. The eventual effect of this is a partial disclosure of secrets from within the lived experience of the city, alongside a seemingly irresolvable narrative of place-specific symbolism.

Another apocalyptic figure in the novel posits an alternative to grand apocalyptic narratives, and at the same time questions the agency to resolve them in this world. A disturbed man publicly self-harms in the street, warning of subway cars disintegrating, "entropy calling them home" (150). This interjection advocates a rewriting of the linear apocalyptic narrative with the slow spiral of cyclical deterioration termed entropy. However, as the man's actions demonstrate, a belief in a consistently decaying world absolves the individual of responsibility, just as in the sudden destruction of the conventional apocalyptic narrative. Such justificatory myths show that judgements made on the purposes of disorder are also larger statements of faith concerning life as a closed or open system. Terrorism's apparent disruption of the everyday creates this disorder and challenges belief in forces of order, or in this man's case forces of creative negentropy. As symbolic as the man's actions appear, they are also placed in the context of the everyday, with the paragraph's opening sentence framing his actions as one of Toronto's denizens' "small braveries and defeats" (150). It is therefore important to see this reaction as part of a larger city space occupied by regular routines of habit, such as dog-walking, street repairs and caring for children, all presumably the "small braveries" against one man's "defeat."

Nevertheless, victims of the perceived outbreak persist in attempting to articulate the symptoms of disease and strive to resolve the terror into some order. Another girl who collapses in a hospital ward attempts to comprehend what she felt when she fell:

When she tried to describe the smell she spoke at first about exhaust fumes ...

but finally she could only say it was not quite like that, that it was a smell like

the absence of a smell. The precise smell of nothing. (85)

The need to characterise the source of illness is consistently evaded by description

and testing. This mirrors the whole novel's core mystery and drive for a solution,

whilst also suggesting the mystery can have no solution. Helwig's omniscient narrator

ruminates early on that any answers will always be provisional or partial: "This is the

nature of the measured world – you can be certain of the presence of danger, but you

can never guarantee its absence" (21). The process of the hazardous materials team

who attend a suspicious fire in a warehouse in Scarborough carries this same desire to

diagnose but their actions are described as an amalgam of everyday cleaning, a

scientific pursuit of answers and a religious ritual with "their instruments, their

mysterious process. Their slow-dance liturgical beauty" (190). The "liturgical beauty"

underscores the presence of faith within this scientific approach. This surprising

emergence of religion in the determining of safe city space echoes Brand's invocation

of religious language to depict such concern for city space as communal space (see

chapter three). This rhetoric too seems reminiscent of the popular philosophy that

emerged from the US Defence Department during the Iraq War, although Helwig's

novel illustrates Donald Rumsfeld's neglect of a certain category of knowledge

pointed out by Slavoj Žižek:

> [W]hen Donald Rumsfeld pondered the relationship between the known and
>
> the unknown: "There are known knowns. There are things we know we know.
>
> We also know there are known unknowns. ... But there are also unknown
>
> unknowns, the ones we don't know we don't know." What he forgot to add

was the crucial fourth term: the "unknown knowns", things we don't know

that we know, which is precisely the Freudian unconscious. (19)

Žižek's emphasis on the 'unknown knowns' is much the same as Helwig's attention

on the persistent invisibility of disease and the uncanny presence of the

disenfranchised. In turn it echoes what the original group of girls on the subway know

about their encounter in the park with Derek, but can't begin to acknowledge to

themselves or others.

This distinctly uncanny geography, or terror-tory, is deployed when Helwig

continues the analogy of the city-as-body. Toronto's ravines trail deep into the city's

downtown but are outside of the central circulation of most Torontonians. Amy

Lavender Harris has noted their prevalence in the literature of the city, suggesting that

the ravines define more than Toronto's topography: they are the repository of

the city's memory and the symbolic seat of its conscience, a tangled warren of

nightmares and desires played out in subterranean shadow. (39)

In turn, Harris links this nightmarish quality to the body and victimhood by

cataloguing a history of their use in fiction as locales of fear and lawlessness. When

Alex and Susie enter the ravines to look for Derek, the novel captures this sense of

travelling off the map, describing them heading "[i]nto the sketchy dreams of the

city's sunken veins" (182). In colloquial usage, the term sketchy can also mean

unsafe, emphasising a quasi-nightmarish quality to the ravines. Their comparison to

sunken veins links to the novel's opening passage and draws on bodily rhetoric for

dehydrated blood vessels thus also gesturing towards their role in a deeper geological

history of the hydrocycle. The ravines function as a secondary network of the city's

"interior channels" initially identified as Toronto's weak spot (7). However these

channels provide shelter to the homeless, and in tandem with visiting health workers,

support Derek. Furthermore, the historic rivers defy a conventional association of wild nature with hostility, instead echoing the title of Margaret Atwood's *Survival*: "In the crooks of the ravine, men and women reached out for survival, scooping water from the river, and at the shore of the lake someone walked through the small stone spirals of a garden, and saw the word FEAR on the side of a building across the road." (*Girls Fall Down* 202). Such associations with Atwood strongly resonate in light of Atwood's own literary connections to the city's ravines.[18] Coral Ann Howells notes that Atwood's use of "Toronto's ravines provide a wilder dimension to that city's neat lawns and ordered spaces" (*Private* 16). Here too, Helwig compares the sustaining power of the river in the ravine with the public urban garden. Whereas Atwood's ravines are often the sites of people's deaths or possible predators, spaces of struggle for survival, for Helwig they seem more equipped to help support life, they are spaces for survival. This shifts only when it is revealed that Derek is carrying meningitis, a very contagious disease, within these supporting channels. Derek becomes a part of the pathological geography of the city-as body. The ravines which are supportive are also infected. The real threat is therefore not global terrorism, it is an assimilated Western disease, carried through the veins of bodies in the city and the veins of the city-as-body.

Helwig figures the ravines as connected to subway trains, and later streetcars, as active bodily pathways, both made up of bodies and serving as veins and vessels within the city-as-body. This strategy shifts the meaning attached to public transit, echoing similar moves in Dionne Brand's bodily, indeed avian, verse in *thirsty* (see chapter three). Depictions of Bloor/Yonge, Castle Frank and Broadview subway stations begin to take on affective symbolism as Helwig's characters orient themselves by these locations. Moving away from the official symbolic order to the

lived experience of charting such stations in personal geographies, the names of the stations become resonant with the events witnessed within or nearby.[19] Castle Frank is the station Alex enters after his final visit to Derek's ravine-home. It is in this station that Alex encounters the young graffiti artists, who have been spray-painting the word 'FEAR' over the city's built environment, and it is here at his most tired that stepping onto the train at rush hour seems reassuring: "he was pressed so tightly against the people around him that it seemed almost relaxing, as if he were not wholly responsible for supporting himself, and he closed his eyes" (252). Foreshadowing Helwig's climactic scene of communal reassurance, Alex witnesses the everyday conformity and civility of public transit. This conformity is in stark contrast to that illustrated by initial reactions to the public illness of the first girl to fall. Subway passengers become largely impassive: "some of the passengers in the nearby seats held hands or tissues discreetly to their mouths, but as if this were incidental, as if they weren't quite aware of anything" (8-9). Following the evacuation, Alex interrogates the mindset of those around him and finds not just a reserve but a reminder of similar responses in Toronto to the events of 9/11:

> Last year when the buildings fell in New York, in the midst of the aftershock a day or two later, he'd gone into the SuperSave on Bloor and watched people hoarding, all of them apparently unaware of what they were doing – smiling, chatting, walking calmly through the aisles, and at the same time piling their carts full of toilet paper and canned tuna and bags of pasta. (10)

As on the subway, terror here is portrayed as ensuring conformity through a communal rejection of its potential for disruption. People largely wish to maintain a façade of politeness whilst permitting their own consumption to remedy fears of scarcity and disruption. The people Alex observes are on some level — 'unknown

knowns' — aware of this performance within a public sphere: "you didn't admit to fear, not up in this country; it would be disruptive and far too personal, and not very nice for everyone around you" (10-11). This public sphere Alex perceives slips from something local in Toronto to something Canadian. Just as Toronto is 'Canada's global city,' it carries the synecdochic relation, standing in for a Canadian response to fear. Clearly this is an extremely problematic move, and the thought that a singular Canadian mindset exists is open to exaggeration and caricature.[20] The problem with portraying this mass polite (non) reaction as Canadian is that it overlooks the specific context from which it generalises and at once overlays local space with nationally symbolic notions of conduct. The nation's assertion in such circumstances overrides both local and transnational affiliations, for to not behave this way would be to be unCanadian in Canadian space. As part of this insidious nationalism, akin to that which Kamboureli and Härting warn against, there is support for what Himani Bannerji terms "multiculturalism [that] preserves the partisan nature of the state by helping to contain pressures exerted by 'others' for social justice and equity" (296). The possible effect of terror is therefore a restrictive assertion of the national. This echoes the sense in which Goldman sees "forgetting to remember [gendered and racialized violence] is, in fact, a constituent feature both of apocalypse and the origin of the nation" (26). Therefore, the position of the national, the "ex-centric, Canadian perspective" in Goldman's rewritten apocalyptic paradigm must be thought of tentatively and with caution.

The real victims of terror should also be remembered in Helwig's literary treatment of terrorism. Catherine Morley has cautioned that through literary depictions of terror "the fiction writer ... is in some way channelling some of the power of the terrorist act, converting violence into spectacle, and appropriating the

187

narrative of the victims" (246). Morley's concerns are worth addressing here. Unlike many contemporary novels that address terror, *Girls Fall Down* has no easily assigned villain, and no real terrorist. Much contemporary criticism has been concerned with novels that attempt to portray a direct representation of the mindset of the terrorist. Instead, in *Girls Fall Down*, it is Alex who imagines the possible identity of a terrorist in downtown Toronto. This is significant as Alex's troubled attempts at imagining a poisoner distance Helwig from the ethical questions involved in affiliating the narrative with a direct terrorist standpoint. Furthermore, Helwig foregrounds the process of imagining a terrorist, demonstrating how Alex's fictions require revisions and amendments. Initially what Alex refers to as his 'story' is focused on bodily aesthetics and actions:

> Let him be a tall man, and good-looking, and educated. He must be a man
> with some scientific training. He could be a chemist say; but in this story he
> would be a doctor. The doctor steps onto the train with a package wrapped in
> newspaper. (28)

Although the story is something Alex suggests he does not believe in, the fact of its creation within the narrative alludes to the power of order, and the potential for disorder, in the everyday city. The tall, well-educated man, would, for Alex, serve as an unobtrusive figure on the ordered subway. Largely avoiding the would-be terrorist's motives or mindset, Alex later builds an image of the figure based on a fellow subway passenger, in turn singled out as abnormal for his masked face (75). The power of this imaginary is revealed towards the end of the novel when a man similar to the imagined terrorist pushes past Alex carrying a brown paper package in a subway station: "*That man's going to drop the package and poison us all*, he thought. He was thinking this on purpose, wasn't he? A weird variant on punishing himself"

(254). Alex attributes this incident to a personal tendency to imagine transgression, and wishes to take personal responsibility for any potential ramifications. In doing so, Alex eventually recognises the impact of this creation. As Alex is then aware, there is a part of terrorism which functions through rhetoric. However, Houen emphasises that such notions of terrorist discourse can "become problematic if the focus on the fictional and the figurative obscures the physical effects of terrorist violence" (*Terrorism* 9). Texts clearly influence action and can provoke real violence.

The imagining of a terrorist located in a real city has the potential of extra-textual responsibilities. *Girls Fall Down* suggests this too through demonstrating the violent consequences of a group of youths' 'imagining' a terrorist. Alex's day job as a medical photographer at a city hospital forces him to document how a victim received extreme burns after being falsely mistaken for the imagined subway poisoner. As with Alex's portrait of a would-be terrorist, the gang's determinants focus on notions of disordered behaviour. By "talking to himself and carrying a sports bag" (126), the man was identified as inassimilable to the youths' notion of the ordered city. The further determinants for the attack become dangerously incoherent: "the kids also said the guy 'looked Muslim,' though another one is apparently calling him the 'Jewish guy.' So they're pretty clear they're into hate crime, they just can't decide who it is they hate" (126). The inability to distinguish whom the public should fear leaves all attempts at imagining threats tinged with violence, and a further attention to notions of public order and disorder. This reiterates the proximity between the imagination of terror and xenophobia.

The omniscient narrator draws attention to the novel's wider framing of notions of public order and embodied disorder in a sweeping chronicle of "some things that girls do" (56). Beginning with self-harm and anorexia, Helwig's narrator

dispassionately maps the female body as a marker of conflict and crisis worldwide. Behind each of these reactions there are implied but unwritten secrets:

> In Kosovo, girls fall down in their classrooms with dizziness ... On the west coast of Jordan, Palestinian girls fall down in dozens with spasms and blindness and cyanosis of the limbs, stricken by some illness that can't be rationally diagnosed. (56)

In each case the bodily symptoms are emphasised against a history of pathologising women by diagnosing them as 'hysterical'. In connecting these events to collapsing Asian factory workers, groups of girls participating in gang murder, and rural epiphanies in European villages, the narrative line complicates this by suggesting violence done both to and by girls. The power of these stories is superimposed over the meaning of the girls falling in Toronto. Such ambivalent and contradictory signs and contexts invoke the apocalyptic paradigm only to blur any clear notions of good and bad, elect and non-elect. The symbolism of visible bodily disorder is strong, and could be read as gestural were it not also seemingly inarticulate. The same ideas of bodily symbolism attach to the first girl who fell. Throughout Helwig's novel this girl remains nameless, filling an archetypal role. She is designated as either "the girl" or the "first girl who fell" (36). The referential resonance of women and 'the fall' line up behind the image of this girl and the girls in the sweeping chronicle to portray a global sense that the woman's body is a possible site of hermeneutic activity. In a similar fashion the overwhelming resonance of the homeless in the novel is their bodily presence. If, as Mark Kingwell has suggested, the urban homeless "can only embody, a helpless exemption to the rules of the social game" (14) then perhaps the novel's homeless, such as Derek, also embody a local protest against the local, national and global narratives which configure them as outside the interpretive range

and therefore the social sphere. These two differing senses of marginalisation collide when it is revealed that the girls, prior to the first girl's fall, have abused Derek after meeting him in a park. It is only then that seeing Derek as an exemption from the social game also illustrates his position as a target for one of the girls' sense of order and disorder: "'You have no right,' said the girl desperately, clenching and unclenching her hands. 'Being like this. *God.*'" (237). This is one explanation for the girls' subsequent attack, striking out at Derek for his perceived voluntary abdication of rights. Another explanation for this act sees Derek become the symbolic vehicle for the girls' societal concerns. The girls latch onto Derek in his vulnerability in order assert themselves as aggressors rather than victims, taking Derek as a symbol for all predation.[21] In doing so they invert their perceived 'elect' nature as young girls who need to be protected. Such unmoored violence is both placeless and intensely local. The first girl to fall later leaves presents for Derek on a park bench, as a penance – this is also demonstrably local and localised.

The novel gives a clearer sense of how localised responses are interconnected to narratives of global terror through its construction of public discourse and behaviour. Two of Helwig's commuters at another subway station discuss their suspicions regarding the delay after the first girl has fallen and in doing so expose some latent fears about global events:

"Or it could be one of those, you know, Middle East things, you know, about the war with Iran or whatever."

"Iraq," said the other man. "They're gonna have a war with Iraq is where."

"No," said the bass player. "No, I gotta tell you, man, I'm pretty sure it's Iran." (15)

The perceived threat is quickly linked to international geopolitics, even if the details are incorrect. In suggesting Iran as a possible threat, the two youths again emphasise that Helwig's Toronto public imagine a broad spectrum of global terror affecting, and at times located in, situations local to their everyday lives. Moreover, the vague term 'Middle East things' reasserts the climate of globalization that enables linking ever-redefined places and regions together as local agents. Helwig consistently hints at the ease with which these narratives of terror and disease can be manipulated. *Girls Fall Down* is saturated with these references to recent scares and disasters at both a local and a global scale. These form a narrative template in the media or what Appadurai has termed, in relation to globalization, a "mediascape" (35). Mediascapes in and of themselves are neither positive nor negative, and Appadurai is at pains to emphasise the possibilities bound up in their construction. Nevertheless, in the definition of a mediascape constructed out of 'strips' of life removed from their context there is an implied privileged viewpoint:

> Mediascapes, whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-centred, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots, and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives. (35)

Access to this privileged viewpoint is largely posited by Appadurai to be open to any public or private media company. However, this same position is increasingly open to anyone who has the capability to form and disseminate image narratives on the internet. As such, grass-roots involvement in producing narratives ensures such mediascapes contain multiple voices. Indeed, the graffiti-ing of FEAR across the city could be said to be part of a grass-roots mediascape. There are of course still power

dynamics in these contested perspectives, and traditional media companies still play a

large role in setting the media agenda. However, individual feedback to news media is

arguably more influential today in a media landscape characterised by the need for

24-hour news, and the resulting need to cut costs by relying on stories being generated

by social media, or cheap commercial news agencies. As such practices imply, further

emphasised by charges of 'churnalism' (Davies 59), whereby news media effectively

re-edits and processes existing stories from other media outlets and wire services

without new research, it is hard to find critical space outside these mediascapes.[22]

One media 'strip of reality' is presented in the novel when Alex sees

newspapers referring to the outbreak of bird flu, and the subsequent poultry cull, in

Hong Kong in 2002: "BIRD FLU EPIDEMIC COULD KILL MILLIONS, said a

headline in a newspaper box" (41). He immediately perceives both threats as

interchangeable: "Maybe this would replace the fainting girls" (41). A further opinion

on the media narrative of flu proves hard to attribute to a point of view, seemingly

blurring Alex and the narrator together in an overlap of free direct and free indirect

styles: "Discarded newspapers lay scattered around the car, under the feet of dripping

passengers, repeatedly and monotonously predicting millions of influenza deaths"

(47). The presence of newspapers scattered on the floor of the subway car indicates an

urban landscape of dispersed news, where commuters fill their time by reading cheap

and disposable print journalism. The excess of sensational reporting here is shown

conversely to numb the public to its meaning. The rupture of the everyday that

sustains the concept of terror is seen as something that also sustains mediascapes. The

imbrication of everyday life with these media narratives is emphasised by Houen,

who notes that "the view that terrorism and the media form a 'symbiotic relationship'

is certainly commonplace" (*Terrorism* 11). The global reach of this symbiotic

relationship means that the global reach of terror networks is interlaced with the global reach of mediascapes. This may imply an irreconcilable dominance of terror, but reception of media is not passive. Whilst global threats are disseminated in the novel's Toronto media, the attitude expressed towards the newspapers here is also boredom. Such boredom can be termed as highly productive. Ben Highmore has suggested, drawing on the work of Kracauer, that "to declare yourself bored is not a mark of failure but the necessary precondition for the possibility of generating the authentically new" (301-2). Boredom with media narratives is one way to begin taking a critical perspective on their forms and formulas.

Although the first girl to fall does not consciously recall these mediascapes, the narrator presents this knowledge as unconscious knowledge, similar to Žižek's unknown knowns. The girl's account of events does not touch upon past historical threats but the narrator's transition to relating such a history implicates the girl:

> She didn't know about the panics on the London Underground, the rumours of cyanide. She hadn't read the stories about what happened in Tokyo in 1995, when a group of elite sons and disaffected mathematicians decided to kick-start the apocalypse; never saw the pictures of people staggering out of the subway exits, clawing at their eyes. (35)

This history evokes a ghostly outline of past threats, and is shortly shown to be more present in the girl's life than her conscious remembrance would allow for. In a flashback, her friend Zoe is relating her brother's newfound obsession with terror gas attacks before they go on to take the subway journey the novel opens with: "Cause he's like, it happened in, in the Japan subway, and all these people died, so he's like, I can totally do this at home" (38). With this restored memory, and her embedding in a culture of news media, a milieu of transnational apocalyptic events is established

around the girl. In some senses this seems to draw upon the notion of global flows. Mediascapes function as methods of transit for narratives of disaster, enmeshing prophecy into everyday news broadcasts. This creates a transnational desire for such stories, at once exoticised and consumed by their supposed safe remove. Instead, the transit of stories accompanies embodied responses, situating Toronto within a sphere of terror. Intervening in this local and global exchange are national vectors, such as Canadian military participation in Afghanistan, which the girl perceives as immediate in time and vicinity: "wars in distant countries but somehow close" (35). This constant low-level exposure to media narratives of terror may also explain the dissemination of anxiety in Helwig's Toronto populace. When Alex observes that he expects to hear about a terrorist attack each day, the voice of the narrator pulls away from Alex's experience, implying that the following statement has broader application: "it had been that way since what happened in New York; any daily routine, now, could contain this news" (177). In light of these transnational contexts, more significance is given to the first girl to fall recalling an actual Toronto subway accident she was involved in when she was much younger. Her recollection of the event itself is unclear but her sense-memory of the incident is distinct. She describes perfume "clotting in her throat" (39) from pressing against a stranger, and in doing so evokes a clear precursor to her account of the bodily response in the present day narrative. This seems to suggest that vivid local events, as much as the transnational mediascape, shape a sense of terror. This movement from a localised Toronto accident then becomes a part a global terror panic. As, indeed, these instances of terror-tory are integral to depictions of Toronto's own sense of place.

The literary depiction of Toronto's terror-tory is enhanced by Helwig's textual references to apocalyptic imagery from the bible, from American and British

literature and from other Canadian literary narratives depicting Toronto. Bearing out what Goldman sees as essential to the apocalyptic paradigm's structural characteristic, Helwig's narrative is "fundamentally allegorical and intertextual in design" (18). In the framing of Helwig's primary image of a falling girl, highly referential in itself, the narrative drives the reader to search for earlier guides as a mode of explanation: "After one girl has fallen, the rest are explicable; they have a template, a precedent. But before that, it is harder to understand. At the beginning of this problem, then, is a single girl, the first to fall" (35). As a structural characteristic this is distinctly biblical, drawing upon Eve, the 'first' woman to fall in Genesis. However, in locating a falling female in the darkened Toronto subway the novel draws allusions to at least two other contemporary Toronto writers, Margaret Atwood and Michael Ondaatje. Although any number of Atwood's texts register images of falling women in Toronto, one passage in *Life Before Man* (1979) seems particularly resonant with Helwig's novel.[23] In Atwood's novel, Elizabeth, having pursued an extra-marital affair and eventually being left by her husband Nate, has a dizzy spell:

> [S]he's frightened. She's done other things but she's never blacked out like this before. She foresees a future of sudden power failures, keeling over on the subway, at intersections, with no one to drag her out of the way. Falling down stairs. She decides to have her blood sugar tested. (293)

As in *Girls Fall Down*, Elizabeth's fleeting vision strongly situates the image of the isolated falling woman on the Toronto subway. In turn, although Atwood's novel as a whole signals no conventional apocalyptic structure, its original more explicitly geological title, *Notes On The Mezosoic* (i.e. life before mankind)(Wilson 166), indicates the text's preoccupation with a deep temporal structure associated with apocalyptic writing. This same isolation has an apocalyptic tenor in Helwig's novel.

The first description of the girl before she falls down on the subway makes another textual allusion: "The girl was kneeling by the door of the subway car, a circle of friends surrounding her like birds" (7). This image echoes the prophetic biblical passage in Isaiah, "For it shall be, that, as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon" (Isa. 16.2). In the Bible these women alluded to as wandering birds are seen as fallen and potentially non-elect, unless they work to earn such mercy. The religious implications are again obscured in Helwig's use of this allusion; however, they are stronger in another text being echoed here, as the circle of girls draws on the signature image of Michael Ondaatje's *In The Skin of a Lion* (1987). Setting a story in early twentieth-century Toronto, *In The Skin of a Lion* opens with a scene where five nuns attempt to walk on the unfinished Bloor Street Viaduct. Four of the nuns are held back on top of the bridge, but one falls off it. The one who falls is described by her saviour, Temelcoff, as "a black-garbed bird, a girl's white face" (*In The Skin* 32). In Ondaatje's narrative the girl who falls, Alice Gull, goes on to renounce her religion and define herself from the image of a bird. As these images of falling women, birds and viruses coalesce in the *Girls Fall Down*, there is an additional connection to Timothy Findley's *Headhunter*, in which the novel's plague, sturnusemia, is attributed to "the expected influx of birds which carried the disease—starlings, mostly—whose Latin tag had given the plague its name" (6). These allusions, all part of Toronto literature, become important when discussing how Toronto's own literary precursors may help to establish a sense of particular and located semiotics. Goldman's discussion of the apocalyptic paradigm's characteristic intertextuality leads her to cite Findley paraphrasing Thornton Wilder: "Wilder urged young writers to be familiar with the works of those who had preceded them so they might *know where they enter*. Literature is never done with" (qtd. in

Goldman 32). Such a concept of acknowledged literary tradition also relates to the apocalyptic narrative structure, by way of its diachronic perception of texts. Literary representations of Toronto can be seen to develop and evolve over time, and allude to the changing fabric of the literary city by way of previous literature as much as to shifts in the real city. Helwig's intertextual allusions to other Toronto literature acknowledge a reading community who are cognisant of these literary cities. Furthermore, Helwig's allusions to literature deepen her engagement with a located sense of being and imagining.

The novel displays a self-consciousness about its allusions and the kind of allegorical readings that texts are open to. The first girl who fell happens to be studying William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, a parable of the nature of good and evil, the elect and non-elect. As the girl studies the novel, she comes to the conclusion that it merely depicts boys doing evil to boys and wonders "if there was a book about what girls did" (129). Unbeknownst to the girl, she is part of such a book, as we see the social pressures of her female friendship group. These pressures are framed by the wider context, already discussed, of 'things girls do.' The biblical allusions scattered through the text are also the focus of the girl's studies, overtly referenced by "the cover of her exercise book, where she had written *Bible Themes in Literature*" (96). Whilst Helwig's novel draws attention to these biblical themes, deploying apocalyptic imagery and even mentions in the acknowledgements the influence of the Venerable Bede in her portrayal of Derek's visions, these refuse assimilation into a schematic reading.[24] Just as the bodily action of falling refuses to articulate a problem, or the urban community of homeless people only hint at coded expression, the novel evades simple singular meanings. This trait is in evidence after the first subway incident. Alex meets his old friend Adrian who suggests that what Toronto now has is an

"airborne toxic event" (11). Alex responds "[t]hat's from a book" (12), emphasising a phrase deployed in Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (1985) to describe gas attacks. Adrian's response highlights the flexibility of such stock phrases: "Also latterly from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. It's multivalent" (12). Here the word "multivalent" draws together the medical sense in which pathogens attach to surfaces with the multiple meanings of textual allusion, suggesting that the text itself is literally viral in its pathways of meaning.

The text's referentiality also extends to the press that published it. Coach House Books have a history of printing texts that have intimate connections to the city of Toronto. Authors noted for their response to the city in literature including Margaret Atwood, bpNichol and Michael Ondaatje have all had work published with the press, and the new poetry and fiction in production continues this tradition.[25] One example of this place-based connection can be seen in a recent series of essay collections, collectively entitled *uTOpia*. The first of these titles, published in 2005, was designed as an open call to gather eclectic opinions on the future of Toronto. Subsequent volumes have been themed, and it is one such volume that carries an essay from Helwig. In *HTO: Toronto's Water from Lake Iroquois to Lost Rivers to Low-flow Toilets* (2008), Helwig borrows observations from the narrator of *Girls Fall Down* to illustrate her thesis that Toronto is a city where "our fears and our connections happen below ground level" ("Downward" 178). Such observations extend from the PATH system to the ravines and thus meet the collection's wider interest in Toronto's own water-based topology. Indeed, in addressing the ravines, Helwig cites Dionne Brand's and Margaret Atwood's work as examples, suggesting that "Any novel that wants to be a Toronto novel has to reckon with the ravines; in our imaginations, even more than in reality, they are the city's dominant shape" (179).

Helwig's assertion here terms her own work as representing Toronto, and in doing so asserts the importance of the real city alongside a collective imaginary of the city. In turn, in referring to other texts that deal with the city's image and lived experience, Helwig positions herself as writing into a tradition of place-engaged literature. This project is all the more effective for the symbolic literary heritage of Coach House.[26]

The material city's cultural circuit can also be seen to attach meaning to the novel through the Toronto City Book Awards. Shortlisted in 2009, the novel gained a local circuit of readership and a video produced between the Awards and the Toronto Public Library invites a particular attitude towards the novel's engagement with the city ("Maggie Helwig – TBA 2009"). The short video contains Helwig introducing the novel's plot and themes and then hinting at some of the influences on the novel, noting the resonance of the work of the photographer David Barker Maltby. Maltby's photography is included on the cover and in the background of the chapter titles inside the novel. Helwig hints that Maltby provided her with a large inspiration for both affective locations in the city and an idea of how the photographer views the city. In turn, Helwig attempts to explain the "lightly fictionalised" use of St. Stephen's Anglican Church as one of the particular spaces within the city that resonates in the novel. The church becomes a way in which the novel suggests a form of religious discourse which can become malleable to basic human need, echoing its ongoing engagement with apocalyptic rewriting. Helwig notes this, emphasising in a personal interview:

> if you're dealing with people who are homeless and marginally housed, churches are huge in their lives. Churches are virtually the only public space where they will probably not be thrown out. ... For that community churches

have a considerable importance that has nothing to do with religion at all. (Personal Interview)

In turn, the video produced by the Book Awards does not allude to this complexity of understanding. The Awards video does point to a sense that landmarks, spaces and places might contain some of the meaning of fictional as much as emotional and cognitive subjective geographies. However, the ability of a documentary image of a church to resist preconceptions makes this effort more difficult. The material city's church pictured in the documentary does not provide a space for the unique understanding of church-space the novel constructs. This framework seems hard to challenge. The sense of referentiality produced by the Awards' material intervention is underscored by Helwig's comments that the video has to be viewed as "a part of the business" (Personal Interview). The video, and recognition by any awards might then be seen to provide a normative drive to frame responses – with full authorial involvement. Only in the possible personal reading might the novel's literary sense of Toronto's church-space intercede.

For Helwig, then, *Girls Fall Down* is both a 'Toronto novel' and an exploration of apocalyptic thinking through a lens of contemporary fears. By way of these goals, the novel becomes an exploration of Toronto's own distinct terror-tory. The most obvious conjunction of the city's territory and its terror-tory comes through the narrative's resolution, or indeed irresolution. Instead of following the conventional apocalyptic narrative, which ends in a New Jerusalem, Helwig's novel reiterates Goldman's suggested example of a Canadian rewritten apocalypse by urging change within the here and now. In this case, the here and now is a Toronto still beset by disease, social problems and the isolation of the homeless. The novel's narrator suggests that the underlying problems and anxieties are ongoing, and

therefore the novel self-reflexively draws attention to the absence of a conventional end: "not a proper end with catharsis and resolution" (248). Following this the narrator qualifies the nature of these ongoing threats by suggesting a wider understanding of Toronto's terror-tory: "our bodies are permeable to the world, and ash and poison are moving in the air" (248). Helwig's Toronto, through its experience of an apocalyptic narrative, emphasises the complex nature of the place. In its local situation the city is also very much national and global. So, whilst corroborating Goldman's template of a rewritten eschatology, Helwig's novel counters some of the unproblematic ex-centricity Goldman attributes to the Canadian rewriting of apocalypse. Goldman asserts that Canadian rewritings constitute a direct response to "the rising tide of apocalyptic rhetoric in the United States" (168), whereas Helwig's mediation of such discourse replicates the uneven take-up of and response to transnational narratives at a local level. The discursive formations of terror and apocalypse overlap in the contemporary setting to reveal the transnational formation of narratives of fear. In turn these diverse influences are negotiated at the local level and heighten already-present local fears, drawing out Toronto's city space as terror-tory.

Coda: The discord and concord of literary Torontos

In October 2010, two inscribed plaques appeared in the streets of Toronto. At the corner of St. George and Bloor Streets there now stands a waist-height metal display. Only feet away from a bicycle chained to one of Toronto's iconic post and ring stands,[1] the green bordered display contains text in the outline of military chevrons reproducing in its entirety Ken Babstock's poem "Essentialist" from *Airstream Land Yacht* (2006). Babstock's words resonate with their location, depicting an encounter with an army cadet on a subway commute to St. George station.[2] The Canadian resonance of the poem's military cadet is bracketed by his local presence: "snug underground in the civic worm burrowing / west" (Babstock 13). This is disrupted by the transnational and wilderness-framed voice of the cadet's chosen reading: "what my soldier was so engrossed in – Thoreau's *Walden*" (13). Babstock's poem is thus bound up with the subtle contradictory forces of place and being. These same contradictions are drawn out further by the plaque, located on St. George street, Toronto, intended to "mark the places where the real and imagined landscapes meet" ("Project Bookmark Canada: Annual Report 2010-11" 4) which also contains a sizeable passage of American transcendental writing quoted extempore in the text of the Babstock poem. Perhaps the most resonant line of Henry David Thoreau deployed by Babstock and then in display through this street setting in Toronto is one which examines contradiction: "*We must reconcile the contradictions as we // can, but their discord and their concord / introduce wild absurdities into our thinking / and speech*" (13).

The second plaque to be unveiled in October 2010 sits on the corner of Manning Street and College Street. In the same green frame the plaque displays a passage from Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* (1996).[3] Michaels' novel centres on

Jakob Beer, his rescue from Nazi-occupied Poland and his subsequent life in Toronto. The passage on the plaque is written from Jakob's perspective, walking through the streets of the city's Little Italy neighbourhood at night: "one evening I walked up Grace Street, a summer tunnel of long shadows" (*Fugitive* 109). Jakob's route through to Manning Street both prompts and is layered with his memories of Jewish folk songs from his Polish childhood: "Suddenly an overheard word fastened on to a melody … the words stumbled out of my mouth … 'What good is the mazurka, my heart is not carefree'" (109). These remembered parts of Jewish folk songs receive a distinct reception from a distinct audience in this street in Toronto: "the street wasn't empty as I thought. Startled, I saw that the blackness was perforated with dozens of faces. A forest of eyes, of Italian and Portuguese and Greek ears; whole families sitting silently on lawnchairs and front steps" (110). The fictional Jakob's account of the street then observes the way that myriad transnational cultural histories exist within Toronto's streets, permitting his "foreign song" to sound strangely familiar (110). The plaque's use of this passage borrows the novel's observation of these transnational connections and deploys this to reinscribe an idea of visible multiculturalism within Toronto's streets.

'Project Bookmark Canada' then demonstrates, in its attention to Toronto, the desire to fix in place a text's literary geography, precisely *where* the "real and imagined landscapes meet" (*Annual Report* 4). This desire to fix a location can never be simple, nor can it be definitive. The project has other such plaques to mark the work of Elizabeth Hay in Ottawa, Bronwen Wallace in Kingston, Terry Griggs in Owen Sound and four more are planned across Ontario in 2011. The sense that one text about a street should then take precedence within the material street could be seen as invasive. Why, for example, isn't bpNichol's description of "St. George to separate

/ Admiral and Huron" (*Martyrology: Book 5* n.pag) where Babstock's plaque now stands? Others with various ties to St. George and Bloor, from the writers to walkers and nearby residents, may perceive a very different real, imagined or literary Toronto present at that location. Interventions, such as this project of literary outreach, which both discuss the imagined city and reinscribe the material city might seem as complex as the depictions offered of Toronto within literature itself. Nonetheless, these 'Bookmarks' symbolise one answer to the question: what do we do with engaging representations of Torontos? Aware that a plurality of Torontos are alive in its social spaces, this thesis has paid attention to how real and imagined conceptions of the city do not always meet. They are instead just as likely to exchange, blur and circulate within Toronto's wider symbolic economy.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

Literary depictions of Toronto illustrate the complexity with which a particular location is lived, perceived and conceived. The city's symbolic currency as a national media centre, a global city and a fragmented body of local neighbourhoods or suburbs is fundamental to each depiction. In this respect, the representations of Toronto studied in this thesis demonstrate what Julian Murphet calls the "complex plane of immanence" in experience of spatial scale (116). Murphet sees contemporary life as part of a:

> reemergence of spatial consciousness in an escalating scale of magnitude, from the body, through the textures of everyday life, our cities, and ultimately to the planetary stage we are calling 'globalization'; all of which are in fact inextricable – 'postmodern space' being, precisely, their compression into a single, complex plane of immanence, whose contours and elevations we are still in the process of mapping. (116)

Whilst questions remain over the fundamental history of such an experience, there can be little doubt that Murphet expresses in clear sociological terms how spatial understanding means acknowledging the messy presence of multiple notions of place all at once. Literary depictions of Toronto both contain this sense of immanent space, and are contained within it. Furthermore, the resonance of interpretation and spatial complexity within each textual engagement with Toronto demonstrates the movement between the literary and the real life spaces of the city. At times distorting, such movements might be seen to resemble a hall of mirrors, that "tricked-up" sense of space Lefebvre detects in spaces intended to be read (143). The construction of located meaning, in both literary form and content, participates internally and externally in Toronto's symbolic economy. This thesis has examined how literature reacts to and participates in Toronto's contemporary life, and the manner in which Toronto is a located plane of negotiation for these local, national and global forces.

As with the Bookmark Canada Project, the material city's influence on the production and dissemination of literature can also be seen to frame the meaning of literature. All of the works covered in this thesis have particular relationships to the Toronto City Book Awards and in turn, each author's engagement with their work's extra-textual life can be seen to differ. In part some of this difference of engagement has to do with the cultural capital bestowed on winners of the award. Michael Redhill's *Consolation* undoubtedly received more attention in the city after winning the Book Awards, which ensured that the text was preferable for the inaugural One Book Toronto scheme. In turn, the book's success can equally be seen as at a distance from the local sphere given the initially negative reaction (mentioned in chapter two) before its endorsement on the Man-Booker Longlist. The manner in which One Book Toronto went about responding to the book, aided by Redhill, drew attention to the

documentary evidence of the historical city and overflowed into the public contemporary city most prominently in the form of the walking tour. Similar methods of identifying prominent locations where the real and imagined text are meant to meet are visible in Maggie Helwig's video interview in 2009 ("Maggie Helwig – TBA 2009"). Helwig's recorded presence outside St. Stephen's Church, and subsequent mention of its influence on *Girls Fall Down*, encourages a sense of public access to the source of literature within the place it describes. In this and the manner in which *thirsty* might be reread through Dionne Brand's public role as Toronto's poet laureate, a form of literary tourism is performed. Nicola Watson highlights how this practice burgeoned in the nineteenth-century, as "the visiting of places associated with Anglophone writers in order to savour book, place, and their interrelations" (2) became popular. The emphasis on literary tourism today is, as the word tourism implies, often aimed at outsiders, at interested national or international visitors. The promotion of such material association for a local population could as easily suggest the lack of cohesion to the reading public. However, the overt attention to place foregrounded in the Toronto City Book Awards mandate to celebrate "authors or books of literary or artistic merit that are evocative of Toronto" (Pope 493) might be seen to necessitate framing such extra-textual meaning and performance in place.

The material city's various interventions from production to circulation could then be seen to re-author, to a certain extent, a text's extra-textual meaning. At the same time such processes provide an avenue for the text to intervene in the material city. Stephen Henighan's work, alluded to throughout this thesis, suggests a number of ways in which the publishing industry in Toronto influences the production of literature and the meanings surrounding Toronto itself. This combination of international press ownership, local offices in Toronto and obligations to a national,

Canadian, market of readers ensures that large presses negotiate conflicting pressures. However, as this thesis demonstrates, four works published in Toronto by four different presses, each of a different size and each with differing positions towards the literary market, contain equally engaging depictions of Toronto. Indeed, far from holding these texts back, their attention to location seems to have paid dividends: two of them have been published internationally. Despite being a small sample of the literary output of the city over the last ten years, this thesis demonstrates that twenty-first-century texts show no aversion to depicting Toronto and to providing a lively negotiation of the same immanent forces of place that publishers experience. This expanding body of literature, and the criticism that grows around it, like Amy Lavender Harris's *Imagining Toronto* and Caroline Rosenthal's *New York and Toronto Novels*, is the most potent rebuttal to the charge of global interests overriding local or national content in Canadian literature. Furthermore, in this thesis's focus on literary texts for their engagement with Toronto, the relative size of each publishing house need not be read as a direct influence on the aesthetic choices each spatial representation enacts. Whilst material factors influence the kinds of extra-textual meaning accrued by the text and some of the ways in which the text circulates, the text can equally be seen as present in the levelling ground of literature, able to signify within the wider conventions of literary form. Part of this thesis's work has then been to emphasise how paying attention to ongoing depictions of Toronto ensures that otherwise undiscussed works from big presses and small presses alike reach a critical audience.

Recognising that part of the reason why depictions of Toronto might remain undiscussed may lie with the symbolic resonance of Toronto, this study has shown how a locally inflected approach to Toronto need not dismiss the Canadian and global

situation. In relation to other critical trends in Canadian literature, the thesis employs a unique methodology. As a way of evading investment in pre-conceived kinds of subjective geographic experience, the thesis compares four different texts and deploys an approach that looks primarily at the spatial resonance of the text. In using the work of Andrew Thacker and Henri Lefebvre the aim has been to avoid what David James notes as the "temptation to evaluate spaces in fiction as historical, documentary reflections of environmental conditions" (24). The novels and poetry dealt with in this thesis have been treated as a creative response to space, containing the power to comment, re-order and refract the influence of place. Furthermore, the environmental conditions of Toronto cannot be seen as neutral, and so an awareness of the symbolic and multiple perceptions of the city has ensured that technocratic and cartographic approaches have been limited. Reading literary depictions of Toronto across this thesis using spatially resonant critical lenses helps illustrate the innovative spatial work that each author's 'textual space' conducts. A pre-conception of the various historical, cultural, technological or political spaces at play in Toronto might be borne out by these texts. As this thesis has demonstrated that critical spatial frameworks draw out the complex and multiple symbolic social spaces that complicate and particularise representations of Toronto.

The cartographic standpoint is also pertinent to consider in addressing the value of analysing literary representations of Toronto. Several actual maps, which have been produced over the course of this study, speak to a desire for Torontonian self-conception and spatial definition. Embedded in subjective and objective notions of understanding space and place, recent maps have addressed the price of housing, the agreed boundaries of downtown neighbourhoods, and the best places in the city to watch televised coverage of the 2010 football world cup.[4] The seemingly mundane

qualities of such maps and captions belie the sorts of loaded discussions of national, cultural and economic division that are projected onto maps. The *Globe and Mail* map depicting where to watch the 2010 football world cup suggested which bars, and in which neighbourhoods, nations would be best supported with such sage advice as: "Since there is a relatively limited Honduran population in Toronto, head towards the increasingly Latinized neighbourhood on St. Clair west of Bathurst" (W2). Such maps illustrate that amongst media coverage of all manner of events lays a public desire for understanding Toronto's shifting values, boundaries and transnational connections at a local level. What such maps do not display are the nuances of lives lived within these networks of understanding. As this thesis demonstrates, literary engagements with Toronto are not only an alternative depiction of these shifts in symbolism but are also likely to involve the consequent circulation of fictional narratives into the real city.

Drawing conclusions towards the nature of Toronto's literary work or any holistic sense of Toronto cannot be fulfilled with an analysis of these four texts; however the issue of genre and the kinds of literary text approached does require reflection and qualification of certain conclusions. Looking at Brand's *thirsty* in order to understand its spatial depiction of an open diasporic Toronto, it is also important to consider the function of poetry apart from the narrative tendencies of the long poem or the novel. Approaching *thirsty* as a sequence of individual lyric poems, albeit linked by certain narrative concerns, prioritises the particular structure and wording which escapes rote historical readings. The resonance of the factual, real life sources of *thirsty*'s historical narrative, becomes all the more striking for its pronoun shifts, its attention to language and attention to the empathic movement required in a city. These concerns are seemingly universal, however their depiction within Toronto's

geography, as possible observations, underlines the work that poetry can do. In seeking a methodology that can apply to poetry and prose narratives it became all the more striking that Canadian literary criticism has seen the two forms as distinct and separate. Noah Richler noted this distinction in a personal interview and suggested, "poetry was extremely important in Canada, or identified Canada a lot more than novels did for a while. I wonder if that's because essentially a lot of poetry is involved in a direct dialogue between the person and the place that they are in, in a more immediate way" (Personal Interview). Certainly, the formal traits and spaces of poetry function differently to novels. Any hard and fast rules about how this process might function came to shift over the course of the thesis as it became apparent that Redhill and Helwig's additional work as poets shows through their prose, edging a perception of the novels closer to what Ian Rae has termed the 'poet's novel'. Indeed, *Consolation* can be seen to have taken root in a poem published by Redhill in *Light-crossing* (2001), entitled "Commodore Jarvis," where Toronto's earth reveals a buried boat under the expressway and retains a buried boy from the nineteenth-century: "He lies there now, / undiscovered, or else / is beneath the foundation of a downtown hotel, / buried under landfill, under progress" (13). Nevertheless, poetry itself deserves a wider consideration for its spatial engagement with place and this would be one possible avenue for future work.

Other genres which could have been approached here frequently suggested themselves through notable works. The classic connotations of crime fiction's ability to represent unique social spaces, combined with the existing historical focus of *Consolation* brought to mind the successful series of historical-detective fiction, the Detective Murdoch mysteries, set in turn of the century Toronto written by Maureen Jennings. As symbolic narratives their reach and popularity has grown tremendously,

heightened by their adaptation into the popular television drama *Murdoch Mysteries* which has recently attracted Prime Minister Stephen Harper as a guest star. But ultimately the complexities of genre fiction and the attention required to notions of formula or indeed departure from formula could not be accommodated in this thesis. The same can also be said for the graphic novel. In September 2011, the Harbourfront prize at the Toronto International Festival of Authors, previously awarded to Brand and other prominent Toronto-writers such as Margaret Atwood and Michael Ondaatje, was awarded to Seth, a Canadian graphic novelist engaged in depicting Toronto. Hs occasional series *Palooka-ville*, and the existing collections *It's a Good Life if You Don't Weaken* (1996), and *Clyde Fans: Book One* (2004) have also found widespread international publication. The prominence of Seth, and indeed Bryan Lee O'Malley – creator of the Scott Pilgrim graphic-novel series set around Toronto's Annex, which translated to film in *Scott Pilgrim Versus the World* (2010) – highlights that other genres are increasingly a part of the diverse spaces of representation that seek to invoke and engage a conception of the city. In choosing not to approach genre titles, the thesis also omitted any notions of fantasy novels, some of which prove all the more interesting as deliberate resistances to conventional realist responses to representing Toronto.[5]

Lingering behind the question of genre, and in some senses avoided within this thesis is the notion of literary value. One charge which literature that does depict Toronto continues to face is that of questionable literary merit. As Philip Marchand notes in response to Amy Lavender Harris's expanding bibliography of the city's presence in literature: "the question remains, however: how good is this body of literature? Perhaps the amnesia is merited" (C05). The flexible criteria employed by the Toronto City Book Awards allow all fiction and non-fiction as choices reflecting

the diverse concerns of each year's citizen-jurors. For this thesis, quality was in some senses an unconscious decision, made in the belief that each text contained enough formal innovation and engaging responses to Toronto to reward protracted attention. Nevertheless, ideas of quality might still surround those choices. As a rejoinder to this, quality does of course come with many of its own pre-examined beliefs. Quality of literature can be a disguise for restricting what is permissible within a text as much as who is allowed to write it, and what elements of Toronto they might choose to address. A standing critique of my rationale in examining Toronto literature might be summarised in Stephen Henighan's comment that *"Fugitive Pieces* is not *White Teeth* or *Brick Lane* in its engagement (or, in my view, lack thereof) with urban reality" (Personal Correspondence with Henighan). This view reiterates Henighan's desire, drawn into Canadian urban reality, for someone to write "the "Zadie Smith" novel about Edmonton" (Personal Interview). Such opinions draw concern in comparing other urban centres with Canadian cities, all the more remarkable when Smith or Monica Ali's works are considered as contested local or national depictions themselves. Literature which engages with Toronto challenges conventional patterns, as should a mature engagement with place and literary tradition. Through attempting to see other novels as types which are absent within Canadian literature or indeed Toronto literature – such as Geoff Pevere and Phillip Marchand's desire for the great Toronto novel[6] – the real literature being produced suffers; prejudged as inadequate.

If one absence remains concerning in the ongoing project of examining Toronto's varying literary depictions, it is the persistent difficulty in finding an engagement with urban Native communities in Toronto. One recent novel that depicts Native populations in the city is Joseph Boyden's *Through Black Spruce* (2008). Boyden's novel is notable then for attracting national recognition by winning the

Giller Prize. Boyden's narrative remains distinct in its urban engagement, often using words shared by the Algonkian language groups to shift notions of ideal readers and conceptions of Native identity at the same time. Renate Eigenbrod suggests that this strategy of deploying Indigenous words in Native literature written in English, creates an "emphasis on *essential* differences between Indigenous languages and English … an important point in the political struggle for decolonization" (144). In this deployment of strategies of essential difference, and being one of few depictions of Natives in literary conceptions of Toronto, Boyden's literary success is all the more striking. As this thesis has demonstrated, concerns remain with the relative role of Native people in Toronto's past and present within literary narratives in which this is far from the primary concern. These all echo the overwhelming suggestions that Toronto is a word of Native derivation. Another task might then be to trace the ongoing issue of Native involvement in the city across many more literary texts engaged with the city, even if they do not immediately lend themselves to such a task.

* * *

Depictions of Toronto in contemporary literature continue outside the national framework. Two recent depictions of Toronto occur in contemporary British fiction and perhaps underscore why it is important to examine the role complex depictions of Toronto play in Canadian literature. The first example here is taken from Clare Morrall's *The Man Who Disappeared* (2010), where a visiting British mature student records her views on the city:

> They cross the lanes of the Gardiner Expressway and speed up. In a sudden
> break between the buildings, Lake Ontario appears, stretching into the

distance, merging with the low clouds on the horizon. Small waves ripple the

surface, grey and bleak in the winter gloom.

'The lake hasn't frozen,' she says, surprised.

'Doesn't happen often,' he says. 'Toronto is warmer than rest of Canada.'

She's here for the art. ... She was browsing on the Internet, trying to decide

on a suitable subject, when she discovered Canadian art and the group of

Seven. Vibrant images of wilderness jumped out at her... (15)

Toronto is seen by the protagonist, Kate, as a synecdochic image of Canada, despite

the Taxi-driver's correction of her meterological assumptions. This symbolic shift

does not simply attach arctic-cold weather to Toronto, but moves swiftly to the

wilderness images of the Group of Seven. The continued perception of wilderness

themes in Canadian culture elides engagement with the urban sphere, and, as

illustrated here, Toronto's particularity. The next example is taken from Jonathan

Coe's *The Rain Before It Falls* (2008):

We were at a stop near the university, now, and she walked to the front

entrance of what looked like an imitation of an old Oxford or Cambridge

college. There was a boy waiting for her there -- a student who I suppose was

about nineteen or twenty -- and the two of them kissed on the steps. ... He

took her by the arm and they went for a walk in the park near by – Queen's

Park, I believe it's called ... There were lots of big grey squirrels running about

between the leaves. I remember them, for some reason. (270-1)

In Coe's narrative the description of Toronto is set in the early-1990s and framed by

the words of an estranged mother observing the new life of her daughter. The pre-

conceptions are here overtly national and colonial, with England posited as the home

to the original and authentic buildings whose fake counterparts are seen in Toronto. In

the narrative the mother may be describing Hart House or Victoria College, but the choice of observing these particular buildings, as much as describing them as inauthentic, is loaded. Also noting the large population of squirrels – the black version of the eastern gray squirrel (Feinstein) – Coe's narrator both witnesses particularity and uses her own viewpoint to frame them as simply "big grey squirrels" (271). The urban wild then contains the power to reshape views of the city. Neither of the narrative voices should be taken as the authors' views on Toronto, but instead both signal that continuing engagements with Toronto are framed by its transnational symbolic economy.

Whilst comfortably situated within a view of contemporary British, if not English, literature, both of these depictions of Toronto clearly function as imagined geographies of the city – involved as they are in establishing signals about the characters' perceptions as much as a notion of the material city. These depictions cannot be judged as "false" they have their own authenticity within the novels' schema. Nevertheless, these jarring alternatives to the representation of Toronto in Canadian literature point out ways in which literary geographies increasingly travel transnationally. Redhill's *Consolation*, whilst creating a local audience in Toronto, reached a British audience perhaps *more* likely to be invested in the period narrative of an expatriate Londoner displaced to a colonial nineteenth-century outpost of Empire. These trajectories of reading publics gesture to the transnational qualities of the contemporary experience, found also in internet distribution and dissemination, and in the ongoing importing and exporting of literature. In studying literary Torontos, this thesis has highlighted literature that engages strongly with place, which creates challenging, complex images and produces formal developments. It is in this located aspect that production fuses with the wider cultural industry of the city,

meeting and exchanging ideas with the ever increasing array of Toronto's Urbanist

and literary social spaces such as: *Spacing* magazine, 'Torontoist,' 'Open Book

Toronto' and the newly launched 'Toronto Review of Books.' As these online and

print communities build around the literary culture of the city, there are more material

social outcomes, in the form of increased participation in 'Word on the Street,' the

International Festival of Authors, NuitBlanche, Luminato, One Book Toronto and

This is Not a Reading Series. Acknowledging this context needs also to admit the

local institutional discussions, inflections of global financial concerns, that open up

public attitudes and perceptions towards literature. City council under the stewardship

of current mayor Rob Ford have recently discussed closing libraries. Councillor Doug

Ford demonstrated a powerful local resistance to literary culture suggesting that

libraries could be closed in a "heartbeat" and in response to Margaret Atwood's

comments in support of libraries, issued the following statement: "Well good luck to

Margaret Atwood. I don't even know her. If she walked by me, I wouldn't have a clue

who she is" (qtd. in Moloney). Literary Torontos then play out against powerfully

discordant and concordant notions of place, living, perceiving, conceiving and re-

conceiving located social spaces. These are the Torontos to which this thesis, and its

study of literary depictions, gives access to.

Notes

Introduction

[1] This donation from the former owner Avie Bennett reflects the wider national associations of the company. Branding itself as "the Canadian publishers," McClelland and Stewart has always attempted to align itself to a national rhetoric, publishing the New Canadian Library and aiding the pedagogical institution of Canadian Literature. For analysis of McClelland and Stewart's influence on the establishment of the study of Canadian Literature see Robert Lecker, "The New Canadian Library: A Classic Deal," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 24.2 (1994): 197-216 and Janet Friskney, *New Canadian Library: The Ross-McClelland Years, 1952-1978* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

[2] The Toronto public could be forgiven for suggesting this is no substitute for proper maintenance. The plaque is one 'bookmark' in a series entitled Project Bookmark Canada.

[3] See for example Theodore F. Sheckels and Kathleen Mackin Sweeney, "Scene, Symbol, Subversion: The Evolving Uses of Mapping in Margaret Atwood's Fiction," *American Review of Canadian Studies* 31.3 (2001): 403-421 and Emily Gilbert and Paul Simpson-Housley, "Places and Spaces of Dislocation: *Lady Oracle's* Toronto," *The Canadian Geographer / Le Géographe canadien* 41.3 (1997): 235-48.

[4] See for example Lilian Chaitas, "Postcolonial (Re-)Visions of Toronto: Spatial Tactics of Resistance in Michael Ondaatje's *In The Skin of a Lion*," *Territorial Terrors: Contested Spaces in Colonial and Postcolonial Writing*, ed. Gerhard Stilz. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007) 191-211, and Robert Fraser, "Postcolonial Cities: Michael Ondaatje's Toronto and Yvonne Vera's Bulawayo," *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 26.2 (2001): 44-52.

[5] See John Clement Ball, "White City, Black Ancestry: The Immigrant's Toronto in the Stories of Austin Clarke and Dionne Brand," *Open Letter* 8.8 (Winter 1994): 9-19, Daniel Coleman, "'Playin' 'mas,' Hustling Respect: Multicultural Masculinities in Two Stories by Austin Clarke," *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in 'New Canadian' Narratives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) 29-51 and Winfried Siemerling, "Writing the Black Canadian City at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century: Dionne Brand's Toronto and Mairuth Sarsfield's Montreal," *Études Canadiennes / Canadian Studies: Revue Interdisciplinaire des Études Canadiennes en France* 64 (2008): 109-122.

[6] See Stephen Morton, "Postcolonial Gothic and the New World Disorder: Crossing Borders of Space/Time in Margaret Atwood's *The Robber Bride*," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 14.1 (1999): 99-114.

[7] Both critic and author here illustrate the development of literary technique and critical approaches over a literary career. Margaret Atwood's views on, and depictions of Toronto have shifted just as the city has changed. In turn, Coral Ann Howells' work in Canadian literary criticism can be seen as echoing the history of the discipline, aptly culminating in her co-editing of the Cambridge History of Canadian Literature in 2009 and in her election as a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 2010.

[8] Grace's material conclusions on the absence of the urban in Canadian literature have been reiterated by Jody Berland, who emphasises a national absence by surveying Canadian cultural production concluding "You would hardly know, looking at Canada's canonical written and visual texts that nearly 80 per cent of them live in cities" (48).

[9] The national ambivalence towards Toronto has been well documented; most recently in Albert Nerenberg and Rob Spence's comedic documentary-film *Let's All Hate Toronto*. The same historical anti-Toronto rhetoric can be seen in a 1943 radio play by Lister Sinclair: "As soon as anybody mentions Toronto, all enmity is forgotten, all scars are healed, all thoughts of violence and discord are swallowed up in warm brotherly love, and united at last in friendship, the erstwhile rival disputants can weep joyfully on one another's shoulders, as in a sublime chorus they lift up their voices in abominable

vilification of Toronto, the Queen City! Long may she continue to rot!" (274). See "We All Hate Toronto," *A Play on Words: & Other Radio Plays* (London: JM Dent, 1948) 255-279.

[10] For Henighan this bias extends to a wider disregard for contemporary Canadian settings. As exceptions to this seem to mount, Henighan's stance seems harder to defend.

[11] William H. Magee, writing for the Ontario Historical Society in 1967, expresses the lack of specificity many readers found in Callaghan's urban fiction: "Morley Callaghan presented a faceless Toronto which he named 'the city'. He apparently could find no difference between it and a hundred other North American cities to the south" (228). Walter Pache notes that this faceless quality in Callaghan's work ensures these "moral allegories ... are applicable anywhere (and perhaps also acceptable for the American market)" (1151). Richard Dennis draws out the coded nature of Callaghan's literary cities, identifying his work as "predominantly set in an unnamed city that is culturally, socially and topographically Toronto" ("Working Women" 39).

[12] Much of which came from its media publicity in the wake of the initial 2002 CBC-produced 'Canada Reads.' Such a media-drive towards a Toronto-set novel is clearly open to the same charges that the Toronto-based media powerfully intervene in national reading cultures. Especially given the absence of data on where in Canada the book's sales were located. However, the book had already been recognised locally in Toronto, as part of the Toronto City Book Awards. For more context on the cultural work of Canada Reads see Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo, "A Reading Spectacle for the Nation: The CBC and 'Canada Reads,'" *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes*. 20.1 (Winter 2006): 5-36.

[13] For a comprehensive cataloguing of the literature that engages with Toronto see Amy Lavender Harris, *Imagining Toronto* (Toronto: Mansfield Press, 2010).

[14] For a detailed study of how Toronto is frequently, erroneously, described as having been designated by the UN the most diverse city in the world, see Michael J. Doucet, "The Anatomy of an Urban Legend: Toronto's Multicultural Reputation," *Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement (CERIS) Policy Matters* 11 (2004): 1-10.

[15] The extension to the Royal Ontario Museum was designed by Daniel Libeskind and opened in 2007, the Art Gallery of Ontario was redeveloped by Toronto-born Frank Gehry and opened in 2008, the Ontario College of Art and Design extension designed by Will Alsop opened in 2004 and the Toronto International Film Festival Bell Lightbox opened in 2011. Large-scale new buildings for the Canadian National Ballet School on Jarvis Street, the Canadian Opera Company on Queen Street West and Koerner Hall at the Royal Conservatory of Music on Bloor Street further exemplify the extent of recent private funding for the city's arts.

[16] Since 2005, the program has employed established writers to mentor unpublished and early career immigrant writers culminating in the production of annual anthologies.

[17] Jane's Walk began in 2007 in Toronto. Its basic premise is to encourage the city's population to explore their urban neighbourhood in group walks, encountering each other and their cityscape anew. Such walks happen annually and take a wide variety of forms. The initiative has now spread to a number of cities worldwide. See "About Jane's Walk," *Jane's Walk*, 19 Sep. 2011 <http://www.janeswalk.net/about>.

[18] One Book Toronto can be seen as a response to other cities' reading programmes. Although unlike book programmes in other cities, One Book Toronto has remained committed to choosing books either related to the book awards or depicting Toronto in some way. In April 2011, One Book Toronto departed from using the winner of the Book Awards, Mark Sinnet's *The Carnivore* (2009) to read instead Judy Fong Bates' *Midnight at the Dragon Café* (2003). For more on the impact of contemporary reading programmes, comparing American and Canadian reading communities see the work of the AHRC funded 'Beyond the Book' program, highlighted in Danielle Fuller, "Citizen Reader: Canadian Literature, Mass Reading Events and the Promise of Belonging," The Fifth Eccles Centre for American Studies Plenary Lecture. London: Eccles Centre & The British Library, 2011.

Chapter One

[1] "The City, Urban Cultures and Sustainable Literatures: Representations of the Anglo-Canadian Post-Metropolis" is a good example of current research. An offshoot from the TransCanada institute at the University of Guelph, the project brings together a number of scholars from Canadian, Spanish and British universities to draw out the impact of contemporary Canadian cities in literature. The collaborative methodology posited prides the interdisciplinary potential of the project, and thus catalogues a number of recent poststructural theorists and terms alongside a myriad of thematic angles. A better indication of the project's direction might be found in the working titles of each researcher, however these appear to take radically different positions (Sierra and Darias-Beautell). It is, however, the one significant movement of criticism shaping in the area of urban Canadian literary imaginaries.

[2] See for example Herb Wyile, *Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization & the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011).

[3] Terry Eagleton has noted that: "In an age when the traditional boundaries between intellectual disciplines are rapidly blurring, geography shares with literary studies the signal advantage of never having had much idea of what it was about in the first place. Just as literary studies covers everything from dactyls to death, geography spans everything from sand dunes to marriage rituals" (22).

[4] The overly metaphorical use of travel is taken to task by Janet Wolff as often gendered and avoiding the corresponding material experience. In turn Wolff suggests that such metaphors avoid the frequently necessary conditions of stasis. See Wolff, "On the Road Again: Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism," *Cultural Studies* 7.2 (1993): 224-239.

[5] Robert Lecker, in 1995, calls this Frye's "central mythopoeic text" and sees it as central to wider Canadian criticism in that "[t]he theories it articulates form the primary basis for how most Canadian critics of the past two decades have envisioned and evaluated their literature" ("A Quest" 192).

[6] Northrop Frye contests this kind of interaction. Frye holds that literary form is unable to be influenced by place (or by Canada) in Culture as Interpenetration. Then again, he does come up with highly metaphorical spatial terms of the Garrison Mentality to describe a broad sense of place in literature.

[7] See Roy Miki, "Globalization, (Canadian) Culture, and Critical Pedagogy: A Primer," *Home-Work: Postcolonialism, Pedagogy, and Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2004); and recent publications surrounding the TransCanada Institute at the University of Guelph, Ontario such as Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki, eds., *Trans.Can.Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007). See also the cross-disciplinary titles within the University of British Columbia Press series 'Globalization and Autonomy' such as Petra Rethmann, Imre Szeman and William D. Coleman, eds., *Cultural Autonomy: Frictions and Connections* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

[8] For a wider discussion of the competing and conflicting common assumptions in the term globalization see Imre Szeman, "Globalization, Postmodernism and (Autonomous) Criticism," *Cultural Autonomy: Frictions and Connections*, ed. Petra Rethmann, Imre Szeman and William D. Coleman. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010) 66-85.

[9] J. Hillis Miller traces a similar trajectory for the word 'topography' as it gradually shifts from material usage, writing on the land, to a transparent metaphorical usage in embodying the land. See *Topographies* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1995).

[10] Depictions of both of these media in literature are approached in depth in separate studies. See Lorraine M. York, *The Other Side of Dailiness: Photography in the Works of Alice Munro, Timothy Findley, Michael Ondaatje, and Margaret Laurence* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1988) and Allan Hepburn, *Enchanted Objects: Visual Art in Contemporary Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

[11] Michel de Certeau offers up an analysis of Lefebvre's social space by focusing on the dominant role and possibilities of spatial practice. Determining spatial practices as text-like de Certeau terms them

"spatial stories" (115) or "spatial 'language'" (99) and in doing so begins to blur the insights offered by Lefebvre's categorical separation of representations of space and spaces of representation.

[12] Patrick Coleman suggests Cavell's essay to determine "the overall critical thrust of the collection" (170) and Carrie Dawson also highlights Cavell's work as an influential departure point (336).

[13] Dennis Duffy's research in Ondaatje's novel has deepened into an extended literary analysis of the actual historical documents produced by Arthur Goss. See Dennis Duffy, "Furnishing the pictures: Arthur S. Goss, Michael Ondaatje and the imag(in)ing of Toronto," *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes*. 36.2 (2001): 106-129.

Chapter Two

[1] Sugars and Turcotte do emphasise that the uncanny "provides a key hinging point for expressions of territorial and historical dispossession and inauthenticity" (ix), yet this seems a thematic unpacking of the term for its wider usage in cultural studies.

[2] This scene also echoes the poetic persona in Dionne Brand's poetry sequence *thirsty* (2002). In *thirsty* the noises heard outside the narrator's apartment are largely sirens. This auditory hint at establishing place gestures towards the varying familiarity or unfamiliarity of sonic spaces. In this scene in *Consolation*, Marianne's engagement is with the Harbour Light Hotel (modelled loosely on the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel) as a restricted sonic space, rather than the expansive external sonic cityspace of Brand's poetry. See Chapter Three for a fuller discussion of *thirsty*.

[3] One of the protagonists in Maggie Helwig's *Girls Fall Down*, Alex, gestures to this same point of view in his ongoing work – taking photographs of banks that are closed. See further discussion of this in chapter five.

[4] This is exemplified by Freud's consistent assertion that the uncanny is a "kind of feeling" (124).

[5] Within such mental currency as personal recollection, the only real exchange would be in conversation but even then such moments could still be reframed or reread.

[6] Similar photographic insertions have been employed in the work of WG Sebald, Tim Pears and Jonathan Coe, where photographs also appear on the same paper as the rest of the novel. In *Consolation*, the premise that a fictional character – who will later be revealed as a fiction of another character – has taken the photograph provides an uncertain meaning to the inclusion of these physical images, blurring our ideas of the image's authorship. The photograph used here is one of a number of photographs taken by Armstrong, Beere and Hime for the city of Toronto in the 1850s. It is regularly deployed in the Canadian television series, *Murdoch Mysteries,* adapted from Maureen Jennings' 1890s Toronto-set detective novels.

[7] At this point Ennis's illness, developed from prolonged exposure to silver nitrate, leaves the photography business entirely to Hallam and the Claudia Rowe. Ennis's life and degenerating health then serves to emphasise the physical traces that are left on the body from the dangerous processes of photographic development in this period.

[8] Riis was a photographer and journalist in New York in the late-nineteenth century. His work, demonstrated in his first book, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York* (1890), used photography to document poverty and poor living conditions experienced in the slums of the city.

[9] "The Photographs by Armstrong, Beere and Hine," *City of Toronto Archives*, 15 Jan. 2008, 21 Sep. 2011 < http://www.toronto.ca/archives/earliest_3_ab&h.htm >.

[10] Redhill also posted an online bibliography of the various histories and period texts that he used to write *Consolation*. This gesture fulfils the deconstructive and reconstructive desires at stake in using the novel to open up Toronto's history and literature ("Some background and acknowledgements").

Chapter Three

[1] Certainly this is the sense of geologic time through which the subway is seen in Anne Michaels' Toronto poem "There Is No City That Does Not Dream" (*Skin Divers* 16). Notably in Michaels' poem "Dinosaurs sleep in the subway / at Bloor and Shaw" (16).

[2] This selective use of Brand's work echoes the desire to see Toronto as wholly unique in the world. This is a complex drive which can lead to an explicit focus on the local, or the desire to compare Toronto with other cities around the world. The second path here is perhaps what leads to the re-statement of the falsity of UN recognition for diversity (see the discussion of Doucet's work in chapter one).

[3] Brand's reflections on moving to Burnt Country are detailed in *Map to the Door of No Return* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2001).

[4] For Brand's reflections on this see *Bread Out of Stone* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1994).

[5] These are collected in Dionne Brand, *No Burden To Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s-1950s* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1991).

[6] See for example Dionne Brand, "'We weren't allowed to go into factory work until Hitler started the war': The 1920s to the 1940s" *We're rooted here and they can't pull us up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History*, ed. Peggy Bristow. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. 171-191.

[7] For a fuller discussion of the ecolect, with reference to William Wordsworth's poetic place-naming, see Hugh Sykes Davies, *Wordsworth and the Worth of Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[8] Candida Rifkind makes a similar connection in her study of leftist Canadian literature, linking Brand to recent historical novels by Karen X. Tulchinsky and Steven Hayward, both dealing with the Christie Pits riots. In turn, Rifkind sees Brand's literary politics as part of that period's literary legacy. See the conclusion to *Comrades and Critics: Women, Literature, and the Left in 1930s Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

[9] Lee's imaginary of Mackenzie's Toronto in *Civil Elegies* depicts the failed Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837: "I saw / regeneration twirl its blood and the rebels riding / riderless down Yonge Street, plain men much / goaded by privilege – our other origin, and cried / "Mackenzie knows a word, Mackenzie / knows a meaning!" but it was not true" (33-34).

[10] Onesuch installation was opened in December 2010 at the Cedarbrae Library. For further details on the project see "Poetry is Public is Poetry," Oct. 2010, 18 Jul 2011 <http://www.poetryispublic.ca/>.

[11] Brand's appointment is for three years, each year she receives a $10,000 honorarium ("Toronto's Poet Laureate").

[12] This is presumably the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Weston, on the intersection of St. Clair Avenue West and Old Weston Road.

[13] For a broader understanding of the history of the UNIA's establishment in Canada, contextualising Blackman's account in Brand's *No Burden to Carry*, see Carla Marano, "'Rising Strongly and Rapidly' The Universal Negro Improvement Association in Canada, 1919–1940," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 91.2 (2010): 233-259.

[14] The original naming of Scarborough is noted in Elizabeth Simcoe's journal, wife of the governor John Graves Simcoe. Simcoe described her sighting of "the appearance of Chalk Cliffs but I believe they are only white sand. They appeared so well that we talked of building a summer Residence there & calling it Scarborough" (136).

[15] Conflicting Native and French usage of place names can both be traced in Toronto's name. Centrally, the Mohawk word Tkaronto meaning 'where there are trees standing in the water,' and the Huron word toronton, meaning 'place of meetings,' seem to lie behind the modern day Toronto. See Alan Rayburn, "The real story of how Toronto got its name," *Canadian Geographic*. 114.5 (Sep./Oct. 1994): 68.

[16] For one account of this see: Kathleen Jenks, "Pan," *Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology*, ed. C. Scott Littleton, Vol. 11. (New York: Marshall Cavendish Corporation, 2005.) 1074-1078.

Chapter Four

[1] The Loughborough-based Globalization and World Cities Research Network have produced a ranking of "world-city-ness" splitting international cities into 'Alpha,' "Beta,' and 'Gamma' groups dependent on their comparative involvement in economic and service industries. Such data is an empirical attempt to map the inequalities of globalization. In their research, Toronto is deemed a Beta world-city (Beaverstock, Smith and Taylor).

[2] Marche was a doctoral student at the University of Toronto when he met his now wife, Sarah Fulford. Fulford herself is Jewish, and the couple have spent time in Jerusalem. Fulford is perhaps notably the daughter of the Toronto journalist and writer Robert Fulford. Robert Fulford, as cited in the introduction to this thesis, has long been involved in creating and mediating symbolic representations of the city.

[3] This multi-centred use of marginalia has been adopted by Christine Estima in a short story set in Toronto for the Diaspora Dialogues series of Toronto writing. See "Nylon-Encased Flesh," *TOK: Writing the New Toronto: Book One* (Toronto: Zephyr Press, 2006) 132-142.

[4] Providing another curious echo, Marche's novel was nominated for the Toronto City Book Awards in 2006 whilst Hugh Hood's essay collection was nominated for the inaugural City Book Awards in 1964.

[5] Atwood's "Dream 1: Bush Garden" figures as part of *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* and contains the stark line "I should have known / anything planted here / would come up blood" (34). As such Atwood's notion of this violent wilderness, resisting domestication, is framed by the persona of Susanna Moodie, a historical imagination and the idea of the dream. Despite this complex frame, the application of Atwood's phrase by Frye as a "suggestive phrase ... defining a Canadian sensibility" (*Bush Garden* x) has lent it a national, sociological tenor in subsequent criticism.

[6] It might be pertinent to point out that postal services in the past have been known to be rapid in relaying messages, as published collections of letters attest. However, this service was still geographically and economically restricted in comparison to today's e-mail technology.

[7] The most prominent examples of email in fiction are either satirical, in the work of Douglas Coupland and Matt Beaumont, or a speculation on digital communication, in the work of Jeanette Winterson and Cory Doctorow.

[8] This reference resonates with another work of Toronto literature – Barbara Gowdy's *The Romantic*. Gowdy's novel charts two separated lovers who each take their names from Abélard and Héloïse and whose romance in Toronto is also intimately linked to the illicit cityspace of the ravines.

[9] A former manager of the Women's Bookstore, Anjula Gogia, emphasised the aspect of community engagement within a globalizing city in the shop's work "The books we sell are directly related to the different communities we serve. We have sections for First Nations women, South Asian women, African Canadian women, women with disabilities, les/bi/trans women and much more" (qtd. in Alland 215).

[10] In a recent article for the online American Jewish magazine *Tablet*, entitled "Intertwined", Marche has explored his own position as 'goy'. Marche's expression of the complexities of this identity as "a hyphenated identity in a world of hyphenated identities" goes to show a depth of understanding which the author has developed from personal experience.

[11] Similarly, an article Marche produced for *The Guardian* as a commentary on the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver again challenges the attribution of surface notions of difference solely to the character of Raymond ("The ridiculously sexy Winter Olympics").

[12] Marche's actual thesis is entitled 'The Dead in Early Modern English Tragedy' and was also submitted in 2005, the year of *Raymond and Hannah*'s publication. Marche has described the uncanny afterlife of writing a subsequent novel at the U of T, only for it to be studied on a first year English course: "I did a lecture for Nick Mount (U of T Assistant Professor) on *Shining at the Bottom of the Sea* at the Koffler centre. I'd written part of it while I was a Grad student in the stands there. I sat in the same seat I'd sat in then to listen to him lecture about my novel. That was weird. That wasn't that long ago" (Personal Interview).

[13] For more on the development of the Jewish community in Toronto see Myer Siemiatycki, Tim Rees, Roxana Nh, and Khan Rahi, "Integrating Community Diversity in Toronto: On Whose Terms?" *The World In A City*, ed. Paul Anisef and C. Michael Lanphier. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. 373-456.

[14] The comparison of city and body has a much longer history than gestured to here. Mark Jenner indicates that comparisons between the city and the human body were made in the late sixteenth-century, with streets being compared to intestinal tracts and whole cities being seen as stomachs digesting foreign matter (152). Naturally a larger discussion of this topic is well beyond the remits of this chapter. Here, rather, I have gestured towards a discourse of the body in city-design which would have impacted upon the development of Toronto.

Chapter Five

[1] A full list of media reviews of the title can be found on the Coach House Books website: Evan Munday, "Coach House Books Catalogue," *Coach House Books* 03 Dec. 2009, 11 Jul 2011 <http://www.chbooks.com/catalogue/girls-fall-down>.

[2] This section of the book refers to the former Morgantaler clinic on Harbord Street, which was the subject of protests and a bombing in the early 1980s. After moving to a separate building on the same street it was again firebombed in the early 1990s and moved again further east across the city. According to Helwig, "At one point the final fire-bombing was in the book. But it didn't fit so I took it out. ... That scene [at the clinic] is factual, in that I was there. I have inserted my characters into a fairly accurately described historical event that I was at. So, it's as close to reportage as anything in the book." Maggie Helwig, personal interview, 9 June 2010.

[3] A recent thesis demonstrates how 9/11 can be seen as a temporal marker in literary narratives, see Zoë Formby, "The Myth of 9/11," Diss. University of Nottingham, 2011.

[4] DeLillo and Lessing's literary works have engaged with depictions of terrorism, before the events of 9/11. DeLillo's *Mao II* (1992) and Lessing's *The Good Terrorist* (1985) are good examples. DeLillo's subsequent work has also engaged with 9/11 itself in *Falling Man* (2007).

[5] For recent notable contributions to the field, see *Literature After 9/11*, ed. Ann Keniston and Jeanne Quinn (2008); Kristiaan Versluys, *Out of the Blue: September 11 and the Novel* (2009); Catherine Morley, 'Writing in the Wake of 9/11' in *American Thought and Culture in the 21st Century*, ed. Martin Halliwell and Catherine Morley (2010) and Richard Gray, *After the Fall* (2011).

[6] The material Canadian context of terrorism has largely been felt in increased domestic security measures and highly publicised anti-terrorism arrest. It is notable that Canadian prime-minister Stephen Harper chose the tenth anniversary of the events of 9/11 to declare Canadians "are not immune from Terrorism" ("Prime Minister Harper marks 10th anniversary of 9/11").

[7] This is a position with which Härting and Kamboureli seem to concur. In their survey of writing on security and Canadian literature, two recent studies are noted: Jody Berland's *North of Empire* (2009) and Richard Cavell's edited collection *Love, Hate, and Fear in Canada's Cold War* (2004). However,

both of these collections are primarily cultural studies and so do not focus extensively on Canadian literature.

[8] In turn this would leave undiscussed the many recent Canadian literary depictions of terror set outside 'familiar' locations, such as *De Niro's Game* by Rawi Hage (2006) or *The Cellist of Sarajevo* by Steven Galloway (2008).

[9] There is a vast tradition of literary criticism that follows Northrop Frye's remark in *The Bush Garden* (1971) regarding Canadian literature's "tone of deep terror in regard to nature" (225), and relatively few examinations of urban unease.

[10] SARS and the blackout serve as key themes in a number of recent depictions of Toronto in literature. Vincent Lam's short story 'Contact Tracing' in *Bloodletting & Miraculous Cures* (2007). SARS is also referenced explicitly in Zoe Whittall's *Holding Still for as Long as Possible* (2009). The blackout provides the setting and context for Barbara Gowdy's *Helpless* (2007). Both the blackout and SARS are drawn upon in Dionne Brand's literary imaginary of Toronto in *What We All Long For* (2005).

[11] Toronto of course has an ever more crowded airspace with two airports in close proximity, Lester B. Pearson and Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport, and until recently the CN tower was the world's tallest self-supporting tower (Davison 123). Nevertheless here Helwig seems to be making a clear distinction between the threat of terror in Toronto and New York.

[12] This term is somewhat problematic, given both the valid claims for other cities in Canada to be 'global cities' and the confusing privileging of the national in a model that is distinctly transnational (although the national clearly still has much power). The highlighting of Toronto as Canada's global city originates in the socio-economic discourse attached to the concept of global cities. Social science studies have typically tried to discuss uneven global development between these nodal points of global flow by tiering the importance of certain cities. This tiering is often based on a wide variety of indicators and is usually represented in the form of various leagues (alpha, beta and gamma) or straightforward rankings. Peter Hall describes this as a "global urban hierarchy," see "Global-City Regions in the Twenty-First Century," *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*, ed. Allen J. Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 59-77.

[13] In some senses this thinking is not new. Cities are areas of human encounter and interaction and are logical areas for the spreading of infectious disease. Instead it is the global city's pronounced concentration of global accessibility which provides a greater problem with human-spread diseases such as SARS.

[14] As seen with Hallam's photography in nineteenth-century Toronto, the contemporary evocation of socially aware photography continues to gesture to a tradition tracing back to Jacob Riis in nineteenth-century New York. See the discussion of this in chapter two.

[15] The PATH system could certainly be termed an expansive 'non-place', with the seventeen-mile network of underground shops and plazas referenced in the *Guinness World Records 2006* as the largest underground shopping-complex in the world (203). In turn this recognition of comparative scale might well lend it accumulated recognition as a place.

[16] Although the commercial impetus, and government support, for expansion have been markedly different in Toronto. For more on this, see Lawrence Solomon, *Toronto Sprawls: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

[17] An interesting comparison to the idea of downtown photography posited by Alex would be the work of contemporary photographer Geoffrey James. Many images in his recent collection of Toronto photography are taken outside of core commuting hours and show a sparsely populated city. See Geoffrey James, *Toronto* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2006).

[18] Atwood has set many scenes in her novels and short stories in the proximity of the ravines. A few examples of these are listed and excerpted in Harris, *Imagining Toronto*.

[19] One account of how Toronto's subway stations, and experience of the subway, can become personal and artistically appropriated comes in Tony Dekker's accounts of song writing in the city. Dekker's "I Will Never See The Sun" references a sequence of subway stations ("Spadina / St. George / Bay and Yonge"). See *City Sonic: Tony Dekker at Spadina Subway Station*, dir Anita Doron, str. Tony Dekker Toronto, HotDocs, 2009, 21 Sep. 2011. <http://www.hotdocslibrary.ca/en/detail.cfm?filmId=22904>.

[20] A recent study by Andrew Cohen re-evaluates notions of Canadian citizenship in relation to various caricatures and traces the intellectual tradition behind possible moulds of Canadian citizen: *The Unfinished Canadian: The People We Are* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007).

[21] Given the important role Derek plays, it is all the more surprising that this is the element of *Girls Fall Down* which proved the stumbling block in Helwig's relationship with her original American publisher. Helwig found that the Toronto setting did not impact on her work, but that there was "a sense that there was too much Derek" (Personal Interview) – something Helwig was not willing to amend.

[22] Following Davies' term 'churnalism,' there is now an online website dedicated to analysing news articles to alert you to their provenance. In some senses the website enacts the same check on journalism that academic institutions increasingly apply in monitoring work for plagiarism. See "Churnalism.com," Media Standards Trust, 21 Sep. 2011 <http://churnalism.com/>.

[23] More notable images of falling women are present in Atwood's *Murder in the Dark* (1983), *Cat's Eye* (1988) and *The Robber Bride* (1993).

[24] Helwig's own insight on where Bede's imagery is used in the novel is also fruitful in underscoring the novel's wider religious imagery transposed over Toronto's city space. The image in the final passage of the novel is of a subway car pulling in and out of a station: "Like a bird in the night, the train flies through the darkness, alone" (266). This image, according to Helwig is taken from "a scene somewhere in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* where the parliament are debating whether not to adopt Christianity. One of the pagan chiefs says: 'It seems to me that the life of man is like the bird flying in the night. It briefly flies into a banquet hall where there is warmth and food and light, and then it flies back out into the darkness again. If this new religion can offer us anything more than that then why not give it a try.' I've always found that such an evocative image, the bird flying into the banquet hall and then back out into the night. Doing that at the end of the novel with the subway train was something I really wanted to do" (Personal Interview).

[25] Coach House Books is the modern day successor to the now defunct Coach House Press. Recent fictional works published by Coach House Books that deal closely with the city's sense of place include Darren O'Donnell's *Your Secrets Sleep With Me* (2004), Claudia Dey's *Stunt* (2008), Dorothy Ellen Palmer's *When Fenelon Falls* (2010) and Sean Dixon's *The Many Revenges of Kip Flynn* (2011). The press also has a series of six essay collections, collectively entitled 'uTOpia,' which feature writing from Helwig, Michael Redhill and other Torontonians. In turn, Coach House publish numerous geographic and architectural guides to the city. These include Shawn Micallef's *Stroll* (2008), which purports to be a psychogeographic investigation into the city's streets and laneways.

[26] The press's founder, Stan Bevington still works on the publication of Coach House titles, four decades after he moved into the current offices in 1968. Bevington's presence provides an ongoing personal connection to the press's history, alongside a continuity of craft and ethos.

Coda

[1] The post and ring bike stand has become to some an iconic symbol of the city of Toronto. Having been designed and produced in the city there are now over 16,000 of these stands on the city's streets. The object originates from the work of the city's 1985 cycling committee, chaired then by Jack Layton. Layton claimed the design for the bike stand had been conceived in a Toronto pub. See Tammy Thorne, "Who was first past the post?" *Spacing* 7 (2006) 21 Sep. 2011 <http://www.spacing.ca/magazine/section/infrastructure-fetish/who-was-first-past-the-post/>.

[2] A video of Babstock reading his poem at the unveiling of the plaque shows city life continuing around this busy intersection. See "Ken Babstock's 'Essentialist,'" *YouTube.com*, 5 Nov. 2010. peachthedino. 21 Sep. 2011 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKbm-WRE3m8>.

[3] Michaels can be seen reading at the unveiling of the plaque, gesticulating to add emphasis to Jakob's naming of Manning Street. See "A Piece of 'Fugitive Pieces,'" *YouTube.com*, 12 Nov. 2010. peachthedino. 21 Sep. 2011 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jG3tTabNL5Q>.

[4] See "Have Toronto home sale values gone up or down?" *The Globe and Mail*, 22 Sep. 2011. 27 Sep. 2011 <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/home-and-garden/real-estate/buying-and-selling/have-toronto-home-sale-values-gone-up-or-down-check-our-interactive-map/article2172637/>; "The Star unveils unique map of neighbourhoods" *Toronto Star*, Mar. 8 2009, 27 Sep. 2011 <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/598502>; Tara Howe, "Where to watch the World Cup in Toronto," *Toronto Star*, 6 Aug. 2010, 27 Sep. 2011 <http://www.thestar.blogs.com/worldcuptoronto/2010/06/website-tip-wheretowatchtheworldcupcom.html>. A similar map to the one posted in Howe's article was also part of "Globe T.O. guide to World Cup restaurants and bars," *Globe and Mail* [Toronto] Jun. 12 2010: W2.

[5] A working bibliography indexing fantasy, horror and science fiction depictions of Toronto has been compiled by Karen Bennet. See "Fantastic Toronto: A Survey of Toronto in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror Literature," *Fantastic Toronto* 2011, 27 Sep. 2011 <http://www.karenbennett.ca/FantasticToronto.html>.

[6] Note again the absence of poetry in this posited relationship with Toronto in literature.

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Appendix A: Interview with Michael Redhill

Interview with Michael Redhill at Bar Mercurio in Toronto.
Date: 8th June 2010

Will Smith (WS): I wanted to begin by asking you about the Toronto City Book Awards. I was interested in your experience of that and what it was like to win and how it affected the book in the local area.

Michael Redhill (MR): Well the Toronto City Book Awards came after the long-listing for the Man Booker Prize. As you may be aware from having lived here for a while, and reading the buzz around books, once something in this country gets some attention paid it outside the country, people here redouble their attention. That's the kind of phenomenon that marks a young culture. You don't know what's worth celebrating until somebody from another culture says hey that's good, and now you can pay attention to it. So I don't know what role that might have played in the nomination or the subsequent winning of the Toronto Book Awards. That sounds very cynical but the book had an afterlife, it had a very strange arc because it was not very well received. People in Toronto aren't that interested in reading about Toronto. In the rest of the country they are really not interested. It sort of died a very quick death. Then it got nominated. Then it won this book award. Then it was made into this one book thing that the libraries did. It had a whole other life that came out of the attention that was paid to it. I had accepted that the book was dead long before any of this happened. The book came out in 2006. It wasn't until the summer of 2007 that it was longlisted and then all this other stuff started to happen. I watched everything that occurred to the book from a sideways point of view. I was living in France at the time. I moved to France in July 2007 and we were there for two years. All of this happened in the context of having a totally different cultural experience. I was just very pleased that it had this incredibly rare experience in Canadian literature which is to be resurrected during its publication time. There are books that come back years and years down the road, and people go 'hey we should have paid more attention to this' but rarely while the book is still in print does that happen. It was a marvellous thing for the book.

WS: And you felt like you had a better discussion of the book because of that?

MR: I had the first and only discussion of the book as a result of that. There was no discussion of *Consolation* when it came out. Toronto reviews either reacted shamefacedely about the fact that there was a book about Toronto which was ... I'm sure you've seen the reviews. It was sad, the lack of real discourse around the book around Toronto critics was sad. There's a magazine called *Spacing*, which is a local magazine which deals with local cultural architecture and its legacy. They got the book. That was really interesting and they're a good bunch of people. Torontonians still have their head in the dirt when it comes to the place that they live in. They'd rather not think about it. I'm still not sure why. It's a place that's constantly being pulled out from under them like a rug. They don't have anything to grasp. The average Torontonian doesn't think about the place as a city that has some kind of consistent core... cultural or spiritual core to it.

WS: Thinking about the book and the awards… you described the Reference Library as a "dark moment in the civic architecture." You then had to do some readings there for the book awards. Was that awkward?

MR: I seem to remember there was one question about that and I think I just made a joke out of it. I don't remember it. We have had many more dark moments in Toronto architecture since that building went up. They no longer have to feel horrified. I think I described it as inverted rice paddies, it's kind of what it looks like to me. Toronto had a long brutalist phase, and in some parts of town they're still in a brutalist phase. I don't think anybody was particularly offended. I think Tina Srebotnjak who was in charge of that whole program said somebody might bring it up…

WS: Thinking of the novel's 'history'. How did you go about choosing the 1850s? Because, if you're thinking about Toronto having a long history there are other periods you could address.

MR: Yes. That's an important period for a couple of reasons. One is that it happens to be the time in Canadian history when Upper and Lower Canada were going to combine into the Province of Canada and they were looking for a new capital. They sent out a request for proposals. Toronto, Kingston, Montreal, Ottawa and Quebec City all applied to become the capital of this new province. And Toronto photographed itself. So the occasion for the novel was the creation and the subsequent forgetting of this photograph. It vanished - this early artefact, from the very first time the city tried to picture itself in some way. Literally. In 1856 and early 1857. I wanted to write about that period because there's a little crack in the historical door that's open in that period. It also happens to be one of the worst times financially in North America. 1857 was the first international banking crisis and a lot of people lost their shirts. To have a man come over from England to establish a new business in a period of time where having working capital was essential and easily lost just made the whole thing the right time to make it work.

WS: I ask the question because I've come across a lot of Toronto literature which makes reference to a limited amount of historical background. But, the area I've found least represented is the native history of the city, or its first nations traditions. There's a gesture to that at the start of *Consolation*, and there's a gesture to it at the beginning of Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, it's trying to find someone who develops that. Obviously not everyone is going to be concerned enough to do that themselves but it would be interesting to find someone who was taken that perspective on the city.

MR: That certainly is a lost history. I would be curious to read the book written by the person who really has a passionate attachment to that period. I think the right person would have to come along and I don't know who that is. I'm writing about Europeans, ultimately. My most distant history, personally, is European. I kind of grok that. I can understand what these people were doing. Because, later generations did much the same thing. All of my people came over from England and Poland at the turn of the twentieth century. The question of any aboriginal population and how they used this city is almost completely effaced. It's almost totally gone. There are other cities in Canada where they have done a better job of maintaining that link but in Toronto that's almost entirely gone.

WS: It's interesting that you're using the metaphor of the earth and digging. That's something that is kind of been built over too. And damaged in its own way.

MR: Right. You have to be careful though when you're choosing a metaphor, not to extend it so far that it tried to do too much work. I made passing mention of natives in canoes and spearing fish and there's a lot more I could have talked about... there's taddle creek that runs down through U of T that was famously full of salmon... there's the davenport portage... there's a lot of parts of the city which, especially in terms of how they were used by the aboriginal populations, are still there under the streets. But, it wasn't my business to dig into it. I worried about trying to be inclusive in a way that would seem gestural rather than meaningful, and therefore I avoided it.

WS: Going back to the photography. I'm intrigued by the appearance of the one photograph in the book. Particularly how it affects your reading of the novel. In the different editions of the novel, the way the photo appears... in the American edition you see the page with the commentary following immediately underneath the image whereas in the British and Canadian editions it gets its own page to itself. I wondered how much control you had over the different editions? How they appeared?

MR: Only the Canadian. I wanted the picture to appear on its own page. The Americans for whatever reason... the impact in the light of the American edition is negligible because the book died and they never brought it out in paperback. So, very few people ever saw that edition of the book. The point from where I was sitting, the design of that page was essential. There should not have been any words on it. It needed it's own space. Almost like a picture being hung. And naturally the placement in terms of the length of the book, the fact that you're reading fiction and then suddenly there's this violent page with a real image on it from the period you've been reading about. It's meant to hit the reader on a different cognitive level. That's the only reason why I'm pleased the American edition didn't go anywhere because they treated the text like a caption which I really didn't like.

WS: I found the whole thing interesting. When you include an image in a book it often has some kind of contextual hint as to where it has come from. As a reader who reads around you can understand where it's from, and you can understand in the context of the novel. But, if you're looking for textual clues for where that image has come from or who it belongs to, there aren't any. There's no reference to copyright on the front page, or any hint of archive listing, so was it difficult to get that image to put in the book? Or, was it out of copyright?

MR: It was well out of copyright, it doesn't belong to anyone anymore. It was a hundred and seventy years old. Doesn't belong to anyone.

WS: I wondered if the archives...

MR: Unless the original rights holders transferred the rights to an institution. In some ways it's the property of the British Government.

WS: It's interesting when you talk about the foreign and commonwealth office... Philip Hatfield in the UK has been working on the photographs which represent Canada in that archive.

MR: I wonder how many more images that are lost, are in that archive, from that period.

WS: A lot of the images are of public buildings from across Canada... what he was suggesting was that the framing of each image was the same, wherever it was taken. It was 'a public office'. A bank building. Etc.

MR: What's great about those images is that they were trying to keep the human element out. Whenever they could they took pictures of buildings without people in them. For instance, the Toronto Stock Exchange has that wonderful image of a gaggle of men standing outside having some kind of a smoke break, just talking with each other, and you suddenly realise this is a city full of people. Also, the exposure rates mean that people have to be standing still if you're going to see them. That's partly why there's that one image in *Consolation* that's reproduced, because it has evidence of ghostly motion in. I found that whole aspect of researching the novel almost a holy experience, with it being so wonderful to see those images.

WS: Do you still find that in the kind of attitudes towards city architecture today? A preference for the building over the people around it?

MR: There are some cities that are very good at maintaining a human scale and Toronto is not. You can go down any number of streets that at one point had an internally consistent architectural rhythm and a human scale ... you could see how it related to the street and how it related to the people who used these buildings. Now we're making monuments in a city that really isn't designed to have monuments in it. Like the ROM [Royal Ontario Museum] which is such a godawful building in every way imaginable. It's godawful for what it says about what we think of ourselves. It's godawful in terms of its utility. It actually reduces the space for exhibits. There's so much empty space in that building, it directs the eye into the corner and pulls you away. The whole interior scale of the building is off. I just look at it and feel awful about it. The art gallery is a much better building. Toronto is still a city that is desperately trying to traipse onto the world stage. There was a picture of Katherine Heigl in the paper today at the opening of her new movie, and she's wearing a kind of altar boy's top with this disgusting black skirt which is torn to pieces and a purple leather belt. And you know, that's Toronto. It can't decide how it wants people to look at it so it just does everything all at once.

WS: I was intrigued then by your notion of collective memory. How this is an injunction for individuals to act towards memory but also to come together over it. Do you think there is a tension between individuals trying to understand the city and this collective core myth of the city?

MR: Part of the question is, is there a collective memory of Toronto? Do you think the average Torontonian has a sense of where we exist on a timeline? When you go to Europe you have a really strong sense in Rome and Paris. People walk around in more than one time period. Partly that is just maintaining the physical presence of the past.

It's the only way you can do it. The people are gone. The only way you can do it is through maintaining the physical legacy and whatever efforts the modern municipality does to say stop and tell you what it is. Then you can feel like you're part of a chain of events. It happens more and more now in Toronto. They are getting better at it. There's still not enough of the original city left behind that you can make that connection. You have to work too hard as the individual citizen, to imagine what was there, because it's either gone or it's covered up.

WS: In that respect, what do you think of the signage 'bookmarks' that are on Prince Edward viaduct to say this bridge was in Ondaatje's novel? Say if someone wanted to do that for you and for the hotel at the Harbourfront? What would you think of that kind of memorialisation?

MR: I like that. I don't just like that because it would immortalise my book but it's important for people who live in a place to know that it not only existed before they got there as a physical place with empirical data attached to it but that it lives in the imaginations of the people who lived there or lives there. I think it's much more important that Miranda Pearson be doing... I would love her to pick up text from books that used Toronto as a setting a hundred years ago... and there are books that had Toronto as a setting. They're not all fiction. There are books... there are absolutely fantastic guidebooks that were written for the city by 'a journalist' or 'a member of the public'. They wrote these guidebooks for Britons to come over and visit Toronto. There's all kinds of stuff well worth taking out of that, putting on plaques and letting people see. This is how a living breathing person actually saw this place. I like the possibility of establishing a spiritual as well as an empirical history for the city. Let people see the city as it has been imagined by their artists and their historians.

WS: It's surprising that those kinds of narratives co-exist with Susanna Moodie. Moodie having been championed as this literary life-writer. But those kind of urban narratives haven't been taken up in the same way.

MR: No. And again it goes back to Torontonians. Torontonians have internalised a lot. They've internalised the attitudes of other Canadians towards Toronto, that it's a cold soulless place. They've internalised the sense of inferiority because they're constantly trying to become world class. I have an ad-campaign for Toronto in which the camera covers over a crowd and someone on stage says is anyone here from Toronto and ninety-seven percent of the audience put up their hands up. Actually we do things here for ourselves too. That doesn't come out in our public demeanour.

WS: I also wanted to ask you about the use of Don Paterson and Borges... both of those opening quotes are translations too, so both are double-voiced. Do you find that important in framing the novel?

MR: There's a double-vocality in the book. You don't realise until you're at the end of the book that the voices you are listening to are not what you expect them to be. So, there's a transformation that occurs there. I chose those quotes because it felt like they resonated well with what I was trying to do.

WS: I'm interested then by some of the poetry you have written before *Consolation* that directly addressed the city, like some of the pieces in *Light-Crossing*. Do you think poetry can do something in representing the city that fiction couldn't?

MR: Poetry does a different job to fiction, even if it's narrative in some way. I'm not sure if I can quantify what that is, but there is something very private about poetry. I always think of poetry as being a group of singular readers in cafes or something, and there's something about the crowd that involves the novel. The kind of contemplation that a poem allows the reader is a different quality than how the novel interacts with the reader. The novel for the big discussions and poetry as a seduction.

WS: I'd read somewhere else that you had stopped writing poetry?

MR: It's not a conscious decision. I would like to be writing more poetry and in the last couple of years there has been more coming. But I began to think that my voice as a poet was … I made some unconscious choices as a poet and I wanted to stop for long enough to mature as a writer to the degree that I knew whether or not I should be writing poetry anymore. So I'm at the stage of still trying to get back to that.

WS: What do you think about other contemporary portrayals of Toronto in literature? Have you seen what is coming out now?

MR: I haven't read all of it. Sometimes Toronto is just used as a setting because that's what the author is familiar with. *Consolation* was a book *about* Toronto. I'm interested in the way the younger generation is using the city as a setting and uncovering their own lives in the context of the urban experience. I think that we don't need a lot of books about the history of Toronto. What we need is the confidence to use Toronto as a setting so that it becomes a character in its own story as time goes on. I think that is happening. It's a nice thing to see. It means that sense of embarrassment is lifting. Once it becomes just a given that you can do that… not just in literature, other genres. I'm noticing that in detective fiction we're seeing Toronto being used as an exciting setting and counterpoint to those kinds of stories, and why not? I like that as well. I want to feel before I get too old that there's a kind of vibrant… I like the idea of the city being interwoven into a lot of things, like for instance when you get site specific performance art. The way that festivals like Luminato are using the city. It's coming.

WS: Did you experience any resistance to the idea of writing about the city from the writing community or from publishers? I've heard some people advise, perhaps agents, that if you are going to write about Toronto and you have your eye on a world market you should perhaps suppress reference to the city?

MR: They're right in the sense that no-one in the United States was interested in this story, which I think is kind of pathetic. My agent never said to me 'you might want to think about setting this in Chicago'. Nobody said that. It did very well in England. It did better in England than it did in Toronto partly because they're interested in that colonial reality. What happened to their far-flung ancestors. Most of the resistance just came from the people who tried to have some kind of a discourse about it. There was a lot of 'how dare you say anything that could be perceived as negative about this place, everybody already hates us'.

...

WS: When you did the Toronto book awards, what was the afterlife of that project? Do they maintain contact in any way?

MR: The book awards don't but the public library was very good about things. They bought 2,000 copies of the book and there were a lot of panel discussions and so forth. I still get called on to do talks and things. Very recently I ended up down near Mimico in a place called New Toronto that used to be a separate division, there were a bunch of historians who sat in a circle and wanted to talk about imagining the past. It comes up. I've done a new book and it's going to hopefully come out next year at which point I'll hopefully stop talking about Toronto. I mean, it's really nice that people got interested in the end.

WS: The book awards recently gave its award to a poetry collection. Do you think there is a potential crowd discourse that could form around a book of Toronto poetry?

MR: The audience for poetry is obviously not the same as it is for fiction. People are not as willing to delve deeply into poetry for whatever reason and that's a pity. But the Toronto Book Awards do a fairly good job. They chose Austin Clarke's book *More* last year and that's a book that really generated a lot of discussion. As time goes on it continues to be a subject. I don't like the idea of the Toronto Book Awards being an occasion to just talk about the city. It should be about good writing. Often it is. In general our willingness to talk about the city, our place in it and where it is headed is more accentuated now than it was even ten years ago.

WS: Well certainly it seems like there is more being published which is aware of city writing. How developed it is I'm not sure but there are people tempted to see there are things that need reprinting, recovering and reinvestigating. Especially the uTOpia series. Thinking of the urban traces piece you contributed... you've read Seth, what did you think of *Clyde Fans*?

MR: I like it immensely. I liked it a lot. I've never met Seth, but I've bought some of his artwork strangely enough. There's just this one panel from *Clyde Fans* of a full-page cityscape and as soon as I saw it I wrote to him and said I wanted that and so I purchased it from him. I feel like I have a lot in common with this guy because he is a fetishist. We haven't used that word yet and I think that it's important to have that quality if you're really going to get deeply involved in the kinds of things I have gotten involved in with *Consolation*. It is the collector's mentality, but you have to be able to fetishise without sentimentalising. Seth does that extraordinarily well. He is deeply committed to his subject matter but he also wants to go deeper too. It was a great series. Some of Chester Brown's stuff is interesting that way too. I think the whole *Louis Riel* series didn't work, but there has been other stuff. He is a bit perverse, but in a really interesting way.

WS: It is also interesting because of the way *Consolation* has that contemporary strand in it too, and the idea of hotel space as symbolic of the views Toronto has on itself. I was looking through the kinds of neighbourhoods that get addressed in the novel because one of the comments I heard at a conference in the UK was that

Consolation was successful because it brought together neighbourhoods. It didn't dwell on one neighbourhood. It didn't try and articulate a localised neighbourhood sense of being, but circulated in the city with hotels, libraries and publicly accessible spaces.

MR: *Consolation* has been discussed at academic conferences?

WS: Yes.

MR: Scares the shit out of me. So yes. I did want to be as inclusive as possible.

WS: It's interesting because one of the major selling points, perhaps not always in its literature, is the idea of the diverse neighbourhoods. It seemed like bits of that are in evidence with the deep history, but it's not a book that wanted to map the contemporary scene of neighbourhoods and plot all of those together. I would imagine it is so overreaching to try and fit all of those things in…

MR: Yes, it wasn't meant to do that. I didn't want to do some holistic portrait of the city. I always get baffled by this whole 'Toronto is a city of neighbourhoods' thing, because I've never been to a city that wasn't full of discrete neighbourhoods. I don't know why that's held up as a virtue here. New York is full of neighbourhoods, Paris is full of neighbourhoods. I can't figure that out, why do you think that is? Why do people make such a big deal of Little India, Chinatown, Little Italy…?

WS: I was thinking about this on the Danforth yesterday. It seems to have been co-opted and branded. What the City of Toronto has decided to do is to put decorative signs in the right areas and flag up to everyone that these are neighbourhoods. It is something to do with that trend of having 'global areas' in the local space.

MR: It is probably the most multicultural space on the planet and the different cultures have been encouraged to keep their traditions and to localise them in some way. As a matter of policy it has been a great thing here but regardless of policy it tends to happen. There's a Russian neighbourhood in Brooklyn. New York has a bunch of Chinatowns.

WS: I think in other countries it resonates with the national policy of multiculturalism. You get a wider sense that the public sphere can debate that kind of thing.

MR: There's no such thing as a Canadian. From time immemorial we were first Brits, Scots and Irish and then wave after wave of immigration has made it impossible to talk about this city having … yes it has Orangemen roots, and English-speaking roots, but since the 1930s the city has absorbed and accommodated wave after wave of immigration and it has always welcomed it.

WS: It's interesting to see the resonance of urban policy and discussions of the city, in the discussion of city literature. The kinds of things I've heard reflect on the position of local governance and local protest. The extent of reading Jane Jacobs into *Consolation* both as a basis of local knowledge, and talking about "eyes on the street". An awareness of the process of dwelling.

MR: You can't have a policy unless you can also have tolerance. You can say to people, it is going to be the official policy of the municipality to help people adapt to living in a new country while also providing them with the opportunity, or at least not obstructing them from establishing their traditions here. The city as a whole has to be okay with that. I guess Toronto just is.

WS: I have another question. I don't know if I should tape this or not because it's slightly odd. I had an interesting experience when I was reading *Consolation* and I got to page 309. I saw that the worker on the construction site was called Inger Wolfe. When you search on Google Books the character changes to Janet Szabo.

MR: [audible laughter]

WS: I was interested as to what this might mean?

MR: It seems like it must be a typo of some description.

WS: A highly elaborate typo.

Another thing I'm interested in is the book's formal structure. With the chapters you have a book of four, book of three, book of six, book of five, book of five, book of six, book of five and they're interwoven so tightly. The renumbering seems significant...

MR: Well have you read the Zohar? I'm just joking. I was just thinking I'll get this guy off on a wild goose-chase. He'll have to learn Aramaic. No, I think the internal rhythms of the narrative determine what kinds of breaks you use. I have found over time that sometimes it is appropriate to have a chapter break, sometimes it is appropriate to have a section break or a section break with some kind of typesetting thing in the middle. Those are forms of punctuation that happen between discrete narrative units and I just go by intuition, how much time is left between one part of the book and next and how you want the reader to relate to it.

WS: So it's a grasp of the drama of reading?

MR: And the pace. The pace of it. The numbers themselves have no meaning. You're reading that deeply, wow.

WS: Well it's just one of those books which has a noticeable structure to it because of those sections, and through being captioned. Obviously you are jumping backwards and forwards, but also internal to those sections. And in turn you have the prologue and the epilogue. The italicised addenda that stretches on. The textual recurrences...

MR: This is where we part company as readers. You're reading the book in a very intense and focused fashion. Of course, I wrote it in a very intense and focused fashion, but not with any of the tools that you are using to read it. It's always interesting for me to hear what people are picking up on in terms of its structure when they are reading that deeply. For me, things progress through subsequent drafts. I

work on where it feels like the pace is flagging, where things need to expand, where things need to contract just so that the rhythm of the book doesn't go wrong.

WS: I should just say that I began working on my thesis in 2007 so I've been with the book for a while...

MR: My God, yes you have. Almost as long as I have. How many times have you read it?

WS: Five or six cover to cover, but you are always dipping into it. I'm wondering about the long gestation of your novels, and you've obviously edited a lot through these, did you feel there were other stories that could have been told in *Consolation* that are still floating around that could be used for other fiction?

MR: When I'm writing a long-form work, I always keep one file called redeploy because I like what it is so much that I just didn't want to lose it and I keep another file called Outs. Whole sections or chapters that I know can't be in the book go into the file called Outs. The redeploy file is considerably shorter. It might have paragraphs or brief scenes that need to be in the book somewhere. Usually that stuff makes it back in. But then I go back to *Martin Sloan* and I look at the Outs and see there is some good writing here, some good storytelling here but I can't use it. It is just an occupational hazard that you can't use everything that has some merit in it. I've never consciously returned to a passage that I've removed from something and tried to turn it into something else. Mainly because there are so many things that are in a gestational stage in my mind at any given point that I always feel like I want to move forward. I have files of story ideas and novel ideas none of which I will ever write because the things that I put down in those files are usually notes to my self about 'wouldn't it be cool if...' The thing that I know I'm going to write I just start to write. Or, I keep them in my head for a long period. I have a novel in mind now that I'm sure I won't get to for a number of years. I'm still waiting for a structure to present itself. When that happens I know I'll write it. But I haven't not written a word down about it because I'm just keeping it very close to my chest. My mind is full enough of things and I'm now old enough to realise you can't use everything. In fact, my official output of work is only half of what I've written. The rest of it is in bankers' boxes at the Fisher Rare Book Library. It's up to future academics to say "It's a good thing you set that aside" or "too bad he could have made his mark if only he followed through".

WS: So you have some papers there already?

MR: Yes, in fact I have thirty or forty bankers boxes of stuff that I have tried to keep organised over the years. Then they asked for it and I sent them a whole pile of crap that hasn't been catalogued. I plan to go some time and to go through those boxes to make sure there is nothing that I don't want available.

WS: That's an interesting process, archiving when someone is around to be an arbiter of it.

MR: I realise that I'm taking a liberty that I probably shouldn't take, because if I chose to keep that stuff I probably chose to keep it for a reason. Maybe I ought to

leave it for someone else to decide. There may be souvenirs that I want to keep but I don't think there's anything damning, records of my various homicides. "This box not to be opened until after my death".

WS: I just saw that Don McKay has his papers accessible there too so I might have to have a look at those too. I heard someone else was looking through Atwood's papers and the level of filing there is really something.

MR: It's amazing. I remember a long time ago, just out of curiosity, going to look at Michael Ondaatje's and Dennis Lee's papers. It's very interesting what they kept. There's an illusion at work here that the detritus that people leave behind appears meaningful because it has been collected and organised. In fact these things come out of the chaos of daily life and were never meant to be meaningful. You construct a meaning out of them...

WS: But they are elevated.

MR: Exactly, that's the right word, they are elevated and instead they're sheddings. They're skin for the most part.

Interview with Stephen Marche at Massey College in Toronto.
Date: 9th June 2010

Will Smith (WS): I was interested in Toronto literature because no-one discusses it in academic circles. Critical studies seem to disregard it whilst still trying to fit it into the existing paradigm of what they think should be...

Stephen Marche (SM): CanLit is so overwhelmed by the question of landscape as opposed to virtually anything else. Have you been to the AGO here? [Art Gallery of Ontario] All of the art is landscape art. In a way all of the fiction is landscape fiction. Even for people who would really resist that, writers like Randy Boyagoda and Damian Tarnopolsky. People like would not consider themselves Can Lit writers. I don't consider myself a CanLit writer. My passport says I'm Canadian and I'm a professional writer but I don't consider myself a Canadian writer. I don't feel like I'm a part of that tradition. But even so *Raymond and Hannah* is Toronto versus Jerusalem. Ultimately it is a kind of landscape novel. So, the ruralness of the best writers ultimately... academia here is a complete gerontocracy, it's still lost in 1976. Of course there's not going to be much writing that fits exactly to those stereotypes. The new writing is ... 'I came from India'... landscapes elsewhere, Bombay, Japan.

WS: But then, there are novels that talk about cityscapes, about Vancouver or Toronto, that really deal with those places. I don't think they're picked up perhaps because they don't fit...

SM: Well Toronto is an interesting city because it's marginal two ways. It's marginal globally, because it's a feeder city to New York and a lesser extent London. It feels colonised, and can't work out which country it has been colonised by more. On the other hand, I'm from Alberta and I lived on the East Coast for a long time and nobody there gives a shit about what happens in Toronto. They don't even feel envious of it. They feel envious of Montreal. If you're in Western Canada they feel envious of Vancouver but Toronto is really kind of treated as a garage. The place where you have to go to get your car, your banking. The people in Toronto don't care about the rest of the country either. North of St. Clair, for my wife [Sarah Fulford], may as well not exist. I remember a friend of mine saying he was from Alberta and she said "is that the Western-most province?" It's one of the first things I remember her saying.

It used to be there were two economically competitive global cities, and basically Montreal decided not to compete anymore and it wanted to be French-Canadian. So all the Jews, the Greeks, and the Chinese people all moved here en masse in the 1980s. That also meant Toronto became a kind of island.

WS: Do you think it is strange there is lots of good Toronto literature and no-one wants to discuss it in terms of Torontoness?

SM: There's never been a big best-seller. Maybe *Cat's Eye*.

WS: But it depends on your terms. Canadian literature doesn't often have large best-sellers. It's not like it is compared to anything.

SM: I think even when you look into CBC, it's all about outpost Newfoundland, or Alice Munro and her rural Ontario… rural British Columbia. Other cities don't really play a part.

WS: When you were writing *Raymond and Hannah* were there other Toronto novels you had in mind?

SM: None. Well, *In The Skin of a Lion*. Actually I think the novels I was really thinking about were Leonard Cohen… were Montreal Novels. In particular AM Klein's *The Second Scroll*. That was the biggest influence on it by far. Then I was also thinking about a lot of different things at the time. I did feel that there wasn't, 'the multicultural novel', by which I mean 'a novel about all the different people gathered here' rather than I'm an Indian living in Brampton, that hadn't been written and that seemed to be a huge opportunity. Moving here, the easiness of the city was still new to me. You can talk to anyone here. You can't do that in New York. In that city there are a lot of peoples from all over the world but they're stratified. Here, people really sleep with each other. A lot. I read an article that said 70% of third-generation immigrants are in mixed-race marriages. And that's a lot.

I see this at my kid's daycare where virtually no-one is in a non-mixed-marriage. All the kids have a minglingness. Fascinating I think.

WS: I guess that has arisen in my research. Toronto having neighbourhoods but also having terms on which to live where peoples can approach each other, having different agreements.

SM: I think it's a city that has taken the principles of the British Empire to the extremes -- a new direction. By which I mean an idealised version of the British Empire, freedom of trade above all. I mean it's an open city. Also, it's a private city. You can do whatever you want and no-one really makes a big deal about it. That hasn't even been challenged by cliterectomy. Everyone knows people are sending their kids home to Somalia, to East Africa to have them and come back. It's not in the city's DNA to challenge that. It's more like "as long as you don't cause a fuss we'll leave you alone".

WS: Is that something to do with the absence of a central common social body that everyone imagines is policing them? Because, it is such a collective compromise?

SM: There are institutions here. There is this WASP establishment.

WS: But not that everyone is signed up to?

SM: That's probably true and I'd like to agree with it but everyone here sends their kids to public school.

My kids go to school with my dry-cleaner's kids and it's a great school. I'd like to think… socialism tempers it a bit. Because health and education are still part of the

common ground there is a kind of meeting place there. I see what you mean though, there's no common tradition...

WS: I wonder if there's such a thing as a Torontonian identity or mythology? If not whether such a thing is coming into existence?

SM: I think it definitely is. I mean my wife is the editor of *Toronto Life* magazine and she would definitely say that. That's her job. That's what she does all day. Helping to create this mythology of the place.

I wrote *Raymond and Hannah* about ten years ago in Toronto. You can go and see the site of the first legislature on North American soil and it is now a Car Wash. There's no plaque, there's nothing.

In Brampton today I read they're destroying forty-five 200-year-old buildings that Brampton cannot afford to lose. It's not like it's got these magnificent architectural structures.

Ten years ago there were no really good buildings in this city but now they are starting to come. There is the AGO, there's the ROM, there's some interesting architecture. Before, it seemed careless of itself. Even things like the wires being above the air. It's like we're in the wild-west. We can't bury the wires? They don't care. The concept of beauty and importance of public space had been shattered. That is really coming to an end. You can see it with *Spacing* magazine, general little hubbubs of city pride.

There's also a huge upswing in Canadian patriotism and Canadian nationalism right now that I don't ever remember being anywhere near to close to. Even, in the 1980s, with Mulroney and Free Trade. There's a general feeling of a pluralistic, and solid Canadian identity, and that's more solid than it has been in a while.

WS: Coming to the city's acknowledgement of beauty, it seems that this is present in Michael Redhill. It has been in the city before. It's a return to the city's idea of appreciating itself.

SM: Maybe, but I have trouble thinking of periods in history where it really celebrated itself. It's hard to say because celebrations of the city are not typical. What people are proud of are not monuments or objects but they are things like... I'm a writer and my wife is an editor. We live in a hundred-year-old house downtown. We have a doctor, a great school, a hockey rink and a swimming pool on our block. And they're all free. That's amazing. That's a huge achievement. In terms of society that is truly something to be proud of. On the other hand, in terms of the fourth plinth [London's rotating sculpture in Trafalgar Square]... the whole city here is the fourth plinth. It's an absent structure. I do feel that people are proud to live in Toronto now. I'm not. ... well anyway... You can tell because the people no longer call themselves a world-class city. They've stopped using it.

WS: *Raymond and Hannah* has an interesting attitude to history. At one point you say Toronto had nothing but space and money. Space and money are something but it

doesn't have a depth of perception. I wondered whether you thought that was something unique to the citizenry today or whether that is historical?

SM: Even twenty years ago I think it was not only a city so pathetic that it was colonised, but it was desperate to be colonised. It kept its Englishness well beyond the point where it was any way reasonable. Then it switched to this Americophilia in a way that Montreal never had a problem with. Montreal got its own identity with more self-respect. This self-advocating element to Toronto seems to be disappearing. I don't think it has moved into the institutional life of the city as thoroughly as I would like it to but it is coming.

The thing that I find interesting about Toronto, in literary terms, is its position in relation to other places. I don't think there will ever be a novel written about Toronto like [Martin Amis's] *London Fields* or *Money*. Both London and New York there. Like, I love London so much that I can hate it. By the way, that's the sign you live in a great city. You love it so much you can hate it. I don't think Toronto will ever get to the self-confidence where that will be true. Even the satirical novels [here] are all apologising for their subject in a way.

In comparison to Jerusalem. There you have all this history killing you. You can't do anything. Nobody can do anything. Everyone is paralysed by it. Here you can move and see much better. One of my pet theories about Toronto is that it is sort of like Dublin or St. Petersburg. It's on the edge of mainstream culture but it's not fully of that culture completely. You read the *Guardian*, you read the *New York Times* but you're not of it.

WS: Do you feel that lent more importance or more problems to writing about the city, when you're on the edge like that?

SM: I have two thoughts on this. Did you ever read Russell Smith? Fascinating case. He's genuinely brilliant: as a constructor of sentences, and paragraphs, as a craftsman. I think he can compete with anyone in the world. He chooses to write about society in Toronto about which people don't give a shit. It feels to me that he's like an artist who has taken a shell and drawn an incredibly elaborate picture that no-one can look at or see. That's one case. There's this group of writers that are trying to say Toronto is really important. That to me is a mistake. If Russell Smith was writing exactly the same stuff from Upper East Side or London, he would be known everywhere. But, okay, you're writing about the Canada council? No-one wants to read about that! On the other hand, I have a column for *Esquire* magazine and all I do is take the Canadian perspective on America and they eat it up. I've really become convinced that that's all Malcolm Gladwell does. He takes the Canadian perspective on any American phenomena and applies it and they can't get enough of it, because it's slightly different.

WS: In that scheme of things is Richard Florida the inverse?

SM: I was at his book launch on Saturday. He has an iron-clad, centre-right 'all you need is art to make your city function,' and he's taken that everywhere in the world. The idea that Toronto is this huge urban success, because Jane Jacobs moved here is staggering. Jane Jacobs left New York to Robert Moses. Would you rather have New

York or Toronto? In New York, they couldn't build an orchard on the East Side because an activist neighbourhood group complained about the insects. They are ready to elect a fascist mayor. They are running on I will hurt people. They want people not to be nice.

Now, there are that school of writers who overrate Toronto but there are also unique possibilities here. There is a reason that America is overrun by Canadian writers. I think the education system here is very mobile, people can come from all different classes and everyone gets the same education. It is a well turned town. A lot of these writers are thinking the multicultural society is very hard to write. You have to speak a lot of languages to get it. You have to represent other people, which is kind of paralysing. To capture that moment is hard.

WS: Did it cross your mind that writing a Toronto novel would impair the audience for the book?

SM: I wish I were that sophisticated. I am incapable of that. I wrote this book that had marginalia. I thought that it might get published by a small press like Coach House. And then I would write another book that might get to a big press. I find all the business stuff unfathomable. I certainly didn't think it would go to America and then it did.

WS: I'm interested because I've heard reports from various people that when they decided they wanted to write about Toronto, their options narrowed as to who would publish it and the opinions of agents and people in between i.e. 'maybe you have the characters and a good plot but tone down the Toronto references...'

SM: They might say that because they don't want to say you're shit and your characters are unreadable. The reason publishers didn't go for it because it's set in Toronto? And you're a victim? Bs. I doubt there are many martyrs in Toronto. Everyone I know... I kind of think the opposite. I think there's a built in appetite for people in this city to read any book about Toronto. And also, there are more prizes which you can win. Toronto prizes. I know Howard Akler's book *The City Man* did very well. That book could, published by a small press, could have gone absolutely nowhere. It got reviewed everywhere. All the media is here and it only cares about what happens in Toronto. They could barely care about what happens in Calgary or Montreal.

WS: So, why then are there less books being written about Toronto?

SM: I read a very interesting anecdote about Isaac Bashevis Singer who moved to New York and then was desperately trying to get into *The New Yorker*. He kept sending them stories and stories. Then his agent sent them a story set in rural Belarus, about taboo in the shtetl. Backwoods stuff about menstruation. They took that one. He was like 'why are *The New Yorker* taking a rural fable'? Because, that's what city people want. City people don't want city stories they want rural fiction. That's Alice Munro stories in a nutshell.

WS: But then, if there's a population in the city also ready to read city stories and would lap up city stories, then why does the media or the publishing world intervene?

SM: That gets transferred. That's the million-dollar question. It happens in London too. Why does Monica Ali, writing a nineteenth-century novel about propriety and property, become a bestseller? Why? Why do bright people want to read that? Martin Amis has never made the top-twenty bestseller list in *The New York Times*.

WS: I thought I would tie my trip to Toronto in with Luminato, which is now a few years old, which is a celebration of arts here. I asked the festival if they had any Toronto authors speaking and their response was "Michael Winter lives here, he's speaking".

SM: I did it last year.

WS: There's a strangeness to Luminato. It is a large, showpiece, funded celebration that doesn't take in local representation.

SM: Part of that is to do with a local fiction, cultural issue, which is to say "don't get too big for your britches"... and this curses Toronto and curses fiction. It's much better to read about someone from...midwives from Nova Scotia. A big hit here was Ami McKay's *The Birth House*. That sold 80,000 copies. Russell Smith is eighty times the writer that Ami McKay will ever be, and I've never liked a single one of his novels. I think the bestselling book he ever had was 10,000 copies.

WS: It's difficult to find figures because the bookscan data is shared between publishers on the agreement figures aren't released to the public.

SM: It's because they don't want you to know how small they are.

WS: With regard to *Raymond and Hannah*, what drew you to the form, the idea of marginalia?

SM: I was reading this essay by Valéry on Leonardo da Vinci that was an essay with commentary. And Jewish book forms have the same thing. And there's this Chinese form I got into. It was like this imperial entertainment form where there would be a storyteller and then someone would come out and do a scene then someone would do a song, then someone would do an opera piece. Then they would stand up and do a story again and keep going back and forth between modes. I had this idea I could do a novel where I could do extreme lyrical stuff, then I could do snappy dialogue, and then I could do hardcore pornography and stitch them together without worrying about how they were put together. It worked. That stitching together consumes a lot of time. Researching a short story is eighty percent of the job.

WS: And were you studying here when you wrote that?

SM: Yes, I was. I was in second year of my PhD.

WS: There must be something odd about a PhD student studying the book you wrote?

SM: No, the weird thing was when I did a lecture for Nick Mount (U of Toronto Assistant Professor) on *Shining at the Bottom of the Sea* at the Koffler centre. I'd

written part of it while I was a Grad student in the stands there. I sat in the same seat I'd sat in then to listen to him lecture about my novel. That was weird. That wasn't that long ago.

WS: I was intrigued because the second novel is experimental too and does interesting things... but I wondered about the response to the first novel which equally plays around with form.

SM: I don't think I've... the novel I have coming out next year... has Torontonian characters but it doesn't happen in the city. I think I've just decided I'm not going to be a Torontonian novelist.

WS: Writing Torontonian characters outside the city...still reflects on a sense of the city?

SM: The Torontonians I like are in the coffee shops...where you do have this cool, modern sensibility. Totally open, culturally, and at the same time not capitalistic... although I find them to be totally globalised too. I just realised amongst a group of friends the other day, we had all spent years abroad. Italy, England...for work or whatever. That's just part of the modern world.

WS: And yet what's interesting for me... Raymond in the book is figured as not of the city, and yet his body becomes marked as Toronto. It's a very bodily connection to the city. To become that embodied and to have not been 'of' the city is an interesting connection.

SM: Toronto is full of those people. People who have moved here. Old families - I've only really met two or three of them; people who can genuinely trace their family back in the city. For me, part of my family goes back four hundred years in Canada, and the other side of the family are Italian. That was another thing I consciously decided not to do, not to become another Italian-Torontonian author. That was very much an option the publishers would have loved but I find it all too tiring, and worn out before it even happened. It's interesting to me that you're talking about Michael Redhill and people like that, whereas if you'd asked me who I thought of as a Torontonian novelist I'd be like Kerri Sakamoto, and these guys I can't even remember because I do not care, who write a collection of short stories and then a novel. And, then if they win a prize, another novel, and then you never hear from again. I'm pretty sure that's how publishers think of the new generation of Torontonian novelists. That is a conception. It's not Michael Redhill writing about weird artists, or me, god forbid, my agent isn't here, my publisher isn't here, my employers aren't here. That's how they would think of Torontonian writing, I'm ninety-percent sure.

WS: No-one's really written on it as yet. There's a text coming out from Mansfield Press [Amy Lavender Harris' *Imagining Toronto*, 2010] which is meant to let people know there is writing set here. A flag for the public to explore it. Whereas, I see similarities between your work as sharing the representational effort that is put into Redhill's work, to Maggie Helwig's work, and Dionne Brand's *thirsty*

SM: That's the one that actually tries to be multicultural right? It has people from four different races in? I never read that one.

WS: The novel does, *What We All Long For*. I'm looking at her book length collection of poetry. Poetry, then, telling the story of the city in a different way. There are aspects of embodied cities in all the texts I've chosen and I think the only thing missing from your novel is a bird hitting a window!

SM: You know that Thomas King story? That's my favourite Canadian story. They all get it from the beginning of Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. The poem opens with the image of a bird hitting a window.

WS: They all have lots of associations with bodies, and make a big deal of the ravines in varying ways. They all have similar ideas of how people circulate, or opt not to...in private spaces, step back from the city. Whether they choose this or have it forced upon them is another angle on this. Those kinds of devices.

SM: The one thing that is kind of unique about Toronto is the proximity of the wilderness, because that really is rare. There are no American cities where that fits the pattern. You can go an hour north of here and be in primeval forest, untouched forest. Maybe in small Eastern European cities you can do that, but to be in a city of 5 million people and be an hour away from Georgian Bay, is weird. The ravines too. They are really powerful. I've written recently about Leslie Street Spit (globe and mail article), which to me is an ultimate defining metaphor for this city.

WS: It's interesting that people can then have those parts nearby but their lives are so small in circulation that they can never see other parts of the city like those. You get it in London and you get it in other cities too...people have a neighbourhood and don't circulate widely.

SM: I haven't been to the East End of the city in... I can't remember. I don't have any reason to go there.

WS: I talked to someone from Bloor West yesterday and told them I went to Riverdale farm and they replied 'why did you go there?'

SM: Riverdale farm! That was probably the last time *I* went to the East End of the city...

I think also in Little Italy and Little Portugal. There are thousands and tens of thousands of people who live in a semi-autonomous enclave of their own language and their own culture, completely removed from the city.

WS: In some novels, there are characters who have a more complex social community. They may live in a neighbourhood but have a broader social circle. It could be like a social worker or it could be a family who dropped by... the very compartmentalised life isn't very well explored.

SM: This is definitely a city of compartmentalisation but maybe they all are. New York, people don't really leave their block.

WS: In the same ways, those lives are articulated differently given the different social policies the city provides. Like the facilities that you have nearby, might not be monumental but may be better than somewhere else.

SM: The facilities are amazing. What is about to happen in England, and what is already happening in America is going to set Canada apart as a society. Certainly amongst Anglophone countries. It is amazing, the sight of things that you take for granted. All of these friends who have travel elsewhere, all of these people who have lived in Hong Kong, lived in Bombay, lived in London, come back and they get why it's so good. And love it. It's an amazing city to raise a kid.

WS: A lot of people have written about early nineties novels, but it seems harder to write about why the city has changed in the last twenty years.

SM: A hundred thousand people move here a year, which is staggering growth. I think it's the past five years. Its various things like the banks.... TD is the fifth biggest bank in the world. It's unostentatious and it's completely wealthy. A very wealthy globalised city, no problems with finance, huge natural resources behind it... it's really that proximity to the wilderness. The north here... have you ever been to the north here?

WS: The furthest north I've been geographically in Canada, is Quebec City.

SM: See, in Northern Alberta, you can drive three hours from Edmonton, where I was born, and there are lakes that have never been named. Just numbers on a government map. And that's a southern province. You go into the territories and its so vast. A friend of mine just came back from hiking Ellesmere island, which is north of 60. That island alone is the size of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland and, that island has 800 people on it. But they had to hike everything back, they weren't allowed to leave anything behind. In such a space. Another friend was telling me, he's part of the navy and they have to go as north as possible to keep sovereignty, and so they had to bring back all the bilge They had to keep saltwater on the ship. Because it's pristine water and pristine land. There's so little of it left. I think that does affect people here in a way they may not be conscious of. That unimaginable wilderness of the north. That uncivilized area. I have an article in the *Literary Review of Canada* about this,[1] because I gave this talk to Nick Mount's class. It's sort of a précis of that.

But, Toronto's sort of in between things. It's between New York and the North. The North kind of mocks New York. You can't care about Lady Gaga when you're north of 60. It's all temporary and shadowy. That may have something to do with how Toronto is hard to capture.

WS: Another thing I find interesting about *Raymond and Hannah* is how you've got lots of email correspondence going on and how that says something about place and doesn't, how it serves a duality. It's lack of directness.

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[1] Stephen Marche. "Here, Now." *Literary Review of Canada* July/August 2010. 18 Jul 2011 < http://reviewcanada.ca/essays/2010/07/01/here-now/ >.

SM: I was amazed at how quickly that became old fashioned. I think there had been one other novel that I'd read that had email. It was among the very first.

WS: There aren't many.

SM: That's because it died so fast. I went and talked to students about it, and they were liked 'if it had been written today, in 2007, it would have all been in im [instant messenger]'. It made me feel like Fanny Burney. It made me feel antiquated.

WS: I still think it's cutting edge.

SM: Well, there aren't that many internet novels.

WS: There seems to be a genre division. I had email correspondence with a correspondent for the *Bookseller* who said a lot of popular fiction is doing it. But, not in literary fiction. And yet there were people like Jeanette Winterson who half-attempted it, in *The Powerbook*, but didn't go all the way to realising it.

SM: You might be interested in my next project for *The Walrus*. I'm doing this internet novel about Toronto ['Lucy Hardin's Missing Period'], and where I take the first text will be in the magazine, and the rest will be divergent - like a choose your own adventure. But she goes through various parts of the city like the illegal gambling dens. With no casino here there's all these illegal gambling rooms across the city. It can't really decide what it wants to be. Or maybe that is what it wants to be, sort of dirty in a silly way. You know what I mean? I guess you don't because you're asking me...

WS: I know in some senses what I think the city is, but I'm intrigued by how some people go about constructing it within fiction.

SM: I just didn't want to do the thing where I pretended Toronto was really important.

WS: But there are some people who may have moved here with the last money they had and have established themselves in life, and they will always view the city as fairly important.

SM: Oh. I don't mean. It's definitely important in people's lives. I just mean in terms of symbolic. I didn't want to play a game where I was trying to find symbolic resonance. Like, I was trying to pretend the CN tower had the same resonance as the Brooklyn Bridge. Like, the Canadian version of the Brooklyn Bridge. I wanted to revel in the ugliness and the irrelevance, because that's what makes it so liveable. I mean the reason New York is so hard to live in is that it's freighted with this constant mythology. I mean in the demise of the New York writer, they fell on their own sword in a way, because they created this mythology in the city now no-one can live there ... as a writer. All the big names have moved to San Francisco or Connecticut or other cities. Toronto is so liveable. I contrast it with Jerusalem where there is so overwhelming, unliveable, beauty, but constantly dying and killing, and blowing up. Toronto will never blow up. I shouldn't say that just before the G20.

WS: It's interesting given my take on *Raymond and Hannah* is all about globalization. When you say it's a dream of interpenetration, which then I draw back to Northrop Frye, because he wrote an essay on Canadian culture as interpenetration, foreshadowing these discussions.

SM: For Toronto, it's about language attitudes here too. No-one cares how you talk. Every English-Canadian boy knows if you go to Montreal and say the right thing in slightly the wrong way – they will point it out to you, correct your French and ensure your grammar is exactly right. Of course all the class structures inherent in every last phrase. That doesn't seem to work here.

WS: I still find speaking English here, people can simply not listen to you. They'll hear your accent and not your content. Perhaps people are trying to locate you. It's really confusing.

SM: I think of all the possible choices I could have made living here. My grandfather is from a small town in Tuscany. It would be easy to write a novel about. I'm also from Western Canada, where people would love a Western Canadian novel. I just partly resisted that because I find CanLit so boring.

WS: But if you write a novel, does it have to be accepted as CanLit to be CanLit? Can you challenge it?

SM: I'm not sure. I find the institutions here to be incredibly strong and incredibly conservative and inbred. That goes for the CBC, the prizes, the magazines and journals... every break I got in my career I got from America. That's why I don't think of myself as a Canadian writer.

WS: So where did the novel get picked up first?

SM: It was picked up here first but I got nominated for the O Henry Prize in the States, then the next day I got an agent and it got picked up pretty simultaneously. My second novel was bought in America first. Now, I'm writing this book about Shakespeare and history and I don't even have a Canadian publisher. I just have an American publisher. I got an academic job in America, the first people who published my journalism were in America, the first people who published my academic articles were in America. You just get the message after a while, like where am I wanted. That goes along with the incredibly fall on your face humility, 'oh my god you made it, you got your book published in America'. Then the Canadians are either at your throat or your feet. You start to notice that they only like me because I got published in America. It's awful. It's like this horrible, Oedipal, psychodrama. As I'm entering my status as middle-aged artist I just don't want to be involved with them anymore. I want to just do my work, do the best work that I can and leave that stuff behind.

WS: What do you think about the European market?

SM: These things are confusing. They say, 'oh you've got Jews in it, you won't get into the British market'. We always impute these grand historical forces in this. It's probably more likely my literary agent has had a meeting with a Dutch publisher but had gotten drunk the night before and didn't happen to get it properly. You know

what I mean. It's like he was publishing Korean-America in Canada. You know Alice Munro has been translated into eight languages. Steven Galloway has been translate into eighteen. Who cares? There's no way of knowing what it means.

WS: Does it affect your perception of readership where you're being published?

SM: I don't know. I'm not sure with fiction it makes sense to think of the readership. I mean I'm not writing popular fiction. I'm writing literary fiction. When you're writing a popular non-fiction book like the Shakespeare one I'm writing you then you're definitely thinking about who exactly am I writing for. But when you're writing *Raymond and Hannah*, it got way more audience then I ever thought it would get and the audience for that was not who I ever thought it would be at all. The audience for it were mostly Americans. It's a book about Toronto. Why on earth would that happen? With literary fiction I think you have to write for yourself and let other people overhear you.

European markets? Who knows. I don't understand people in my neighbourhood let alone a small neighbourhood in France. I regard all that sort of readership stuff as semi-miraculous really, that it goes beyond the people I know. It's all gravy after that.

WS: That's why it's intriguing with Redhill's book, the way it worked. It got on the Booker longlist then got back here and lived a second life once it had been picked.

SM: It got on the Booker longlist. I find the further I go with publishing the less I understand. I don't get it, and I don't think I want to get it. I think if I did get it I'd just quit. Who knows? It got published in Korean but not in Hebrew. I don't think any writer thinks about that stuff, even if they say they really are because you can't figure it out.

WS: it has so much politics to it, so much chance, and so many people mediating...

SM: Chance has a huge amount to do with it. Chance is definitely the most underrated thing in human affairs. My experience of publishing is that everything I was sure I was going to get, I never got. The prizes add an element of fluke to it. Like Yann Martel. One of the biggest flukes.

WS: That's really interesting. While I was at Hay last year I saw Jamie Byng (m.d. of Canongate Publishers) who was saying that when they received *Life of Pi* in the UK, they re-edited it.

SM: Yes, there's two versions.

WS: He was saying it was their re-edited version that won the Booker and then that returned over here. I find that fascinating that they can re-edit a Canadian novel for the UK market.

SM: Martel is such a weird case. It's like his arrogance is created to deflate the fluke of this big win. Not that he's a bad writer. But this new book, [*Beatrice and Virgil*] it's like 'I'm going to be glib about the holocaust'. If you're going to be glib about historical phenomena that might not be the place to start. Although I found it

fascinating that he hadn't been able to get the manuscript he wanted published. I assumed that when you won the Booker and you had millions of sales you could do whatever you wanted. If you sold a million books and made a fortune, you'd be able to do what you wanted. Apparently not. Apparently you can even write books people don't want even then. None of the stuff makes any sense. My career has been filled with so much fluke, bad luck too. Everyone is the same way. When you're writing from Canada you have less support...you have to get lucky...

WS: You were shortlisted for the City Book Awards. I started some of my project looking at the City Book Awards and wondering what kind of effect they have... it's clear they have a funding effect.

SM: Massive. Oh I think all the publishers run literary fiction for the Giller. They look at a book and ask themselves 'can it win the Giller?' This is one the reasons I don't see myself as a Canadian writer because the books I write have no chance of getting on that list. I've written about this before... it all sounds like sour grapes. It was in *The Star*.[2] I thought I was ending my career in writing that, but it actually helped. I thought I'd be driven out of Canada and me and my wife would be forced to leave back to New York.

The books that the Giller has picked have been truly dreadful. Not just boring. Although I think you could say that about the Booker too. What was the one that won after Martel? British novelist writing about how terrible America was. *Vernon God Little*.

WS: It's not as bad as some Booker winners...

SM: The key book is *Midnight's Children* being chosen as the Booker of Bookers. I hate that book. It's deadly boring. I know it's a classic and blah blah blah. I have so many friends who were going to do postcolonial PhDs and they took one look at that book and were like 'I can't spend my life teaching this book', and changed area. The interesting thing about CanLit is there has not been a major novel over 600 pages. That is real. There is no big Canadian novel. Even the attempts to do it, like *Solomon Gursky Was Here* [Mordecai Richler] and *Two Solitudes* [Hugh MacLennan] are not ... they look at being long novels and turn away from them.

WS: *Alias Grace* is long?

SM: Five-hundred pages? To me that's a little different than twelve-hundred pages, or seven-hundred pages. I bet there's not a Canadian novel that's six-hundred pages?

WS: Yes, but then the new Martin Amis novel *The Pregnant Widow* is six-hundred pages and it should be two-hundred and fifty.

SM: Well Amis is another fascinating case. He's a bit like CanLit. He was big in the sixties.

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[2] Stephen Marche. "Raging Against the Tyranny of CanLit." *Toronto Star* 20 Oct 2007. 18 Jul 2011 < www.thestar.com/article/268644 >.

WS: He can write a sentence but you question what on earth is going on.

SM: I think it's like the Rolling Stones. This is just an exercise in vanity. A friend of mine went to a lecture he gave here on his sister and said it was brilliant.

WS: Really?

SM: He's trying to be like Christopher Hitchens.

Interview with Maggie Helwig at Hart House, U of T St. George Campus in Toronto. Date: 9th June 2010

Will Smith (WS): The first question I will start with is the question I was asked at Congress, when I was presenting a paper on your novel [*Girls Fall Down*], and couldn't answer. Someone said to me 'Why girls?'

Maggie Helwig (MH): Why girls in the sense of why am I using the word girls, or why is this book focused on young women?

WS: I think the sense was 'Why is the book focused on young women'

MH: I'm interested in the whole phenomenon of young women somatizing social tensions. It's something I've been watching for a long time. There's a little section in the book where I talk about the mass collapses of factory lines in Asia, there was an incident in Kosovo where all sorts of girls started collapsing and rumours of poison gas... and it's happened in Palestine. In a more sort of diffuse way I think it's a lot of what's behind eating disorders. Young women are highly sensitive to their social environments but they tend not to have any tools to analyse their understanding and so they somatize. Any kind of tensions or problems, young women, especially young women in groups have this way of picking up and sensating through bodily symptoms. That's something I've been interested in for a long time. And that's something I wanted to explore in the book, that kind of phenomenon.

WS: I had sensed in the novel a discussion of how people embody their perspectives without necessarily articulating it in other ways. This reminds me of the collection of essays you have written on the apocalypse, or apocalyptic thinking. That was the early nineties...

MH: That was the eighties.

WS: I see a lot of similarities between some of the things you were talking about within that collection and the things you go on to discuss in the novel. At the time you made claims that apocalyptic thinking happened once in a generation, although it seemed to be happening then. I wonder what the kind of benefits of apocalyptic thinking are today?

MH: I think the power of apocalyptic thinking is quite dangerous, and I think I've become more aware of the dangers of it over the intervening period. The power of apocalyptic thinking is in transformation, in thinking things do not have to be as they are. It's a tool for thinking of things as different, even radically different to how they are. None of this is fixed or permanent or inevitable. I was actually just doing a bible study on revelation in a church up in North Toronto over the past few weeks, and trying to talk about the positives... I mean apocalyptic emerged as a political genre. It's become weirdly de-politicised but it's really about transformation of this world. Again there's this funny idea that the apocalypse culminates with everybody flying away to heaven, or something like that but it's about a transformation to this world.

WS: Well. That's reassuring. Before I'd come across your book of essays, I'd been thinking about the role of the apocalyptic through a book of essays written by Marlene Goldman, *Rewriting Apocalypse in Canadian fiction*?

MH: I've not read it.

WS: Goldman's book looks at early nineties texts like Findley's *Headhunter*. I was intrigued by the extensive analysis that she goes into, that relates to the apocalypse in literature. And, that the common beliefs in apocalypse are not textually aware in the way that you indicate.

But, perhaps I might ask a more factual question, relating to something else that came up at Congress. The flashback scenes in the novel that relate to protests outside an abortion clinic, they seem to be located next to the Toronto Women's Bookstore? Was this the case?

MH: It was nearby. There was a building separating them at that point. They were on the same street.

WS: It's not there now?

MH: It was blown up. At one point that was in the book, the final fire-bombing was in the book. But it didn't fit so I took it out. The building is no longer there because a few years later it was fire-bombed in the middle of the night and the whole thing went up.

WS: Okay so there is a factual element to that...

MH: That scene is factual, in that I was there. I have inserted my characters into a fairly accurately described historical event that I was at so it's as close to reportage as anything in the book.

WS: I think I'd read somewhere that you were at one of those...

MH: I was at a number of those.

WS: It makes sense.

MH: I lived a block away. I lived just around the corner, so whenever there was action at the clinic I would be by with people.

WS: Relating some of this to today and to the tendency to apocalyptic thinking... there's a lot in the novel about fear and terror in general. I wonder if you see a distinction between fear and that contemporary kind of terror? Whether the permeation of the word terror and terrorism today have affected the novel in some way to make it more 'post-9/11'? I wondered what you thought of that?

MH: I actually... there was a great dilemma for me. 9/11 posed a great literary dilemma for me because I already had a germ of an idea for a novel in my mind. It

related to what I eventually wrote. I had that germ in my mind before 9/11. Then 9/11 happened and I thought I can't write this book now. If I write this book now it will be about 9/11. It took me years to figure out a way that I could still write this book without it being about 9/11. So it wasn't originally intended as a response to 9/11. It became more of a challenge to say how could I write this book now, in this changed position. That took a long time to figure out.

WS: It comes through in the novel, from the tendency to historicise fear and terror. I was intrigued how 9/11 must have affected you, particularly from the trajectory of your earlier essays, how you must have shifted. You make a reference to 9/11 in the novel, to how people behaved in the streets of Toronto after that. I wonder if there's a sense that this is a way cities in general react to a broader definition of fear? Or, if this is a more temporised thing?

MH: I don't know. I'm not a sociologist. I hang around and watch people, and write about people... Every city is going to be different. One of the other challenges of the book is how would something like this play out in the specific setting of Toronto, which is a very suppressed kind of city. We don't like to be very overt about anything. The book is also very much influenced by SARS. People who don't live in Toronto don't really understand how quiet the whole SARS thing was. There was this kind of suppressed anxiety but you didn't see very much, and you didn't hear much. You knew that people were living in quarantine, and that this epidemic was going on but ... people would be on the subway and some people would be wearing masks and try not to touch things. It was all really quiet. Talking to some of my friends in England during this and they seemed to think we had body carts going through the street or something. In almost any other city in the world, apart from Asian cities who would have reacted the same way, there would have been a lot more overt fear. And we contain. So working out how to play something like this out in a city that is so contained [was a challenge].

WS: That's interesting. I've only got London to compare to that, during the panic over swine flu. But there again on the London underground, people were open about moving away from people who they thought were possibly infected, or not touching things... emails were going around about door handles being cleaned twice a day.

MH: People in London are far more overt about fear. You wouldn't get anything that open in Toronto. Partly it's something to do with the very exaggerated politeness that we have. We really cling to politeness.

WS: That's strategic though...

MH: Yes.

WS: I'm intrigued by how that localises. And how in a broader sense that feeds into how you write 'the city'. Did you, in writing about Toronto through this, come to any idea about whether there is a collective sense of the city? Obviously there is a social body. There is a lot of circulation and differing networks going on but whether there was some kind of commonality or memory which Toronto has?

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MH: I'm a white middle-class intelligentsia. How far I can understand the city outside that perspective is limited. I can try but my ability to understand the city from outside my own location is... I don't know if we have a collective memory. I think we all do have a relationship to our intense strategic politeness. It's often a conflicted relationship. Especially for communities that are not 'European,' and communities that have more reason to be in conflict. They are still in relationship to that strange void however conflicted that relationship is. One of the reasons I included some of the abortion clinic material was that I thought that was disappearing from our collective memory. But it was something very significant in the city. I wanted to keep that in memory.

Toronto has an identity. It's a hard one to pin down. It's powerful and hard to pin down. At the same time there's a diffuseness about our identity, but we know we have it.

WS: There does seem to be a central idea. People have something to relate to. It is not just buildings, or iconic buildings but there is a social and built element to it.

MH: Yes. I think there is... one doesn't want to exaggerate the strength's of the city's multiculturalism because it does get exaggerated too often. But there is an attempt to live together that is significant. An attempt to live together in a way that's different to American cities or European cities. That's partly, and I think I say something about this in the book, there are values to our politeness. It's part of what enables our attempt to live together. Try with varying levels of success to be patient with each other.

WS: One of the scenes in the novel where this happens is the mentioning of the post 9/11 respect of each other. In that instance there is a suggestion that Toronto stands in for a Canadian mindset. I know that is framed within a character's perspective, but I wondered whether you saw that as something which is convincing or problematic?

MH: I think it would be terribly problematic. I don't know a great deal about Canada outside of Toronto. I do know that most of Canada outside of Toronto hates and resents us. Or at least is required to use a discourse of hating and resenting us. I can't speak with a tremendous amount of knowledge about the rest of Canada.

WS: I'll leave that question hanging. I think it's something which emerges here and in other readings.

MH: One of the things that works is ... I'm sure this is something that you have dealt with...

Until fairly recently, I've felt awfully strongly, Canada's representations of itself in literature have been all rural and small town yet we are one of the most urbanized countries in the world. We all want to think we are Mennonites living out in the country.

WS: There is a place for those narratives but I think it has become distorted. Within both criticism and publishing. This leads nicely into your awareness of Toronto literature. Coming into writing this book, how much previous Toronto literature were you aware of? Were there books you liked which were set in Toronto?

MH: Yes. I didn't go back to *The Torontonians* [Phyllis Brett Young, 1960]. *In The Skin of a Lion* [Michael Ondaatje, 1987] I read. Everybody read *In The Skin of a Lion*. I read *What We All Long For* [Dionne Brand, 2005] while I was working on this and thought well I'll just give up then – she's already done it. I read Russell Smith. And I'd read Atwood... *Cat's Eye* [1988]. I read a lot of small press stuff. I usually find a lot more urban stuff in small press.

WS: Did you choose Coach House in the sense that you wanted to go with a smaller press, or was there resistance to writing a Toronto novel?

MH: There was resistance. My agent wasn't particularly happy. Initially I didn't really have a choice because I had a contract with Knopf. So it had to go to Knopf. We went back and forth for eighteen months with changes that they wanted and changes I wasn't willing to make. It went on and on. I had a two book contract with Chatto and Windus and a one book contract with Knopf. Knopf felt, partly because of the two book contract with Chatto and partly because they had the option, that they would go back and forth. Until I just said this isn't going to work.

WS: I'm interested in what Knopf's response to the novel was? Was the setting an issue?

MH: Setting wasn't explicitly an issue. Although I suspect that on some level people would have been happier if I'd done something similar to my previous novel [*Between Mountains*, 2004]. Interesting war zones, other places. But that was never explicitly an issue. The issue was more the lack of one single narrative throughline. And some of the strangeness and darkness of it. And this was what really made me angry, a sense that there was too much Derek. I knew Coach House was right when I spoke to Alana Wilcox and she immediately understood that Derek was the heart of the book. We never even had to talk about that.

WS: Coach House as a press...

MH: They are wonderful. I've always wanted to publish with Coach House. Always. I'm so happy to be with Coach House. I didn't take the book there initially because I couldn't. Knopf had an option and I had the two book contract with Chatto which I finally got out of. Coach House has always been my ideal publisher.

WS: It must be a tremendously difficult thing to negotiate all of that whilst you are writing?

MH: Yes. When you're working on a book you are always insecure about it. If you're getting back a lot of negative messages about it. How do you sort out when the book isn't working? When it needs to be changed? Or, I need to write the book that I need to write. At the beginning there was some of both. It needed work, it needed improvement. It took me a lot of drafts to get it. I finally did reach the point where I thought: this is the book I have to write. If Knopf still doesn't want it then there is nothing I can do.

WS: I know your previous novel was published in the UK, was there any interest in publishing this too?

MH: Coach House tried. But there was no interest. There is no interest in publishing Toronto novels outside of Canada.

WS: This is surprising given the other authors who have written Toronto novels and gone on to be published outside of Canada...

MH: Well, then maybe mine isn't very good! I don't know that's also a possibility.

WS: I'm thinking out loud... but I wouldn't think that would be the reason. It seems somewhat arbitrary.

MH: *Girls Fall Down* is a peculiar book. It has the external appearance of a fairly mainstream novel without offering most of the narrative payoff that you are supposed to get from a mainstream novel. It's not overtly experimental but it's not giving most of the mainstream payoff. It is really in an odd position that way.

WS: I would not think that would affect how a work was received...

MH: Well, it has been very well received in Canada.

WS: You had the Toronto City Book Awards as well. How did you find that as an experience?

MH: Awards are a strange thing. I don't know.

WS: They filmed you?

MH: Yes... It is a part of the business.

WS: Okay. I have been intrigued by the 'off-the-record' comments that people have made, when they have been asked to do this or that by dropping reference to Toronto. These are the kinds of things you hear in the early twentieth-century in reference to Morley Callaghan and I'm thinking they can't still be applicable now. It is hard knowing when there is only anecdotal evidence out there but there is no one person suggesting anything directly. I'm intrigued by the idea that it is not so much publishers as such, but that there is some kind of mediation going on with agents interjecting or editors, interlocutors, to the process saying 'this isn't what we should be doing'. Maybe this is why there is less urban fiction coming through. ... In the context of novels that do address the city, I'm interested in where you thought this novel would fit as a different version of Toronto?

MH: It probably does come back, ultimately, to Derek. That aspect of Toronto. To certain kinds of marginalisation in the city which I do know something about. It's a big part of my life. That is an aspect of Toronto which is very underwritten and under-explored. There are the people living in the ravine and the people living in the little rooming houses. Those kinds of marginalisations in Toronto have not been explored very much. Aside from Dionne Brand, there have not been a lot of writers that have

really worked at the contemporary social tensions and political tensions in Toronto. I think Dionne is really the only other person doing that. I see other people writing Toronto and writing retrospective Torontos, and various kinds of Torontos, but I don't see anyone other than Dionne seriously exploring the social and political rifts and tensions in Toronto right now. She does it from her particular perspective and I do it from my particular perspective. They are not the same, so there is still something I can do there that is not otherwise being done.

WS: I think that's really important. In the four years of reading Toronto fiction, I think I've come across a lot of blank protagonists who aren't socially engaged or politically aware. That's one of the things that people point to in *In The Skin of a Lion*... historicising -- but talking about embodied characters. Thinking about the link between the central characters and the more marginal characters in the novel... I'm intrigued by the two young adults who scribble the word "fear" across the city... who come to be very important near the end of the novel. One of my supervisors suggested it would have been a different novel if the boy had fallen rather than the girl ... would no-one have saved the boy?

MH: I don't think that's true. I mean it was a girl partly because of the girls falling thing. That scene was meant to have echoes of the nun falling off the bridge in *In The Skin of a Lion*. Particularly in that scene I'm really directly trying to do that same scene but underground rather than falling from the air.

WS: The afterlife of some of these moments in Toronto literature are interesting. Particularly the scene you mention from *In The Skin of a Lion*, and the whole Bookmarks project. What do you feel about that? Perhaps if someone had approached you for *Girls Fall Down* to place a plaque in a subway? How do you feel that sort of approach to literature plays out?

MH: I don't have a problem with that. I think we're in a funny situation. Toronto has fairly recently reached a stage in its history where we can start mythologizing. Where we can really start building a dense mythology around the city and we're oddly self-aware of that and self conscious of that. So we're doing it in these self-conscious ways... nobody has to put up a plaque in London saying 'this is what happened in the novel' because it has been much more organic. And New York. Or, for Don De Lillo's *White Noise*. Although *White Noise* isn't set in New York City. I don't have a problem with it. It's a little bit artificial but it's also part of the genuine process of building a dense mythology around the city. Even if we're doing it in slightly forced and self-conscious way I don't see anything wrong with it.

WS: Thinking about the sort of readership who would be aware of that mythology, do you get a sense of reception from those people who influence your writing -- the kind of people you work with? What was their response to characters that were similar to them in the novel?

MH: The response I've had has been good. Obviously a lot of my guys who come to the church don't read books, but several of them have read this book. And they've liked it. They're not accustomed to being themselves represented in fiction. I've also had really good responses when I've talked to others. My friend Jenny Sampirisi teaches a kind of catch-up, quasi-remedial English at Ryerson, and a lot of her

students have dropped out of high school and are trying to get their high school proficiency. Some of them have been on the streets and they've tended to respond really well too because again they are seeing themselves and their experience represented in fiction, in a way that they never have before. Like, "I know these places, oh my God miss I've been there…this is way better than Shakespeare." Now another kid in one of those classes had what I thought was the absolute classic question: "Hey miss, did you ever think about making this book easier so people would enjoy it more?"

WS: Clearly you were concerned with representing Derek in the novel and the kinds of implications that might have. How was that received locally? Did people talk about the representation of Derek locally?

MH: Mostly not. I have friends who have relatives with schizophrenia and we've talked about that. People I work with in the church, who are front-line streetworkers, we talk about it. I think most people, most people find Derek and Derek's experience frightening enough that they don't feel able to comment on it.

WS: It must have been a big challenge to try and imagine yourself into that?

MH: No. Hard, in that he has a very hard life. But imaginatively hard, no not at all. Partly because I've spent a great part of my life with people who are mentally ill, marginally housed and partly because it's really not that different from everyone else's life. Not really. I've been interested by some of the research that's coming out talking about neurological similarities between schizophrenia and creativity.

The letter from Derek in the book was originally much, much longer. The process of writing that was basically me sitting down at my computer and turning off all my mental filters. And just like go, go, go, and it quickly takes you to very disturbing places. I'm not unaccustomed to that. I didn't find it hard to enter into Derek's world. I was careful not to give the narrative voice much access to the inside of Derek's head. That was really an attempt to be respectful.

WS: Very near the end you do get a sense of that. When Derek is being taken in, and before you get the flashbacks..

MH: Out of respect for the integrity of his experience I could not have too much of that. I had also made various rules for myself about what I could and couldn't do with narrative viewpoints.

WS: I find the linking narrative voice very interesting, particularly in comparison to Brand in *What We All Long For*, where the narrative voice, which interjects, is the poetic voice. Coming in and impressing the psychogeography of the city and the way that weaves strands together in useful ways. In other research I've considered it in terms of narrative circulation and the circulation of the city-as-body.

I'm also struck how in Toronto literature many pigeons hit windows?

MH: I don't know if it happens more here than elsewhere or if it's simply because here in Toronto we have a big campaign about it? People are terribly aware about

birds hitting windows, there are adverts in the subway about turning lights off or the birds will fly into your windows. It may not be that it happens a lot here but we're very aware of it. There are people who go out in the morning and pick up the dead birds.[3]

WS: It's a strange perspective on the world. I noted too that at the end of *Girls Fall Down*, you describe the TTC as like a bird in the night. Is there some kind of link to these frailties?

MH: Oh, that's from the Venerable Bede. There's a scene somewhere in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* where the parliament are debating whether not to adopt Christianity. One of the pagan chiefs says: "It seems to me that the life of man is like the bird flying in the night. It briefly flies into a banquet hall where there is warmth and food and light, and then it flies back out into the darkness again. If this new religion can offer us anything more than that then why not give it a try." I've always found that such an evocative image, the bird flying into the banquet hall and then back out into the night. Doing that at the end of the novel with the subway train was something I really wanted to do. Only one person has ever seen the source material there without being told. I thought I had made it pretty obvious but most people don't read the Venerable Bede.

WS: I have to admit I did come across the Venerable Bede in relation to another contemporary novel and thought, I should read it...

MH: ...it's mostly pretty boring.

WS: There a lot of photographers in Toronto literature too, and the novel's use of photography seems complex. I was wondering what happens to the photograph as object in the novel, because it seems the act of picturing takes priority?

MH: Alex is not based on but owes something to a friend of mine who was a photographer [David Barker Maltby, who *Girls Fall Down* is dedicated to and whose image, 'Tear Gas Queen's Park' is used on the cover]. He was like that, the act of taking the photo was what really mattered to him. He had hundreds and thousands of prints lying around his apartment with nothing in particular happening to them. Very occasionally he might have a show or have some pictures in *The Globe and Mail*, but it represented this tiny fraction of this vast body of work that he did nothing with. Then he died very young so his sister has the rights to the whole thing, so it still just sits there and nothing ever happens. Thousands and thousands of photographs.

I love the cover photograph because you can't even tell it's a protest. It's just a bunch of people wandering around in gas masks. 'Here I go walking in my gas mask'!

WS: It certainly has some symbolism to it. I've been looking at the point of view of photographers reflecting a certain sense of imaging the city. In *Girls Fall Down*, there is the moment where Alex enters the PATH system... or in the cloud garden, which is described as the place no-one knows about. But then it still shows the edge of the

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[3] Such a character is depicted in the opening of Alissa York's Toronto-set novel *Fauna* (2010).

social sphere for people who are marginalised... the other tangential link to this would be the wider discussions of public space. Do you think public space is important to what was being put forward here?

MH: We have parks. Then we have the ravines – which are a really unusual kind of public space. They are not terribly accessible and they are not entirely known. But they are public space. Then there are people who live there, so in that sense they are also private space. The ravines are very interesting. Not a lot of cities have anything like our ravine system. It's one of the fairly unique things about Toronto.

WS: They come up in literature, but you don't often see them, before this novel, used as anything but a large metaphor. People go down there and come out, and something dark happened. People chase through there... I read the Paul Quarrington novel *The Ravine* and it still didn't really provide a living sense of the ravines. Since reading *Girls Fall Down* I've been into the ravines more to explore, and to visit the brick works. To just wander around them. They're not all that promoted to walk...

MH: They're not all that easy to get to. They're not that easy to walk through, you have to be reasonably young and fit to get up and down the slopes. They are interesting, quite complex environments.

The novel also features the church as public space. The church that is based on St. Stephen's is also a functioning public space. It is the meeting point. It's where people come to run into each other. The role of churches as public space is an interesting one.

WS: Certainly not something that comes across as overtly moral in the book, it is actually quite neutral space...there are no services...

MH: Right near the end there is a brief reference to Evelyn celebrating the eucharist with her daughter helping her at the altar. I like that image but it is very brief.

WS: I'm interested by that representation of the church without any of the ceremony usually involved.

MH: That's a big part of my experience of the church. A great part of what I do is I run my meal programme. This gets into my whole issue with the church but I think we neglect our role as public open space. There are churches that don't, St. Stephen's is, I mean it's now in a state of collapse, but was quite good about being open public space. Not necessarily churchy space.

WS: It's not a dimension of the usual discussion of public space.

MH: People have funny relationships with churches. I have a different relationship to churches than most people. I understand there's anxiety for a lot of people for engaging with church space.

WS: But they provide a sense of community, particularly in city space. There's something about urban churches that doesn't often get addressed in discussions of urban space.

MH: But if you're dealing with people who are homeless and marginally housed, churches are huge in their lives. Churches are virtually the only public space where they will probably not be thrown out. Churches are where they can go for food, water, clothing and community. Nobody is going to come along and say move along move along. For that community churches have a considerable importance that has nothing to do with religion at all.

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