

Getting Home From Work: Narrating Settler Home in British Columbia's Small  
Resource Communities

by

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B.A. (Hon.), University of British Columbia, 1997

M.A., University of British Columbia, 2001

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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## **Abstract**

Stories of home do more than contribute to a culture that creates multiple ways of seeing a place: they also claim that the represented people and their shared values belong in place; that is, they claim land. Narrators of post-war B.C. resource communities create narratives that support residents' presence although their employment, which impoverishes First Nations people and destroys ecosystems, runs counter to contemporary national constructions of Canada as a tolerant and environmentalist community. As the first two chapters show, neither narratives of nomadic early workers nor those of contemporary town residents represent values that support contemporary settler communities' claims to be at home, as such stories associate resource work with opportunism, environmental damage, race- and gender- based oppression, and social chaos. Settler residents and the (essentially liberal) values that make them the best people for the land are represented instead through three groups of alternate stories, explored in Chapters 3-5: narratives of homesteading families extending the structure of a "good" colonial project through land development and trade; narratives of contemporary farmers who reject the legacy of the colonial project by participating in a sustainable local economy in harmony with local First Nations and the land; and narratives of direct supernatural connection to place, where the land uses the settler (often an artist or writer) as a medium to guide people to meet its (the land's) needs. All three narratives reproduce the core idea that the best "work" makes the most secure claim to home, leading resource communities to define themselves in defiance of their industries. Authors studied include Jack Hodgins, Anne Cameron, Susan Dobbie, Patrick Lane, Gail Anderson-Dargatz, D.W. Wilson, Harold Rhenisch, M.Wylie Blanchet, Susan Juby, and Howard White.

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## **Dedication**

For my mother, who assumed I could, and for Ed, who expected I would.

## **Introduction: Stories of Home As Claims to Land**

In 1992, the silver mine in Houston, B.C. closed, and about a tenth of the town's residents left. Those who remained, mostly sawmill workers and their families, could joke that the closure caused a lumber boom, as bright sheets of plywood soon covered the windows and doors of empty houses and townhouses. In April of 2014, one of the two sawmills closed, causing another mass decampment. I grew up in Houston, as much as anywhere else, and I saw one of my old elementary school classmates on the national news, being asked what he would do next. He said he had no idea. He owned his house, but he couldn't imagine that it would sell, and his job was a specialized one at the mill. He'd lived in town all his life – about forty years, or roughly since it was incorporated in conjunction with a large expansion for a sawmill.

Houston is one of many British Columbian small mill and mining towns built, incorporated, and/ or greatly expanded during what historian Brent McGillivray calls “the long boom” of the 1950s to the 1980s (*Canada: A Nation of Regions* 326), and these places anchor my way of reading some narratives about settler home-making in rural post World War II mining and forestry dependent B.C. communities. My experiment has been one in parallel reading of literary works and what I call public narratives written in the period to discover and analyse what, if anything, the two sets of stories had in common: I am drawing together two discourses of small resource industry B.C. I wanted particularly to know whether and how stories might present industry workers and their families as “at home,” considering that the same period has been one of increasing local and global

awareness of the environmental consequences of primary resource use, and of the clear, unextinguished Indigenous title to most the land of the province. My overall conclusion is that, if those of us who are settlers understand ourselves as “at home” in colonial space, we might sometimes narrate ourselves into place through accepting “work” as what binds land and people together, through creating stories that associate certain ways of working on the land with virtue, and through articulating community values as ones that foster and enshrine these virtues, whatever the actual “work” we do.

As must be fairly clear already, I have had to draw on several disciplines to collate and discuss the works I do, to identify and situate them in relation to other discussions of patterns in Canadian and British Columbian literature, and to explore why and how we settlers might tell stories of belonging in the environs of small British Columbian resource extraction communities. Before I discuss the texts I work with in relation to Canadian literature, in relation to analysis of the development of liberal ideology in contemporary Canadian culture, or in relation to other studies of trends in British Columbian literature, however, I will explain how I arrived at the two parts of my data set: the literary works, and the works produced by public narrators such as municipal councils, museum societies, and festival committees. My focus includes several deliberate exclusions of groups of texts and has accidentally created several more, and I make note of the exclusions I see. Readers will likely see categories of omission I have not.

This project, the collection of texts I examine as a part of literary British Columbia from the 1960s to 2011, and the selected public narratives I use to represent small, resource dependent communities that might use shared story in building a shared

identity, grew out of my broader reading in the province's literature. I was most interested in stories set outside the main cities of metro Vancouver and Victoria, and became particularly intrigued by stories of communities and settlement activity imagined in parts of the province that have been heavily reliant on the resource extraction industries of forestry and mining. I noticed two narrative trends in particular that I wanted to explore further: first, in post-war fiction, community settlement was strongly associated with individual homesteading or family farming, and, second, resource work and resource workers were strongly associated with transience, dysfunction, or both. There was also a trend in these same stories to include supernatural elements, which was unsurprising, given the popularity of magic realism, except that the "magic" also tended to mark out certain settlers as able to communicate directly with something like a god of place, thus creating a strong, even authoritative bond between the land and the chosen settler.

Given that these works were written during a period of intense, planned settlement that brought cohorts of new settlers to new or rapidly and greatly expanded mining and forestry communities in remote areas of the province, and given that this kind of settlement seemed to have little imaginative presence as a potential home in literature, I chose to narrow my study to an examination of works that seemed to be set in communities that could overlie or abut areas with significant mining and forestry activity just when that land was being quickly and profoundly altered. As I concentrated my search, I found that the literary patterns seemed to also appear in many public narratives from what McGillivray identifies as the "fragile" small towns whose populations have expanded, contracted, and changed with post-war resource booms and busts (*Geography*

*of British Columbia* 259-268). I argue that stories that resemble the literary strategies of identifying settlers with land may be used by these public narrators because the town conditions tend to be ones in which, as social geographers Greg Halseth and Lana Sullivan suggest, a strong sense of community and attachment to place could help the town endure industry upheaval (*Building Community In an Instant Town* 262). These towns tend also to be structured with autonomous local government, so residents have some mechanism through which to determine and meet their own collective desires – including funding public narration. Social geography studies showed that these postwar resource towns had intense “family-based” local cultural growth and attachment to place planned right into the town design, and this may partially influence the stories that the public narrators develop. I explain the theory of community growth into place I use, the mechanisms that are meant to direct it, and the implications of this understanding of the nature of “place” (for a study of stories of settler home in B.C.’s largely untreated land) below, in my discussion of Greg Halseth and Lana Sullivan’s study of Mackenzie and Tumbler Ridge, *Building Community in an Instant Town*.

In brief, in public narratives, I found that short histories tended to emphasize first settlers as homesteaders with agricultural ambitions, that narrators tended to emphasize local independent, small-scale, and usually sustainable farming activity, and that declarations of town identity (in mottos, for example) often asserted some kind of emotional attachment to the landscape. When evocations of settler resource extraction activities appeared as part of these public narratives, the activity was frequently discontinuous with the activity in the planned industry expansion – most notably, Quesnel underwent a doubling in size for forest sector processing in the 1970s, and started Billy

Barker Days, a festival celebrating a figure from the nearby gold rush of the previous century, almost simultaneously. At the same time, contemporary industry does not seem to be a developed story pattern through which public narrators in these rural communities commonly narrate residents into place, although the contemporary, large-scale industry that drew the bulk of the residents to a town is sometimes evoked by permanently installing (i.e. parking and immobilizing) a piece of its large, unique, and obsolete machinery.

I should emphasize that I concentrate on *words* as public narrative, with the occasional glance at a town sculpture or mascot as a character. As descriptions of any community gathering in particular, these words often end up more like labels on abstract paintings: they are headings under which some gestures can be gathered together and called a unified thing representing a community, rather than the events that “build community,” and rather than a description of any people, their values, or what they understand to be their histories. In this, “community identity” is identity as Stuart Hall has explained both individual and group identity: it is a set of practices and values that can be articulated together for a purpose in a particular context; it is provisional (600). The purpose of the community is developing a strong sense of “place” in a industry-dependent settler community, and the context is 1960s to 2015 resource extraction industry towns on First Nations’ land, where the national narratives (as I demonstrate below in a discussion of Eva Mackey’s work) are ones of good relations with the Indigenous residents, and good stewardship of a delicate environment. For my study, therefore, it does not matter that go-kart races and midway attractions dominate “Billy Barker Days,” or that booths for home businesses of all sorts appear at farmers’ markets

and community festival events, whatever the festival is called. It matters instead that a public narrative gathers the community together under the label of a prospector, or a homesteading re-creation, or an agricultural fair, or a celebration of town spirit. It also does not matter that many residents eschew civic engagement; it matters that those who strive to create and articulate a resource town as a “community” publically and collectively narrate a community through the words that they do.

Unsurprisingly, my focus on narration as discourse has led me into two forms of grievous textual violence: I ignore what is best about the exceptional books I read, and I ignore exceptional voices, ones that cannot be caught in a search for the greatest overlap among many texts and with the banal consensus of the sorts of stories a chamber of commerce would be content to tell about a place. Because I am seeking exactly what is most mundane, what clichéd town mottos and meditative prose poems might have in common, for example, I cannot prioritize literary evaluation of the texts I study, or even particular nuances of their genre or form: I track the declarative, and I (occasionally pigheadedly) insist on discussing realist technique -- even in Patrick Lane’s noir fiction, treating it as though it can reasonably be read as a portrait of a probable culture. Again, this is because my interest is in how stories of home might be mobilized in the creation of “place” for actual settlers. This sort of *use* of story by an audience is explained by literary theorist Robert Tally as a way of including reading literature as a spatial practice:

Literature also functions as a form of mapping, offering its readers descriptions of places, situating them in a kind of imaginary space, and providing points of reference by which they can orient themselves and understand the world in which they live. (2)

Tally also describes the complementary importance of analyzing spatial practices to literary criticism, asserting that “literary texts both operate within and help to shape the geography of their worlds, and through them, of ours” (99). In Tally’s model, British Columbian readers of local novels read up and down, recognize the “place” they inhabit in literary “maps” of fictional place, and see guideposts in literature for orienting themselves in their lived place. The fields of meaning in literature and in lived space help create each other. Furthermore, in his analysis of proposed comprehensive literary mapping projects (like those of Franco Moretti), Tally suggests that a flattening of the affect that distinguishes idiosyncratic texts is an asset when trying to consider a type of narrative’s role in a culture, reasoning that such projects recognize that traditional analysis that “looks less at norms and more at anomalies cannot give an accurate picture of ... how [literature] operates, or what effects it has (103). Reading for pattern entails reading characters and landscapes mostly allegorically, looking for how landscape and character might combine to create specific, consistent meaning across many texts. I have found this reading for use has a significant limit, in that what is essentially a cultural studies approach to analysing narrative art tends to ignore any internal coherence a piece of work exhibits, and leaves little room for acknowledging aesthetic merits -- almost suggesting that the “use” of narrative is to articulate stereotype.

This concern of re-inscribing, through allegorical reading, what is already most easily seen brings me to my second textual violence, one that relates to the body of “British Columbian Literature,” rather than to individual texts. The other problem with reading for the most obvious features in common across many texts is that it gives a very distorted picture of both British Columbian literature and the contemporary and historical

population of the province. The group of stories I collect, both as community narratives and as literature that reflects the assumptions about settler community characteristics in these narratives, has both deliberate and inadvertent exclusions of stories from frequently marginalized groups, stories that are part of both the literary and the place-based community of the province. My focus on stories of settlement in the context of post-war resource extraction specifically excludes primarily agricultural communities, cannery towns and fishing communities, intentional communities and religious settlements, and forestry and mining work camps and unincorporated company towns, both historical and contemporary. This narrow focus is relatively unproblematic, but other exclusions are more sensitive.

Most importantly, I exclude First Nations community narratives of all sorts, including any from communities that own the land expropriated for industry and industry worker settlement. I feel strongly that to include (by discussing narrative) either the “places” constructed by primarily First Nations communities (even resource towns) as somehow akin to “place” in settler towns, or to include depictions of contemporary resource communities in First Nations authors’ work, for example Eden Robinson’s *Monkey Beach* and *Traplines*, would forceably enfold storytellers and narratives in and of these non-colonial places in the liberal project of claiming land through the virtue of work. As my argument is that settlers write themselves into place through stories that explain their presence as good or organic in a way, when it really cannot be explained as good or organic, setting stories of home from First Nations authors on the continuum I have constructed would be perverse and corrosive.

More regrettably, my search for pattern has ended up with me sketching what seems to be a glaringly Anglo-white picture, and every time it looks even a little bit like an actual contemporary town, it has a lot of (presumably straight) men doing things in the centre of the action. These exclusions are ironic, given I was initially inspired to consider a research project in non-urban B.C. literature through my love of Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill*, Denise Chong's *The Concubine's Children*, and SKY LEE's *The Disappearing Moon Café*, and they are vexing, considering I had in mind always community my own towns, with my classmates and friends from India, Pakistan, Vietnam, various local and distant First Nations, South Korea, the Philippines, and many European countries, as well as non-White second and third generation settler Canadians. This dissertation has of necessity focussed on widely-used narratives, and exemplified each one with one or two examples; the works of ethnic and racial minority authors are often outliers to these narratives. Out of the discussion of homesteading narratives alone, for example, I ended up cutting both the story of John Giscome, the Black man for whom the Giscome Portage is named, and a write-up from the town history page on Houston's website from one of the Sikh Canadian residents, who explained that he understood his ancestral culture to be one that preserved farmers' values, much as did other contributors.<sup>1</sup> These were painful cuts to make. I wish to emphasize that this project, in seeking the densest areas of

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<sup>1</sup> I draw the activities at Giscome Portage as a community narrative illustrating a narrative of homesteading as one that enshrines very contemporary values, in spite of its relative isolation, because the Huble Homestead/ Giscome Portage do community and class outreach programs throughout the very large area circumscribed by School District 57, including Valemont, McBride, and Mackenzie. There are other, similar heritage groups throughout the province, including one with similarly dense community participation in Chase, but the Huble programs and documents are able to illustrate many trends at once.

repetition, tracks dominance so that I can show how it becomes re-inscribed, even by those of us attempting to escape it. Please read against it, vigorously. The stories are homogenous and homogenizing because they are deployed to create commonalities, but the people are diverse. The rest of the “white” effect is unfortunately a result of trying to find novels, short stories, and collections of narrative poems that either create imaginary communities large and varied enough to be imagined as places, or describe communities in which at least one major character works in the post war mining or forest industries. I worked with what I found.

I would like to turn now to a working definition of community, place and home as they are used in this study. The key point I want to make clear about all three terms as I use them is that they are all shared and social constructions, rather than primarily individually felt attachments, although a “sense of community,” “a sense of place,” and “a feeling of being at home” are components of community, place, and home respectively. For “community,” I follow Halseth and Sullivan, who explain that a “community” is a group of people and their shared social and geographic context, which together provide members with a framework for, among other things, “interaction, mutual and collective support, a sense of belonging, a shared sense of social place and social control, and economic organization” (*Building 6*). The definition is clearly one that can include members who do not directly interact with each other, and for whom, as the authors explain, a “sense of community” is unfelt and unnecessary until “there is some threat or challenge to the community” (*Building 7*). Halseth and Sullivan clarify that the stronger the interpersonal and community bonds for a community that shares a place, the greater the community’s ability to act to decide its “collective future” (7-8).

Halseth and Sullivan explain that the process of interacting and developing interests in common, would transform the community from a “community of place” to a “community of interest,” whose members recognize themselves as sharing interests and an identity. The physical town itself (the “landscape,” or “material topography,” including manmade structures, of a piece of land, as Tim Cresswell explains [11]) would have to be comfortable to live in, but the interactions would tie people to each other and to the site.

In effect, both community cultural activity and literary representations of settler community help to create “resource town B.C.” and individual resource towns as “places.” I follow Halseth and Sullivan in talking of “place” as the defining context for this activity of community identity formation, rather than any other term. As political geographer John Agnew explains, place is “the geographical context for the mediation of physical, social and economic processes” (317). Tim Cresswell, who foregrounds “place” as a way of understanding the world, summarizes:

Place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power. (12)

I choose “place” over “topophilia” (common in literary geography) partly for the word’s greater association with political and social geography – I am more interested in how narratives of home, including in literature, might affect the social world than vice versa – and because it emphasizes the social and economic power relationships that are part of being in place, including the power to exclude people from community. Cresswell’s formulation also makes it clear that “place” and “ideology” are closely intertwined. I also choose “place” rather than Henri Lefebvre’s closely related “social space,” which does

highlight these power relationships (Lefebvre 190), because I wish to keep the topographic specificity of even the literary constructions of imaginary place in B.C. in very clear view: when Gail Anderson Dargatz, for example, writes a book that exiles a war-fevered white patriarch from an imaginary settlement that could nonetheless clearly overlie a valley a few kilometers from Chase B.C., she is in a way scripting an exile of the ideology he embodies from a recognizable place, whether or not the script is ever followed in Chase (*The Cure For Death By Lightning*).

My need to define community and place both materially and precisely, so that they collect residents into groups the way stories collect characters, flows from what I understand to be the nature of home, and the problem of non-Indigenous – settler – home in resource industry towns on First Nations land. In British Columbia, a story of “home” is not the just the declaration of an affection, and it is not just the description of a place. Home is a narrative of belonging in place, to the exclusion of others. In other words, it is a land claim, and it is made in a field of other land claims. When public narrators strive to articulate the community of a resource town together as belonging in place with an identity, boundaries, and members who share bonds of affection and interest, they create a story of a place as “home.”

My definition of home is like a needle driving a thread through layers of cloth. A story of place *when told as a story of home* forces a convergence of the imaginary topography of the province and the material one, including the physical land, quilting them together at a point and bending the imaginary environs and the topography into close association for the community that circulates the story, thereby identifying individuals and communities with land, for whoever encounters the story. For public

stories, the company and government expectations that attempted to mould who would come and potentially become public narrators matter too, as they sought residents with particular values and broad ideological orientations. Although this is a study of literature and should be read as such, as it does not collect data about contemporary or historical British Columbia in a way that is usable in other disciplines, it includes a meditation on social planning principles for towns because they seem to script likely narrative through scripting culture. The social planning and policy responses to the material decline of small resource towns in B.C. is in the realm of studies of the social sciences, far removed from what can be directly addressed through literary criticism. However, literary studies of culture overlap with these material studies because of a key assumption in the works of the social geographers I draw on for my understanding of comprehensively planned mining and forestry town culture and development. Social geographers studying community development and sustainability take for granted that community cohesiveness is an important factor in determining the town's ability to create and maintain an alternative economy, and a culture built in common is key to this cohesiveness.<sup>2</sup> The argument for central role of narrative in culture is made in cultural studies generally by Stuart Hall, who first describes the self's identity as a post-modern one, composed of many selves appropriate to the fractured experience of the social caused by diaspora (his main focus) and the discontinuities of late modernity (597-598). On this premise, he grounds an argument that national identity — a form of cultural identity (like the self) —

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<sup>2</sup>In their introduction to their book-length study of Kitimat, Mackenzie, and Tumbler Ridge, Halseth and Sullivan of the University of Northern British Columbia explain this building process as a shift from a place-based community to an interest-based one (*Building Community in an Instant Town* 7-8).

is formed in the same manner (611-612). Thomas King explores the same centrality of narrative and the effects on First Nations people of hegemonic settler narratives and the structures and policies they produce through his Massey lectures, collected as *The Truth About Stories*.<sup>3</sup>

As for identity in those towns, Halseth and Sullivan explain that that resource-boom era municipalities, particularly the smaller and newer ones, are planned not just with their streets and amenities plotted, but with their expected characters and cultures roughed out. Halseth and Sullivan explain that these towns “are about work,” adding that, “the main question in their development is how to promote a community landscape to support their workforce” (*Building Community* 8).<sup>4</sup> Halseth and Sullivan explain that planned towns are designed to draw workers with dependents, “young families... [who] quickly bring stability” (15). Their data suggest that company expectations are also that the new residents will be “a strong ethnic mix,” meaning that they would have relatively little in common when they first arrived (16, table). These social planning principles made it clear that the “community landscape” developers promote is defined ideally

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<sup>3</sup>Hall makes the link between the fragmentation of self each person experiences by inhabiting a range of “subject positions” and the fragmentation of society in to many group identities in order to explain (following Ernesto Laclau) that cultural identities, including national identity, “hold together...not because they are unified, but because their different elements and identities can, under certain circumstances, be articulated together” (600). King is not explicit about how self-narration becomes shared culture, but suggests, through paralleling internal dialogue (in which someone justifies his actions to himself) with shared story, that the processes of individual and group identity construction are the same.

<sup>4</sup>The emphasis on community as support for industry is the start of this project, and it is a glimpse of the ideology of liberalism that is apparent in various forms in the public and literary stories of home I explore: even “community” is something of a resource in a global market, and what determines the “best” community in place from the town planners’ point of view is one that encourages the workers to stick around when the market falls.

through family, and families should “feel part of a stable, permanent, and welcoming community” (20). The young families were to be drawn by a stability they themselves were to bring, and the workers had to meet the company needs, but aside from their dependency on the main employer, their age, and their desire for permanence and stability in a community, they were to have little in common. A desire for stability (ideally shown, as Halseth and Sullivan make clear, through home ownership), an interest in community engagement, and an expectation that community life be centred on families with children – this is the value set that companies and town planners imagined would define permanent residents of planned resource communities.<sup>5</sup>

Stories appear in various forms in several places, often not very well developed, and tend to record early homesteading families, suggest contemporary family farming and local production, and evoke a vague but known spiritual connection. These are not the only stories about settler home in B.C., which are themselves of course also not the only stories of home in B.C. that a settler reader could access. Rather these stories are the ones that seem to appear most robustly in the narratives that residents of comprehensively planned resource extraction communities can use to write themselves into place. Writing the small settler post war resource community into place in rural B.C. is the process and the locus for the process that I want to look at because new settlers

who mine and process

<sup>5</sup> In fact, in another essay, “From Kitimat to Tumbler Ridge,” Halseth and Sullivan include an adaptation of Allison Gill’s list of “social planning principles,” which could double as a list of what town planners imagined would be ideal residents’ values: “choice, commitment, challenge, self reliance, participation, integration, equity, fiscal responsibility, environmental sensitivity [and] flexibility” (149; adapted from Gill, “Evaluation.”).

wood on untreated land encapsulate a paradox. Resource town sites and their environs are aggressive and permanent sites of land expropriation and of environmental destruction (such as strip mining and clearcutting), but they rely on the people in them developing mutual trust, support, and love of place – values that counter the thrust of the industries they serve. Interpersonal relations and ways of seeing the land as welcoming and beautiful are planned into place as a company asset, as is a careful fostering of “belonging” through looking for unity and interdependence away from the work and worksite, with its accompanying gendered advantage, and to the surrounding land. Good, shared values and an attachment to place: those are what the planners thought would encourage people to stay, not satisfaction or identification with either the work they do or its effects.

The permanence of the towns with extensive planning was therefore to have come about partly through the workers’ ties of family, affection, and love of place — their stories of who they are and what values they share —becoming part of the wealth of the towns. These social ties, what sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, Robert Putnam, and John Field have since theorized as social capital, were to have been at once a corporate asset and a bulwark against the ravages of the fluctuating commodities market because people would stay and build something vibrant outside the main industry.<sup>6</sup> The workers’ social capital was to be company capital; as geographers

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<sup>6</sup> In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam gives probably the most useful general definition of social capital for the purposes of this dissertation, explaining that it “refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (19). The concept itself remains partially metaphorical (as capital is most useful as a way of describing relative power when it can be accurately measured)

Halseth and Sullivan put it when describing the Kitimat master plan, “the needs of the company were clearly being integrated with the needs of the town” (*Building Community in An Instant Town* 20) — and of the provincial government, which would bear the costs of the social ills of large dysfunctional communities if the new industries drew only the unattached men who usually dominated pre-war industry sites.<sup>7</sup>

However successful the development of community in the actual B.C. towns, there seems to be little place in the literary geography of the province for settler home anywhere that looks like postwar mill or mining towns. Unfortunately for the residents of the province’s small resource industry communities, the dominant story of such towns in British Columbian post war literature describes communities housing bad, incomplete, or alienated people in an inappropriately structured colony, usually forced into place against the legitimate claims of First Nations, who are thereby impoverished and displaced. This narrative has appeared in various forms since the beginning of the long boom era and appears (sometimes ambiguously or ironically) in the novels of Anne Cameron, Patrick Lane, D.W. Wilson, George Bowering, Paul St. Pierre, and Jack Hodgins. This kind of story can only give settler residents cohesion through their rejection of it as not descriptive of them or their home. At the same time, however, a rough consensus of what other (usually better) relationships settlers could have with the land, each other, and the

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but invaluable here, because it emphasizes the economic benefit the town planners clearly expected to draw from fostering residents’ affection for each other and their town.

<sup>7</sup>Undesirable populations have high turnover and high crime rates, both features most associated with populations of young, unattached males. John Field notes that the existence of social capital can be most sharply recognized by its sudden disappearance, where it is “invariably accompanied by an intractable rise in in alienation and anti-social behaviour, particularly among young males” (62). Field illustrates the point with the example of mine closures after a general strike.

still-present First Nations people has emerged, and the resource town public narrators (municipal councils, museum societies, and chambers of commerce, for examples), like the writers depicting the region, define their communities through these better alternative stories. These stories of small town British Columbia construct settler home through narratives of the town's environs as more organically and more permanently settled than the historical record would suggest, roughly in order to identify settler residents with place, and either to re-associate these settlers with positive values that seem to be lost in contemporary culture, or to affirm positive values that seem to have emerged as dominant in national culture since the towns' incorporations. As vessels for these positive values, "good" stories frequently depict either industry towns or associated (and sometimes imaginary) non-industrial communities in forestry and mining-reliant British Columbian regions in stories that emphasize more recent, world-wide uneasiness about the permanent alterations to the land and its potential uses caused by resource extraction. Very broadly, some British Columbian resource industry places, whatever their settler history, are represented through a fictional agrarian settler legacy — and often are even so represented by organizations such as tourism boards, municipal councils, chambers of commerce, and historical or museum societies from some of the towns themselves.

This study collects a group of narratives that represent small, planned single industry resource towns and their environs in British Columbia, drawn from a variety of public, popular and literary texts, into four categories. The categories show four overlapping but distinct sets of potential "good" community values. The first category of narratives articulates the values associated with mining and forestry workers, embodied in the figures of lone prospectors and handloggers, who are primarily heroic

men. These figures can neither attach people to specific place nor represent the primarily social normative values that Halseth and Sullivan claim town planners and civic bodies attempt to foster. Again, these values are a combination of a focus on a stable family life, strong civic engagement, economic prudence, and permanent attachment to place (to be achieved through volunteering, home ownership, strong networks and friendships in town of undeveloped forest, landscaped parks, and residential tracts [“From Kitimat to Tumbler Ridge” 139-144, 148]).<sup>8</sup> The second category of narratives portrays pioneering homesteaders, embodying the strongly secular values of classical liberalism — self-sufficiency, industry, and a culture based on both the nuclear family and voluntary civic engagement — enabled by the traditional role of colonial soldiers-turned-farmers as the anchors of “good” empire. The third category of narratives addresses the limitations of the first two by creating the fantasy of the Edenic farm, encapsulating values of a form of contemporary liberalism, with an emphasis on tolerance, good environmental stewardship, and sustainable balance, where the investment of individual resources is successful only when it is an investment in the health of the land and the human community, and where all forms of nurture coincide. The fourth and final category posits home as a right granted by the land through a mystical connection, where the unifying value celebrated is a subservience to the land, usually marked by a celebration of art and

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<sup>8</sup> “From Kitimat to Tumbler Ridge” includes an adaptation of Allison Gill’s list of “social planning principles,” which could double as a list of what town planners imagined would be ideal residents’ values: “choice, commitment, challenge, self reliance, participation, integration, equity, fiscal responsibility, environmental sensitivity [and] flexibility” (149; adapted from Gill, “Evaluation.”).

artists. I will discuss the rough plot stories in each category tend to follow and introduce the texts I use to explore them in a little more detail later in this introduction.

All four of these categories of narrative overwrite the negative representation of the industry town B.C., found in the chapter two. This contrasting chapter appears second because, like the first, it explores unusable narratives of working men and their work, but the narratives are, like those in the later chapters, contemporary ones. The narratives in this group are so dehumanizing in their depictions of industry workers that the stories can only be understood as condemnations of the culture that enables men to act as they do – or at least as their representatives do in fiction. Of course, the fictional representations of industry men are exactly what characters in many narratives are: articulations of some of the values of a culture. However, these particular industry men may not necessarily represent the immediate culture of the towns represented in the stories. They may rather embody writers' understandings of the values of a combined provincial governmental and corporate culture, one that seeks to solve problems of industry workers' discontent and the difficulties of having a provincial economy reliant on volatile resource markets by trying to shape local community culture — often in spite of whatever culture is already in place. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the vision of planned towns as positive was never without analysts with a literary bent who took the regional imaginary as their subject. Where planned towns appear in British Columbian literature since the early 1960s, they tend to encapsulate an ambivalence in the larger culture about experiments in social engineering, both in the towns' perceived inability to ameliorate the violence and dehumanization of the established industrial culture (even the camp culture planned, incorporated towns

were designed to replace), and in their participation in planned colonization of what is now (usually) acknowledged to have always been already-occupied space.

As an illustration, in his 1980 book *Breaking Smith's Quarterhorse*, author and politician Paul St. Pierre describes the instant town policy that enabled much town incorporation and planning as a means of inserting a completely self-contained and extremely uniform culture in an area so as to prevent any unplanned culture from developing:

In the current view of government and industry, such country is better left unsettled until such time as a large corporation is prepared to establish instant towns therein, complete with pre-sliced bread and dripless candles. (9)

In the same vein, Lorna Jackson's 2003 novel *A Game to Play on the Tracks* describes the streets of a town resembling Kitimat as the spiral shell of a nautilus, explaining that they are a trap designed by "some make it happen multinational" to make every resident circle the community centre complex, and leave them "exhausted by centripetal force," unable to escape to the larger world (55). Jack Hodgins's *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, set in a town modelled on the then very new town of Port Alice, makes less of a distinction between a resident's psychology and that of any outside observer, but the activities of design and planning, rather than a more organic growth, seem to be thoroughly rejected by the land of his novel itself. Port Annie is shrugged off the mountainside in a landslide that kills a millworker and expels both the pitchman for a multinational property development company and the town's investment-crazed, huckster mayor — who has just accidentally killed the town's withered but living first god, Fat Annie (*The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* 313, 322-23). (Mayor Weins returns with the

camera crews covering the disaster, imagining he can turn the publicity into a revival of his real estate dreams, but he is explicitly described as “excluded” from the community that coalesces after the disaster [340-341]). More generally in non-urban British Columbian literature since the 1950s, fictional resource workers fare little better than their designed homes: drunken, violent, and relatively poor male workers with few family ties and no regard for those that they do have are a prominent part of the population of small towns created by Anne Cameron, Jack Hodgins, D.W. Wilson and Patrick Lane.

Though few local chroniclers and no public narrators describe resource communities in such unflattering ways, public, popular, and literary visions of the better relationships settlers could have with the land, each other, and the First Nations people appear in stories of small town British Columbia. In an alternative pattern of narrative, popular and literary authors and public narrators — such as municipal councils, chambers of commerce and museum societies — depict settlers who grow plants and care for livestock, or who at least inherit these aspirations amid world-wide uneasiness about resource extraction’s permanent alterations to the land and its potential uses. For example, although *Port Annie* appears in only one Hodgins work, four of his novels and three short story collections are largely set on old farms in Portuguese Creek/ Waterville. Portuguese Creek is a fictional town modelled on Hodgins’s hometown of Merville, and its residents seem never at all to venture into the well laid out streets of the surrounding forestry towns of Courtney, Comox, or Campbell River. Similarly, Anne Cameron re-imagines what seems to be the early mining company town of Cassidy as the agrarian *Bright’s Crossing* in at least five books and Susan Juby represents nearly the same area, cradle of southern Vancouver Island logging, through the *Woefield* farm. In the interior,

Gail Anderson-Dargatz places the exclusively farming-dependent town of Promise near the coordinates of Chase — long a forestry and lumber processing centre. These alternative stories, like the many more that have no clear relation to a specific setting, describe family homesteading legacies, often emphasizing their presence as a welcome first intrusion of the cosmopolitan world; they chronicle small-scale contemporary farming participating in local trade networks and avoiding that same world market; or they assert a supernatural or spiritual attachment and subservience to what is constructed as the will of the unaltered land. In contrast, when resource towns with post-war housing tracts do appear in fiction (including where they appear in the above authors but excluding Port Annie), they host communities wherein violence, rape, child abuse, and addiction are the most obvious community norms, as they are in Eden Robinson's Kitimat,<sup>9</sup> Patrick Lane's unnamed town that could overlie Vernon/ Coldwater, and D. W. Wilson's Invermere.<sup>10</sup>

As their near-complete absence from — and their rare appearance in — the literary chronicle of the province in the last thirty years suggest, small resource towns, at least as far as they are defined by their primary industries, the way they are imagined is in a decline that is as pronounced as is their material one. What material riches their residents enjoy now seem more the rewards of theft and vandalism than the realization of a dream of providing a good quality of life to formerly exploited labourers. Put bluntly, in 2015, small resource industry towns, developed for industries that are now going out of

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<sup>9</sup>As this project is about the use of narratives to settlers, Robinson's work is not included. I am speaking of her depiction of the company town, not of Kitimaat.

<sup>10</sup>A group of men in *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* harass the woman known as "Dirty Della," but their behaviour is not a community norm.

business, house mostly non-indigenous, migrating workers with little initial connection to place, workers who are employed in activities that seem to be destroying the local ecosystems through extracting resources from land that is under negotiation with the local First Nations. In this imaginative decline from projected utopia to embarrassing embodiment of failed justice, failed planning, failed land stewardship, and a brutal reduction of the potential meaning of the land and what it holds to saleable goods and waste, part of the power of the narrative of these planned towns as home to their non-indigenous residents is lost.

What the social geographers studying small, resource industry town British Columbia do not tend to do, however, is what I have. I follow King's practice and parse specific stories. I trace recurring representations of the settler groups so as to find what sorts of people are described as belonging together and belonging in place. This study draws into four groups of narrative patterns the semi-official narratives from public bodies, the popular stories of local histories and genre fiction, and the more meditative works of literary fiction, taking the public narratives as the ones that set the terms through which industry town culture can be discussed. In this attempt to trace narrative threads in works ranging from stories from official bodies, to popular history and fiction, and to more literary works, I follow the practice of scholars in Canadian literature and cultural studies such as Eva Mackey, Daniel Francis, Thomas King, Cynthia Sugars, Daniel Coleman, and Bruce Braun.<sup>11</sup> I include public and popular narratives, rather than solely literary fiction, because stories directed to a local audience tend to be conscious efforts to

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<sup>11</sup>Relevant works include "Becoming Indigenous"(Mackey), *The Imaginary Indian* (Francis), *The Truth About Stories* (King), *Unhomely States* (ed. Sugars), *White Civility* (Coleman), and *The Intemperate Rainforest* (Braun).

build and define community in place. Whatever else they do, including draw tourists, mask discontinuous populations, or deflect attention from internal animosities, cultural divides or systemic inequalities in town, public and popular narratives emphasizing local character and values can build cohesiveness through giving residents a story in common.<sup>12, 13</sup> Public narratives in particular, developed and presented as they are by municipal governments and their dependent museum societies and tourism boards, are the local equivalents of the political and social leaders “at the core” of the project of Canada as historian Ian McKay describes it, and have “articulated” the values of their own projects of the local rule they seek to establish through community building, discussed in more detail below (“The Liberal Order Framework” 620-621). Although these narratives are no more likely to describe rural British Columbian inhabitants through their typical employment than are novels or short stories, they more obviously imply continuity

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<sup>12</sup>Systemic inequality in resource work and overall employment in industry towns is extremely persistent, as full-time work in the primary industry remains male-dominated. Each of the three community groups writing for The Northern British Columbia Women’s Task Force on Single Industry Resource Communities’ 1977 report included in its recommendations that unfair hiring practices be ended in the primary industry and that childcare be available 24 hours a day so that women could do shift work (38, 68-69,98). A recent overview of women’s rates of participation in resource sector jobs can be found at Status of Women Canada (“Fact Sheet: Economic Security”).

<sup>13</sup>Even though its use is what I explore, an articulated town “story” is far from sufficient and is probably not necessary for community cohesion. Halseth and Sullivan suggest that, where the residents are families, resident satisfaction with the physical town plan leads to “resident stability” and then to the “creation of community networks and bonds” that make a community “resilient” in the face of industry slowdowns job losses (51). The implication is that if residents are not reasonably comfortable in the first place, they do not get out and participate in communal life. Having space to be together is always a first necessary condition to create the community that claims home for each other: for example, as the NBCWTFOSIRC participants identify in 1977, appropriate spaces to meet and socialize, from cafes to malls to recreation centres and clubrooms, enable voluntary associations, especially for women and children, and these smaller, voluntary groups knit the community together (NBCWTFOSIRC 16, 56, 76).

between the workers and the public narratives. None of these public narratives speaks of the contemporary settler residents as people who are alienated from each other and the land, and who have forced out people who were more truly at home.

Although the question of whether and how far shared story can enable people to retain what they might think of as their homes provoked this investigation, not even the economic *effects* of a narrative response to material decline can usefully be addressed through a study of fiction. What can be examined through a study of narratives is what sort of settlers, with what ideologies, what land practices, and what personal and domestic habits, recur as people who written as “at home” in small resource industry town British Columbia. As my brief overview of notable fictional towns suggests, narrative responses to the negative literary representations of resource town British Columbia tend to reject to contemporary industrial employment as a sufficient foundation for settlers to claim “home,” rather than to vigorously present industry-dependent life as “good”<sup>14</sup> There is no recent equivalent of Ralph Connor’s *Black Rock*, which brought the

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<sup>14</sup>I concentrate on public narratives created after the closures. Their strongest contrast in official narrative would be with the recruitment narratives for individual communities, which tend to emphasize the modernity and metropolitan nature of the towns, but also include a marketing of access to the surrounding “wilderness.” (For example, “The Land Beyond the Peace,” Fort St. John’s 1959 recruitment brochure, opens with statistics listing the rapidly increasing town population and the amenities, including a note that the previous five years had seen the installation of 1,925 telephones. After this reassurance, it draws people by devoting 10 of its 42 pages to a description of the hunting and fishing “playgrounds” to be found along the highway running into town —while repeatedly noting that game can conveniently be shot from the road itself [2-13]). Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are not clear fictional equivalents to these stories, although their place is somewhat filled by popular stories and histories of the excitement of individual participation in earlier resource rushes, with their co-dominant accounts of the minutiae of the technologies of outfitting and the exoticism and danger of the unknown (to them) and untamed (by them) land they penetrate. I discuss some of these popular works in the first chapter.

Canadian definition of home to an interior lumber town through what Daniel Coleman has identified as one of the foundational era (1850-1950s) national myths of what he terms “White Civility,” specifically the myth of “Muscular Christianity.” (Coleman articulates this myth through a reading of another Connor book, *The Man from Glengarry*, which incidentally ends with the Ontarian protagonist managing a B.C. coal and timber company [Coleman 141]).<sup>15</sup> Instead, stories of resource-dependent areas of the province construct settler home through narratives of towns as more individually and more permanently settled than the historical record would suggest. These narratives identify settler residents with the town site, and associate these settlers with values that the narratives construct as ideal for the place. In different stories, these values foreground entrepreneurship and self sufficiency (lost in the more urban comforts of settlement and industrialization) or cultural inclusiveness and environmental awareness (culturally dominant since towns’ incorporations), or subservience to the land, which is understood to somehow direct people’s passions, interests, and actions. These non-industrial constructions of fictional settler home are therefore nostalgic (though not, as Candida Rifkind argues in “Design and Disappearance,” for the lost industrial community [81]), progressive, or both — as they are in Anne Cameron’s depictions of family farms and trading networks operating in a society free of sexism, racism, and homophobia books

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<sup>15</sup>The relatively limited appearance in the long resource boom era writing of the specifically British project of Canada that Coleman describes is likely accounted for by factors Coleman identifies as marking the end of this period: “the mass introduction of non- English-speaking labourers,” and “the development of the officially sponsored and funded system of Canadian cultural production that grew out of the recommendations of [the Massey, Fowler, O’Leary and Laurendeau-Dunton] commissions”(36).

such as *Family Resemblances*, *Bright's Crossing* and *Women, Kids, and Huckleberry Wine*.<sup>16</sup>

This literary trend of overwriting the main settler industries with agrarian settlement and development patterns, patterns more robustly supported by both central Canadian and prairie history, emphasizes the continuity of British Columbian colonial and national development with that of the rest of the country. This emphasis suggests that a “settler” is not defined by action but by outlook. The historical and contemporary ideological projects of the nation are consistent across the country, even though the settlers’ activities, demographics, and circumstances were and are not. Stories explaining settler home still abound in B.C. and in ways that are largely continuous with works across the country; these stories, however, ignore the wage employment by resource multinationals that prompted the foundings and expansions of post-war boomtowns (as

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<sup>16</sup>Rifkind raises the possibility that industry towns, rather than having a clear initial narrative as ideal places from which they have fallen, are instead rising imaginatively as they disappear physically through artistic projects in “emplaced memory” that “attempt to normalize the artificial setting of a company town” (70-71). Part of Rifkind’s argument rests on assuming there is a tradition of “nostalgia for a coherent collective organized by industrial capitalism”(81). It is not clear, however, that industrial capitalism is the primary thread of culture (the site of meaning in Hall) organizing the group in either of the projects she studies: *Rapide Blanc*, even in her analysis, has a dense Catholic Quebecois culture (82), and both *Welcome to Pine Point* and the web project it draws on (*Pine Point Revisited*) show only people sharing the narrow generational culture of a high school class (77). As a contrast to the “traditional nostalgia,” and forming the other half of a “Derridean contradiction,” Rifkind proposes that both works are “radical for their playful attention to workers’ community” (81). Both projects focus on the community off the worksite, and their focus on the lives of labourers is well within the tradition of visual art since Hogarth, if not Brueghel, and within the tradition of English literature since Gaskell, if not Godwin. More particularly, although I can speak only to a survey of B.C. industry towns (rather than the survey of Canadian company towns Rifkind imagines [72]) in literature and culture, my collection suggests that what is radical about these projects is the open nostalgia for a prefabricated townsite, and what is traditional is the focus on the community creating meaning outside or even in opposition to the employment that assembled the residents in the first place.

Rifkind also found in her analysis of the company town narratives *Rapide Blanc* and *Welcome to Pine Point*). Instead, stories of home align these long-term or even permanent wage-dependent residents (supported by large, distant companies) with the temporary influxes of population associated most strongly with gold rushes and timber booms, rather than with, for example, the land rushes of the prairie settlement. This is worth noting because these prairie settlements, described in Sinclair Ross's *As For Me And My House* as having a "brave little mushroom heyday... and then prolonged senility" (127), share with contemporary British Columbian planned towns the characteristic of settlement by families who become landholders. The landowners in these B.C. towns, like those of Ross's mushroom towns, have encountered (or are still encountering) relatively fewer, slower, and more-drawn out failures than did the largely single and more itinerant prospectors and early loggers, whose limited role in some contemporary community identity formation I discuss in the first chapter. It seems to me that, for the new settler, the gamble of paying for a house in a planned community with wages from a mine that may close long before the mortgage is cleared is not very different from the gamble of "proving up" that forms the grand narrative of works such as Frederick Philip Grove's *Settlers on the Marsh* and Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese*.

What wageworkers do not share is the prairie farmers' pedigree of individualism or their (ideally) symbiotic relationship with the land. This apparent literary insistence that workers are temporary and farmers are permanent suggests that, if the ways in which public narrators in towns tell the stories of residents' "home" have any relationship to what they understand gives meaning to their shared claim of home, then the key continuities necessary for residents to be at home are not ones of duration in place, family

structure, or personal wealth, but continuities congruent with John Locke's formulation of what initially makes land the property of an individual in his liberal theory: tilling, planting, and cultivating. As Locke notes, "improving" land is the work that most obviously "removes" land and resources from "the hands of Nature, where it... belonged equally to all," and Locke theorizes that this work allows men to exclude other people from specific plots of ground (*Two Treatises* 288-290).<sup>17</sup> These continuities are worth noting because, even in resource town narratives, Canadian settlers often seem to be "at home" if and only if they own land and work for themselves. Locke's farmers now appear primarily as a literary trope, but an understanding that individual land ownership confirms a person as a free and liberal individual has also been a part of the nation's development. Canadian historian Ian McKay explores "Canada" as a "project" of expanding the "politico-economic logic" of liberalism, specifically parsing the role of land ownership in naturalizing both this expansion and determining who was recognized as a liberal individual in the political order ("The Liberal Order Framework" 621, 623-624). Retaining the symbolic association of property, citizenship, and labour on the land, narratives of resource towns tend to present the residents as inextricably "mixed" with the land they occupy, rather than with a long and more obviously continuous history of wage employment in removing parts of it and selling them. This could be in part because

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<sup>17</sup>An obvious alternative possible pedigree for settler home in British Columbia would be one constructed through the labour movement and the mythology of the worldwide brotherhood of workers. In spite of high public and private sector union membership in resource communities and a legacy of greatly improved industry conditions created through union action, however, robust chronicles of proletariat strength remain the purview of the province's historians and some poets (notably Tom Wayman), rather than its novelists or short story writers (with some notable exceptions such as Helen Potrebenco and the writers featured in Carellin Brooks' collection *Bad Jobs*, all too urban to be included in this study).

independent farmers but not wage workers are easily subsumed into the classical liberal ideology McKay identifies.

The legacy of liberalism in Canada is an area of dense theorization in Canadian literary studies and Canadian studies more generally. Most usefully to this project (which takes as its structure a way of thinking of even bonds of affection, a sense of place, and any declaration of an encounter with the divine as resources that can be directed to commercial ends), McKay has proposed that we think of “Canada” as “a historically specific project of rule” (“The Liberal Order Framework” 620). McKay elsewhere explains that:

“Canada” can be interpreted as a revolutionary project of liberalising a vast subcontinent — i.e. imposing on it an order of liberty, equality and property predicated upon possessive individualism. Its principles were primarily derived from the British motherland and secondarily influenced by the analogous (if more democratic) experiment unfolding in the USA. This was an “active” programme, entailing the conscious elimination of rival social formations, a proactive struggle to match American claims to the West, the aggressive defence of ever-expanding claims of Canadian state sovereignty over vast amounts of the planet, and the strenuous indoctrination of young and old in the verities of liberal individualism. (“The Canadian Passive Revolution 1840- 1950” 363)

Herein might lie a partial explanation for both the absence (in small resource industry long boom era towns) of stories creating community identity through British Columbian industry’s historically robust and continuing trade union culture, and the enduring presence of stories emphasizing homesteading, family farming, and spiritual

communion with the land. The collectivist ideology underlying trade unionism, a “rival social formation,” is counter to liberalism in a way that even the Romantic exceptionalism of being an anointed messenger from the land is not. Replacing employees with landowners and wage labour with details of possession of (and by) the land remains an expression of liberal ideology that articulates home as property maintained through the individual exercise of communally-agreed upon virtues. Each set of stories I examine constructs slightly different virtues and therefore slightly different groups of settlers as those who have the greatest claim to home. As in classical liberalism, this competition for property that *must* in some sense be communally held (like land) creates a hierarchy within the supposedly free and equal, analogous to but more fluid than the “hierarchy of principles, with formal equality at the bottom and property at the top” that justified Canada in seeking to restrict enfranchisement to middle and upper class white men in the nineteenth century (McKay “Liberal Order” 624).

Although the socialism (even, in some cases, potential communism) promoted by the Wobblies and other workers’ organizations stayed a potential rival to the liberalism and capitalism ordering the province, most of the “rival social formations” in the province displaced by liberalism are the cultures of the local First Nations. In most of the fiction I have collected, these cultures are quite specifically *displaced*, rather than assimilated or eliminated, and First Nations characters maintain both kin-based societies and at least cordial relations with the “good” settlers in every group of stories. In fact, in these stories, comfortable friendships with First Nations characters tend to mark out the “good” characters and patronizing or exploitation of them marks out the bad. Unlike rival settlers with different constructions of the virtues that should form the liberal ideal, First

Nations people in contemporary British Columbian settler fiction are usually the virtuous settlers' peers, and their approval of select invaders tends to illustrate a single continuous value set.

Ian McKay's work provides a context for other studies that look at the use of narrative in the creation of a sense of settler home in the country and the province more generally, particularly Eva Mackey's "Becoming Indigenous," which identifies contemporary "official" nationalist narratives that link contemporary Canadian settler identity with the land narratives of tolerance and environmental stewardship learned from the First Nations people, and Elizabeth Furniss's *The Burden of History*, which examines settler/ First Nations conflicts in 1990s Williams Lake as manifestations of the popular understanding of local, Canadian, and American history that forms the "frontier myth" – a story of settlers' moral right proven through violent conflict with the "evil" of the harsh wilderness and the "hostile Indians" (17-18).

Where Ian McKay's work concentrates on the period of Canada's expansion and consolidation, Eva Mackey recognizes the pattern of contemporary settlers describing themselves as having "become indigenous" through an identification of themselves with the land. As a national narrative, this is a collective story, but it also assumes a liberal order – a contemporary liberal order in which the right of formal equality is as recognized as is the right of property. Mackey also shows that these national narratives suggest that Canadians become liberal through their presence on the land and their interactions with the First Nations people. She explains the necessary role the equal and equally self-sufficient First Nations characters play in both settlers' claims of home and the nation's

construction of itself as a just and tolerant society (also key values at the town level). Mackey analyses the 1998 displays at the Museum of Civilization as an official story that constructs Canada as having matured into a pluralistic society through its learning from the First Nations people how to live in harmony with the land, an official story that fits with the trends in story I have isolated (154). The tutelage and co-presence of the earliest inhabitants, who appear only in traditional dress and as “guardians of the land” and “helpmates in progress” (152), provide settlers with “a natural link to the land” (168). Mackey emphasises that the displays “represent difference as unity” (151) and ignore “how far the nation still needs to go in order to have genuine justice and equality for Aboriginal people” (170). Mackey explains that “Canada’s perceived tolerance and inclusion of Native peoples not only fills in the blanks of the settler’s original occupation of the land — more importantly it legitimates in a contemporary way, the nation’s continued possession of it” (170). Mackey argues that “representing difference as unity” enables the construction of the larger contemporary Canadian national identity by papering over both the disenfranchisement of the First Nations people and the post-contact alterations to the land with representations of Canada through “natural and Wilderness images... coupled with images of cultural pluralism which highlight Canada’s Native people” (“Becoming Indigenous” 151). As I show in Chapters 4 and 5, similar narratives of tolerance of and learning from First Nations people can be used to differentiate among settlers, creating a home for some settlers and denying it to others.

Unlike Ian McKay, Mackey does not specifically theorize the link between colonial settlement and the place of settlement and land ownership in an ideological framework that assumes an individual has the right, however limited in exclusivity, to

personal property. Mackey instead points out that “the problem of the link between national identity and specific topographical spaces has been with settler nations for a long time” (150) and sketches the “nationalist narratives of the 1990s.” Ignoring personal property, Mackey presents settlers’ understanding of their own liberalism as a narrative of tolerance primarily constructed through a story of “Canada as more generous than the colonizers of the US” (155). The link Mackey notes between identity and the land immediately around the settlers might be less crucial, specific, and difficult for the “nation” to narrate as inevitable than it is for anyone trying to articulate an identity for the cultures of comprehensively planned mining and forestry towns, which are essentially tiny new colonies built *after* the legislated hierarchies of classical liberalism were dismantled, and after formal equality was extended to all occupants of the “specific topographical space” of B.C. The “national narrative” of progress to greater tolerance is impossible to maintain for a community whose unity is clearly linked to its most visible industries. Instead, as works as diverse as Patrick Lane’s *Red Dog Red Dog*, Gail Anderson-Dargatz’s *The Cure for Death By Lightning*, Anne Cameron’s *Family Resemblances* and M. Wylie Blanchet’s *The Curve of Time* show, stories that show settlers “at home” in the resource extraction regions of the province use narratives similar to the stories of tolerance and good environmental stewardship that Mackey explores as unifying national narratives. In using these stories, authors create *disunities* among settlers, in effect representing the material unity of settler privilege – including formal “ownership” of the land they live on – as moral difference.

In the narratives I focus on, these representations of moral difference are generally contained within a structure that understands property to be earned through work with the

land – either the settlers’ labour to cultivate the land, or, as I explore in the final chapter, the land’s labour to cultivate the settler. Where rival ideologies like the right of conquest and regeneration through violence (which Elizabeth Furniss identifies as core to the frontier myth) appear, they are usually embodied in settler antagonists, as my descriptions of exiled characters will show. In fact, for a study of the role of narrative in community identity formation, especially of postwar boom era public narrative and fiction in small resource industry towns, Ian McKay’s insight into Canada as a project of liberal rule eliminates the problem of redefining conquest in order to make it a necessary part of the definition of the expansion of territory – a redefinition Furniss’s description of Canadian nationalist ideology as accepting a form of land acquisition through a right of conquest requires. The theory of property undergirding many formulations of liberalism (derived in part from Locke) specifically rejects a right of ownership derived from conquest – although this rejection has been often violated in practice.<sup>18</sup> Little I have read in this era’s narrative suggests that contemporary settlers consciously partake in what Elizabeth Furniss describes as the “frontier cultural complex”: a hegemonic but flexible set of practices rooted in oppositional relations between “Euro-Canadians” and “Indians,” practices that explicitly “celebrate European settlement of Canada and the subjugation of Aboriginal people” (188; see 186-192 for the characteristics of the hegemony Furniss explores). I recognize that hegemony is largely invisible, but even popular celebrations of these oppositional relations seem to have become relatively rare in small industry towns.

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<sup>18</sup>For an explanation and analysis of Locke’s reasoning, see Ruth Grant’s *John Locke’s Liberalism*, 138-144. Grant emphasizes that Locke makes it clear that tyranny can be recognized in specific executive actions in a country that recognizes the rule of law, and not just in a country that does not (142).

The same acceptance by settlers of their relative privilege and the necessary (to settlers) inclusion of First Nations' people in all national narratives is explained by Eva Mackey through what she calls the "The Mountie Myth." In this narrative, she encapsulates both what Bruce Trigger had earlier identified as the "self-deception and hypocrisy" of Confederation-era Anglo-Canadian histories and the contemporary recurrences of this "notion that Canada has a long history of benevolent forms of justice and tolerance of Aboriginal people" (157-158). The key difference between Mackey and Furniss' formulations of the contemporary use of narratives of settler/ First Nations relations is that Furniss emphasizes that they involve conscious hypocrisy, and on the part of the working class Canadians (rather than either previous generations of historical writers or contemporary official producers of national myth) living near and among the disadvantaged on and off reserve First Nations people of the Interior plateau (most particularly the Secwepemc). These stories require that settlers who live in a liberal context typically celebrate subjugation. The "Mountie Myth," in contrast, does not assume that settler Canadians generally think of the First Nations people as rightfully dispossessed because they have been conquered.

Although it makes no difference to the racism experienced by the subjects of Furniss' study, nor excuses settlers' exploitation of their power to define the local culture, Furniss' claim that the culture of interior plateau towns has its immediate roots in the settlers' internalization of the twin doctrines of *terre nullius* and right of conquest, but made into the symbolic violence of benevolent conquest, seems able to explain less of how settler stories about local First Nations are told in both Williams Lake's settler culture and of the culture of small mill and mining town British Columbia than does

Mackey's Mountie Myth. Mackey is clear that the contemporary "reshaping" of the Mountie Myth found in the Museum of Civilization does not "represent a radical break from previous more exclusionary versions of nationhood" (151) and that all versions of the myth, along with other myths of nationhood, serve to "create settler innocence" (152). I recognize that my position is partly an optimistic one: an identity that has a culture enjoying the unevenly spread benefits of a liberal democracy base its coherence as a settler group on a conscious hypocrisy (seeing the land they occupy as held through the conquest of their First Nations neighbours and co-workers) seems less comprehensible *to me* than one that sees oppression as historical and a mistake in the imagined progress of the nation, and that understands the current local power relations to be a result of settlers' more willing participation and greater success in what McKay identifies as modernity, "the lived experience of [the] unremitting process of rapid change and its social consequences" (*The Challenge of Modernity* x).

Mackey's observation that national narratives strive to create "settler innocence" is important. Formerly colonial nations have the discomfort of defining cultural identity in a way that depicts the disenfranchisement of pre-contact cultural groups as non-existent, irrelevant, or resolved. Very roughly, colonial understandings of indigenous people as remaining in a state of nature and the land as therefore unoccupied or unowned take the theft of land as non-existent,<sup>19</sup> colonial and national understandings of the same groups as either dying out or improved by assimilation into the settler culture understand

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<sup>19</sup>In colonial era Canadian literature, denials of theft appear most prominently in narratives that present the land as unoccupied and ones that present First Nations inhabitants as either noble or debased savages, as in John Richardson's *Wacousta*.

the theft as irrelevant,<sup>20</sup> and a popular national understanding of First Nations people as fully enfranchised and equal citizens (of a society that celebrates its progress to its current plurality) asserts the disenfranchisement, though a regrettable injustice, is resolved. A theme, or “buried epistemology,” in of all the public narratives in this project, as in those in Mackey’s study of the narratives of the Museum of Civilization, is this implicit understanding of resolution and its corollary that injustice and disenfranchisement are historical.<sup>21</sup> However, as the novels I look at tend to include the local First Nations people as off-site but co-present and in possession of a largely unknown but seemingly robust parallel culture, I focus on how stories of settler culture make claims to home through settler activities on the land rather than exploring mechanisms of dispossession as they appear in story. Even in the last set of stories I study, stories of people experiencing a supernatural calling by the land and often by the ghosts or gods of its indigenous people, I concentrate on the particular form of this vocation as a Western legacy, wherein spiritual leaders do not seek the divine but are chosen. Because these narratives, in their strongest form, claim home by asserting the land shows its acceptance of selected settlers by

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<sup>20</sup>In British Columbian works written before that period I study, these stories are particularly prominent, with a strong emphasis on the inevitability and overall desirability of assimilation, however beautiful the settler protagonist may find the culture about to be lost. Hubert Evans’s *Mist on the River* is probably the best-known example of this trend, with Seattle-based Margaret Craven’s novel *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* a relatively late instance of the same basic story. Narratives of the “Disappearing Indian” are not as clearly evident: as in Hodgins’s *Resurrection*, it seems common that First Nations inhabitants seem to be understood to be sort of everywhere except in the settler towns, having moved on in similar dislike of their new neighbours. Whole former communities seem to be gone from the site of the action but not dead in two well-known examples of such novels, Howard O’Hagan’s *Tay John* and George Bowering’s *Caprice*.

<sup>21</sup>The term “buried epistemology,” now common, comes from a 1997 essay by Bruce Willems-Braun [Bruce Braun], “Buried Epistemologies: The Politics of Nature in (Post)colonial British Columbia.”

speaking through them, I include both autobiographical claims of inexplicable experience, made by M. Wylie Blanchet in *The Curve of Time* and by Harold Rhenisch (both in interview and in explanations of his process of poetic composition), and the more common fictional ones with gods and ghosts. In spite of my focus on what I describe as narratives of the lands' selection of settlers as mediums, I must stress that narratives of indigeneity bestowed *directly* by representative "Indians," through what Margery Fee calls "totem transfer"<sup>22</sup> and through marriage or adoption also appear in British Columbian literature. Again, my study is of a very small group of stories.

Following McKay and Mackey, I understand all of the story patterns I discuss to be variations on an overarching national narrative of (moral) progress or potential progress, enabled by the incorporation of the First Nations as spiritual ancestors for the maturing nation and dependent on Canadians' general understanding of their nation as a contemporary liberal democracy. All the stories' patterns, like Mackey's national narratives, tie settler Canadians to the land through legitimizing some of the fictional settlers' (usually protagonists') claim to home because they have the best values and establish the most desirable cultural norms. Not all of the stories, however, are nation building or community building in the way that Mackey's official national narratives are. In fact, the action of many of the novels, popular or literary, centres on the often-violent expulsion of inappropriate settlers. The expulsion of undesirable settlers is key, as it confirms repeatedly through representation that the contest for settler home in resource

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<sup>22</sup> Fee describes a process of a white person claiming indigeneity-by-identification contemplation that establishes "a relationship with an object, image, plant, animal, or person associated with Native people" (16).

industry regions of the province is staged *among settlers* for exclusive occupation of the “settled” space.<sup>23</sup>

The three main themes I examine that represent positive contemporary values in resource town B.C. — that home can be gained through homesteading, local agrarian self-sufficiency, or settlers’ spiritual connection to the land — encapsulate three contesting and largely incompatible, if frequently simultaneously presented, sets of values. All three themes, with their models of the good life, are consistent with the relatively optimistic strain that other critics have repeatedly identified as characteristic of British Columbian literature more broadly, as far as it can be identified as a regional literature. However, although stories of home in small resource community British Columbia reflect the contemporary national narratives of settlers progressing in learning to be good to the land from its First Nations stewards, they do not clearly reflect what trends earlier scholars have identified in Canadian *literature* east of the Rockies. As Alan Pritchard and George Bowering in particular have noted, the tendency of British Columbian writers to depict the wilderness as welcoming, the First Nations as busy

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<sup>23</sup>In their broader cultural use, these stories of home articulated through the exclusion of inappropriate settlers can reasonably extend to the exclusion of even the settlers telling the story, as they might be when the story is of areas to be conserved for other species. In this sense, Maureen G. Reed’s *Taking Stands: Gender and the Sustainability of Rural Communities*, a book-length study of the effects of what she calls the moral exclusion of Port McNeill resource workers by the dominant culture, presents a curated group of settler women’s stories that claim home against a story of home (explicitly the world’s home, as Reed explains [3]) that assumes their expulsion and the perpetual exclusion of all settlers – and any indigenous resource workers. Reed is very clear that, by the late 1990s, the dominant Canadian and world culture assigned a moral high ground to conservation so unequivocally that resource workers had become part of a mythology of evil that places them as against nature. When the forestry families oppose this discourse, even in debate or interview, they are “stereotyped and dismissed, ignored and vilified, and seen as undeserving” (44).

parallel cultures, and the settler homes that can be found or made in it as too easy to lose or escape to oppress anyone, makes both Northrop Frye's argument that Canadian literature displays a "garrison mentality" and Margaret Atwood's assertion that the dominant theme of Canadian literature is "survival" tortuous to apply.

Frye asserts that Canadian writing betrays a "garrison mentality," reflected in the way individuals remain defined by their community, their only refuge in the face of the threatening wilderness surrounding them all (350-351); Atwood primarily develops the relationship with the landscape, finding that the best that Canadian protagonists can hope for is to survive where they thought they would thrive. But Bowering, in his essay "Home Away," finds that little evidence that small town British Columbia culture is depicted as inevitably intimate, let alone oppressively so. Like the residents of Hodgins's *Port Annie*, most fictional industry town residents are likely to know their neighbours only a little and few of them will have grown up in town: the recitations of generations of family relationships that dominate the thought of working class characters in notable small town novels from the Maritimes, such as David Adams Richards' *Road to the Stilt House* and Leo McKay Jr.'s *24* are absent, in spite of some general similarities in employment. Rural British Columbian protagonists also rarely engage in the nuanced cataloguing of the hierarchies of small towns that permeates Ontario fictions from Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Imperialist*, through Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of A Little Town*, to Robertson Davies' *A Mixture of Frailties*, Matt Cohen's *Elizabeth and After*, and the short stories of Alice Munro.

British Columbian writing also seems to lack the antagonistic relationship with the surrounding wilderness that is core to both Frye's garrison and Atwood's survival

thesis. Instead, as Bowering and Pritchard argue in slightly different ways, British Columbian stories tend both to represent the province as Edenic and to make settlers' attempts to live in and preserve this Eden a central concern. My modification to these critics' observations is slight: as I have suggested, this Edenic strain appears not just as a way of describing the land, but as one of claiming it, and can serve this end not through descriptions of how the land is ideal, but through articulations of who among the settlers is most nearly perfect for the land. Furthermore, the settler found to be most at home is the one best able to exist in rural British Columbia without displacing anyone else, and without depleting any of the province's resources.

In a sense, this trend of identifying the good settler as the one who comes the closest to failing to occupy space at all holds true in studies of British Columbia writing by W.H. New and Laurie Ricou, studies that reject searches for unifying themes in favour of listing ways of seeing or writing the region. Ricou's "The Writing of British Columbia Writing" and his *The Arbutus/ Madrone Files* are structured as unsynthesized parallel sets of observations of writing and resist attempts at forming a conclusive definition of a regional writing. Ricou's autobiographical notes in "Mistory File" and observations in its companion "afterfile" explicitly claim that he gains a B.C home by feeling "at home" and *reading* literature about the "place and climate" (8): his home thus stretches at least everywhere arbutus can grow, and his specific home in Kerrisdale is supported by this learning, demonstrated and claimed in his writing about the writing that is set or produced in the larger area(s). New's 1985 essay "A Piece of the Continent, A Part of the Main: Some Comments on B.C. Literature" starts out very specifically about *literature*, not the sum of provincial identity or identities, but by the second paragraph, the perspectives of

all outsiders and all B.C. writers at least — if not all British Columbians — the geographical province, and the province as it exists in literature (as setting for the outsiders and as setting and perspective for the B.C. writers) become identical, if still made multiple by different perspectives. He re-isolates literature at the end of the essay, explaining that attitude and experience are “elements” used to make literature, and that each writer will use them to fabricate “a separate world” (28). Composed twenty years later, his “Writing Here” explores more explicitly the politics and material implications of the many historical and especially literary ways of shaping Vancouver as “here,” ending with a meditation on seeing changes to his “boyhood home” (24):

I know that others walked this land before I did, that others walk it after. ... [A] new generation grows up in the neighbourhood... in alleyways of place I do not experience, shaping a *here* perhaps that as of yet I do not even see. [Emphasis in the original] (25)

New is at once relinquishing his claim of home in his old neighbourhood, and using it as part of the city he has just chronicled through a list of works to identify himself with a geographic “here” of Vancouver that acknowledges no specific physical site he occupies and excludes others from (home) — but which must nonetheless exist, even if he moves moment to moment (which strikes me as a difficult way to write papers). The effect is that “W.H. New” is able to remain a perspective exploring the separate worlds of fiction, and still support the claim to the home of the man. In a sense, both Ricou and New, therefore claim physical home through the immaterial resource of narrative itself — the

resource that can be exploited with perhaps the least depletion.<sup>24</sup> Constructing a home that fails to occupy land is most nearly done by making a home in literature itself (interestingly, as Frye suggested artists abandoning their garrison mentality eventually would [361]).

British Columbian writing, at least as it has been collected in thematic criticism, also suggests that next nearest escape from complicity in the full legacy of settlement is to settle as lightly as possible, either leaving the environment unchanged or striving to undo the effects of resource extraction. Both Bowering and Pritchard note that environmental conservation is a central preoccupation of settler writers from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century on. Pritchard identifies conservationist works dating back to 1850, and states that the “theme of spoiling the land” became prominent in the post-war resource boom, “an era of extensive, sometimes reckless, exploitation of resources (“West of the Great Divide: Man and Nature in the Literature of British Columbia” [38]). He understands this rise as occurring through the writing and activism of Roderick Haig-Brown and Earle Birney, but also through the stories of Malcolm Lowry and the memoir of Eric Collier.<sup>25</sup> Pritchard develops his argument that the dominant theme of settler literature in the province is “the attempt to gain and hold possession of an ideal place” (36) by identifying

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<sup>24</sup>Both authors note that their exclusions inevitably contribute to distributions of privilege and power in the full artistic, economic and political culture. I am not suggesting that this problem is escapable – just that the home claimed through studies of place is still a part of the larger contest of home, and it asserts that writers and scholars themselves, not just the people their characters — especially protagonists — represent, are the settlers who are most at home. Nothing in the writing of either author suggests he would imagine himself as an innocent settler.

<sup>25</sup>Both Pritchard and Bowering also associate M. Allerdale Grainger’s well-known *Woodsmen of the West* with a habit seeing the province as a paradise, but not with a sense that it needs protection from man (“West...: A View” 99; “Home Away” 11-13).

this theme in Jack Hodgins, and he calls it a nuanced criticism of materialism present in all Hodgins's works (46). Pritchard asserts that Hodgins aligns conservation with fertility and against sterility and materialism, making it, following Haig-Brown, "ultimately a religious concept" (48). He insists that, throughout Hodgins's work, the author's criticism is not of a pursuit of paradise but "an attack on the definition of paradise and possession in material terms" (49).<sup>26</sup>

Bowering mentions Hodgins, Haig-Brown and Collier, but also includes works of the comparatively urban writer Jane Rule and Ontarian Matt Cohen as thematically linked to conservation. He argues that Rule's *The Young in One Another's Arms*, whose protagonists are forced from their neighbourhood by development projects, conforms to a general moral code in regional fiction that marks good people as the ones on the side of the trees against the bulldozers (26) — a somewhat tongue in cheek observation, given that the characters are defending a house in a city. His inclusion of Cohen is also partially a joke: he remarks that Cohen writes of White youth who have run away to live "Indian-like in the setting that does not look quite the way it did before the trucks and saws arrived, but which disresembles... Victoria even more" (15), but does not mention that their rough living conditions have as much to do with cocaine and alcohol being more important to the characters than are the architectural comforts of the urban life they left. As Laurie Ricou points out in "The Writing of British Columbia Writing," Bowering's essay is a "muted parody" of thematic fiction. At the same time, however, Bowering's own novel *Caprice* so strongly associates a habit of seeing the beauty of the interior

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<sup>26</sup>This recognition of Hodgins's works as a rejection of materialism has broad consensus among critics and support from Hodgins's discussions of his own interests. See his "The Only Possibility in a Situation Like This" (144-148), an interview by Tim Struthers.

plateau with moral striving, rather seeing it as a source of extractable wealth, that the parody here seems to be only of the easy use of the shorthand of siding with trees against bulldozers, rather than any criticism of a preoccupation with what Bowering here calls “idealism vs. materialism” (Ricou 111; Bowering “Home Away” 26). The contrast between seeing the world as potentially useful property and seeing it as a beautiful and good whole recurs throughout *Caprice*, as it does in its companion novels, *Burning Water* and *Shoot!* (Bowering *Caprice* passim).<sup>27</sup>

While not all the works considered in this study are set in small resource towns (and they *are* all set where the most consistent settler activity is removing trees or minerals), the single industry towns at the imaginative core of this project are ones wherein the processes of claiming a home are apparent and urgent. As in the works all B.C. critics draw on, the novels I have found set near sites of intense industrial activity are dense with demonstrations of place-specific knowledge — and with determinations of which denizens “belong” and which do not. Similarly, informational and promotional materials from public narrators, examined most closely at the beginnings of each chapter,

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<sup>27</sup> This association with viewing the land and the formation of B.C. poets’ ethos is part of a larger thread in Bowering’s works. In “Reaney’s Region,” he explains: “Now, we were much taken by numen [divine presence, here in the land and viewer together], but for us it was not a household god, just as no ghosts in the valley were related to anyone we knew. We saw the land as forever leading to the other and outer. It was often dangerous but never hostile, unloyal but in no fanciful way treacherous. We grew up without trust in household gods because we lived in so many houses, few of them older than ourselves. “Nature” was for us not a human phenomenon, not intentional, but a place to live. Not under the brow of a hill, but close by a creek spilling down its slope” (13). Bowering’s phrasing recalls Sheila Watson’s biblical allusions in *The Double Hook* (“the brow of the hill” specifically links Watson’s section 5:13 [page 111] with Luke 4:29), as does his contrast of a moralizing and ordered but sterile view from the hill rejected for a complex lived experience by a life-giving creek (Watson 111-112).

emphasize micro-history and various constructions of community unity or continuity and the values that knit the group together, rather than broad historical impetuses for settlement or the ever-present competing claims to the land and control of its use. These narrators might search for commonality in an admirable — or at least innocent — settler *history* in place to create an ancestry for non-indigenous people, but they may equally be displaying residents' awareness of their communities' pariah status in high culture. Such an awareness might explain why contemporary public narratives in particular, especially once reduced to mottos or visions statements, tend to associate small resource towns (very planned spaces in which no one makes a living directly from the land they explicitly "own") with the more nearly neutral activities of small-scale farming and ranching, or with some deep harmony with and love of the surrounding wilderness — Elkford, for example, is a wholly comprehensively planned mining town whose municipal motto, "Wild at Heart," evokes almost anything but the endless flat and spiralling terraces of its open pit coal mine. The residents' narration, and not their employment, creates the home they claim: there is no room for a settler who would *want* to level the mountains to sell coal. All the stories that follow are collections and examinations of narrative strategies through which settlers like the residents of Elkford can claim that they are the ideal people for their land.

The first chapter looks at the representations of early resource workers, solitary prospectors and crews with handloggers or high riggers in particular, that have at least a limited use in small resource town public narrative. Although their appearance in public narrative is rare except in association with carnival events, these workers are figures in both popular fiction and history, and the culture and language of logging in particular is

part of a strong regional poetic tradition. I collect popular tales and histories of gold rush days from Charles Lindsay and Richard Wright, and read them as histories partaking in a small way in the construction of western heroes. I end the discussion of lone prospectors with analyses of two novels, seeing K.C McTaggart's *The Golden Fleece* as an attempt to recreate a lone prospector as a heroic figure in a contemporary context, and Susan Dobbie's *River of Gold* as an inscription of contemporary community-building values in a gold rush tale. I consider that lone prospectors might be largely unavailable as representatives of community values because both the early population's imagined homosocial makeup and the values the figures tend to represent — heroic rather than domestic ones — are counterproductive to attempts to build community. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss the construction of masculinity in literary representations of logging culture, particularly as it found in anthologies and collections curated by Howard White, Daniel Day, and Tom Wayman, and I conclude by reading Jack Hodgins's *The Macken Charm* as in part an exploration of the difficulty of adapting the heroic values — frequently represented as functional in the homosocial, dangerous, and mobile work camps — to life in town.

Chapter 2 introduces fictional resource workers who could represent men in modern jobs in small resource industry towns, particularly shift work at mills. I argue that these characters are generally presented as half-men — malformed and destructive of community, or unformed and unable to interact in any larger community. What values these men have are antisocial and the worlds they inhabit are dystopias. In D.W. Wilson's collection of intertwined short stories, *Once You Break a Knuckle*, and Patrick Lane's novel *Red Dog, Red Dog*, repetitive and machine-like labour are part of a larger social

structure that brutalizes men, contributing to a blue-collar, grey market, and criminal culture with antisocial values of mistrust, predation, and dominance through violence. In Jack Hodgins's *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* and "Spit Delaney's Island," stories with redemptive arcs, shift workers are instead men within a larger society, ones who replace community interaction with care for machinery: these men have workable social values of thrift, industry, and voluntary connection to a larger structure (made concrete in the machines they operate), but directed to activities that isolate them so thoroughly that they are almost unaware of their wives and children, and their misdirection alienates and almost infantilizes them. The specific stories I collect in this chapter all consider the problems of the dehumanization of white settler working men in small resource town British Columbia, but largely do not significantly develop other characters. (The exception to this trend is *The Resurrection*, and I focus on the only named pulp mill employee, Slim Potts, as a man excluded from the community and its eventual growth.) These stories of workers are therefore not representations of functioning community, but are rather mediations on the personal and group effects of thwarted human (male) potential. I can find no counterparts to these cautionary tales in public narrative, and public stories (from the towns I have collected as long boom era small resource industry towns) do not seem to construct workers, at least as they are defined through their work, as the best inhabitants of the land they live on.

Chapter 3 collects public and literary narratives that represent contemporary small resource communities through accounts of first settlers as homesteaders, usually representing these settlers as having ambitions of farming the land they have been granted. The key values of self-sufficiency, thrift, and domestic and civic engagement

tend to appear as entrepreneurial ambition and acumen (including recognizing how to use the natural resources of the land most efficiently), the ability to create and provide for a community of dependents through the business of the farm, and the creation of an equal peer group of landholders. The public versions of these stories also tend to suggest that the “progress” of settlement, which allowed immigrant men to become enfranchised, continues as a moral progress to contemporary values of formal equality regardless of gender, “race,” ability, or wealth. Through this evolving moral continuity, public stories at once create a sort of local settler ancestry and emphasize the more ideal nature of contemporary residents. This story of inheritance and improvement of values underlies what Eva Mackey identifies as the contemporary national myths of tolerance and mutually beneficial relations with First Nations, and it works to indigenize contemporary local residents while creating their “settler innocence.” I draw out some of these narrative trends in two complementary, locally produced accounts of early settlement in the Bulkley Valley, Jack Mould’s memoir *Stumpfarms and Broadaxes* and the more explicitly public narrative of Elnora Smith’s historical compilation for the Houston Centennial Committee, *Marks on the Forest Floor*. I contrast the clear community-building aims of these public narratives with more meditative literary studies of early patriarchs and the accompanying narrative of progress in Jack Hodgins’s *Broken Ground* and Gail Anderson-Dargatz’s *The Cure for Death by Lightning*. Both of these authors present settler men who attempt to farm as failing to thrive on the land in part because they are confined by their acceptance of their role as citizens of and settlers for the project of Canada. Through these men, the nation claims already occupied land, and they are represented as unable to avoid bringing violence and death to their communities,

rather than stability and abundance. I argue that *The Cure for Death* participates somewhat in the creation of settler innocence Mackey identifies, while *Broken Ground* instead portrays settler characters who misunderstand themselves as innocent — at least of any local effects of colonialism.

Chapter 4 considers stories that lack the originary narrative of homesteading but retain the family farm as the nexus of ideal community, structurally dissociating the values of the community in place from direct continuity with previous settler communities. They claim the land as home through their characters' sustainable practices on it; the values remain recognizably the self-sufficiency, thrift, and civic engagement of liberalism, although thrift reappears as sustenance farming and sustainable environmental practice, and the focus of the civic engagement is on the immediate community, which is a network or even a family formed by choice and adoption, and includes trade with local First Nations people. The emphasis is on biological rather than financial growth, and the best people for the land are those engaged in activities that are either benign or healing of the land. The hierarchy of classical liberalism is flattened, and the most ideal communities tend to be enclaves of tolerance, formed by people retreating from the injustice and exploitation of the larger world. As my review of British Columbian criticism suggests, this Edenic strain is perhaps the most explored feature of B.C. writing, and it is strongly identified with a solitary couple attempting to retreat from a degraded and degrading cosmopolitan world. However, as I am interested in stories that can support the claims of home of large contemporary settler groups through values shared with ideal inhabitants, I have limited my study to less-examined attempts to represent contemporary small communities, especially towns, in rural B.C. as Edenic or potentially

Edenic. I briefly review communities in George Bowering's *Caprice*, Jack Hodgins's *Distance*, and Susan Juby's *The Woefield Poultry Collective*. I then review constant features of Anne Cameron's repeated use of the fictional townsite of Bright's Crossing in novels and short story collections including *Bright's Crossing*, *Women, Kids and Huckleberry Wine*, *Stubby Amberchuk and the Holy Grail*, *Family Resemblances*, and *Those Lancasters*. I argue that the differences between Bright's Crossing's culture and that of the Vancouver Island village it overwrites show the structure and function of the myth of the small town B.C. utopia in supporting settler claims to the land of home. The key feature is that, like the stories of homesteading pioneers, B.C. utopia retains a creation of home through labour (part of both liberal ideology and Mackey's argument of the dominant contemporary myth of the nation as people that "give to the land"), but specifically removes both the narrative of imperial expansion and any widely-shared heritage of evolution or progress from it.

The final chapter attempts to identify what narratives are evoked in strong claims of an intense and shared emotional connection to the land as what defines and unites a settler community. I present stories that claim land through asserting that their characters have the most complete knowledge of it, and, in their strongest form, suggest that this knowledge is complete because it is a supernatural or otherwise inexplicable gift from the land itself. Unlike the similar knowledge of place Laurie Ricou and William New gain from their surveys of ways of knowing or describing British Columbia, where their attachment to place as a *feeling* of home grows from study, these accounts of uncanny knowledge support the settlers' right to be in place through a testament that whatever is the local divine has selected them. I introduce Harold Rhenisch describing an unsought

and inexplicable experience of what he calls a “transference... to Native conceptions of land and space” (“12 or 20”) in order to sketch the outlines of what I understand to be the potential use of accounts like his in making the land claim of home. More than anything else, these are stories in which the land unambiguously chooses its people, as it does in magic realist novels such as Jack Hodgins’ *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*. I differentiate between these works, in which the magic is quotidian, and narratives in which uncanny encounters are special events, marking out individuals as favoured. I argue that Rhenisch’s account of his own experience is a reflection of this latter type of story. I note that Rhenisch suggests he went on to confirm his apprehension that he had acquired “Native conceptions” through a deliberate study of local culture. I then isolate these key features — unsolicited vocation from the land, followed by study of local First Nations culture, and a confirmation of some precognition (very vague and perhaps metaphorical in Rhenisch) in M. Wylie Blanchet’s memoir *The Curve of Time* and for characters in Anne Cameron’s *Wedding Cakes, Rats, and Rodeo Queens*. I propose that stories of supernatural experience, and by extension inexplicable but intense emotional experience, give the teller a strong claim of home if the community accepts that these experiences access some sort of truth external to person. In effect, they construct a bond between settler and land created by the land’s attachment to, love of, and even need for the inhabitant, rather than vice versa.

I argue that, in many narratives, spirits, like settlers, seem to have an ideology of possessive individualism. Because they show settlers “giving to the land” through accepting its possession of them, stories of spirits seeking out settlers provide a way to identify specific settlers with the land, still within the language of liberalism that

associates the individual with material property through work and possession. At the same time, these stories remove the instability of “home” that is part of the Edenic story, in which a settler’s claim to be accepted by the land has to be constantly re-proven with sustained success in cultivation, because the chosen settlers are marked forever as different. They also deny the shared culpability in for the environmental and cultural damage of colonialism because the site of “progress” is *only* the person, and not the material world. These narratives of individualized development parallel the national narrative Eva Mackey noted in her reading of Douglas Cardinal’s design statement for the Canadian Museum of Civilization (the source of her articulation of a national myth of Canadians as people who “give to the land”); according to Mackey, Cardinal describes “the development and building of the nation... as if it were a gift to the land” (154). When a settler takes direction from a spirit of the land, the settler’s growth and development and what he or she does with this new insight are similarly constructed as gifts to the land. The greatest community value is therefore an acceptance that spiritual experience lends authority because the subject (in the role of a conduit) is subservient to the will of the land and is therefore at home in the land. In keeping with the settling, rather than unsettling, effects of these magical events, I argue that these ghostly and divine encounters are more continuous with the Edenic structuring of the land as a mediator of divine presence, where land replaced the state as the body that determines who is at home, than they are with the uses of the uncanny that Cynthia Sugars outlines in *Canadian Gothic*.



## **Chapter 1: There Were Men Here: Stories of Early Resource Workers**

Despite the fact that resource extraction dominates the economy of British Columbia, people who live in small resource-based towns in B.C. face barriers to their claim to be “at home.” In most small towns that depend on mining or forestry, no matter how long ago they were founded, the majority of the residents and their families arrived within the past 50 years, and many were likely motivated to move here more by the bald opportunity to make money, than because they were initially attracted to the towns as homes and the sites as places to live. The work at a mine or a mill often provides little intrinsic reason to stay. The effects of resource extraction are unappealing: clearcut hillsides, piles of rubble, giant tailings ponds, habitat damage or destruction. The noise, dust, dirt, foul odours, and wailing transport truck brakes that accompany heavy industry soothe the few, if any, souls. And finally, the First Nations upon whose traditional territory these towns are built remain in or near the developed sites, participating in the local economy alongside more recent settlers, but also engaging in the land claims process and demanding compensation for resources extracted. Such activism troubles the non-indigenous population’s claims to their own livelihood, their local history and their attachment to place. These factors place pressure on the way local origin stories are constructed, creating an implicit narrative of opportunism, environmental destruction and theft that must be opposed by the construction of an equal narrative, often a historical connection to place, and by a set of positive values such as home-building, egalitarianism, pioneering, independence and environmental stewardship.

Occasionally, stories suggesting resource industry settlers' historical connection to a town site present gold-rush era prospectors or independent loggers as founding figures. Represented in town festivals, public statues, popular history and fiction, and literary fiction, these solitary men (they seem always to be men) are larger than life, endowed with exceptional manual skills, physical strength, and endurance — and (usually) a legendary propensity to carouse, get drunk, fight, and otherwise have fun. A figure based on prospector William Barker, founder of Barkerville, is central to the relatively large resource hub of Quesnel's yearly Billy Barker Days Festival, which celebrates the supposed gold rush origins of the city; at least a few communities (including the "instant" town of Port McNeill) hold yearly logging sports exhibitions and competitions that showcase reenactments of the dangerous and demanding historical feats of high-riggers, and stories of these men dancing atop the spar trees circulate in logging poetry and fiction, suggesting a wild and individual bravado as a part of the loggers' identity, excessive even to the demands of the work. However, in popular narratives of resource towns, such as the popular history and "yarn" collections from the Cariboo region by F.W. Lindsay and the more contemplative historical fiction of Susan Dobbie, the logger or prospector is not figured as the precursor of contemporary industrial workers. Instead, he appears in close association with the beginning of agricultural settlement — often turning from prospecting to ranching or farming and establishing a community that supplies the transient men of the resource industries. The logger or prospector, where he is retained as a representative local historical figure, is relevant to resource town life as a symbol of the values of independence and entrepreneurial skill, rather than as a symbol of contemporary wage workers in resource extraction industries.

Where loggers or prospectors appear in literature as contemporary figures, the habits of recklessness and independence carried to the point of lawlessness that they embody prove to be actively inimical to the values that characterize community building in small towns. Like Toby Macken in Hodgins's *The Macken Charm*, they are negative models for future generations, and are eventually removed from influence in the community.

Industrial work itself in postwar resource towns is not a good source of narrative for a positive community identity because of the nature of these towns, and the nature of the work itself. Industry employment is not easily imagined as fertile setting for interpersonal drama, at least not on site. Worksites are often too loud for any conversation, and workers are often fairly isolated except during scheduled breaks. Creative vision likewise has little place, either in a worker's love for what he (almost always "he") makes or in a wild disassociation from the task at hand. Not all resource industry jobs are as repetitive as production line work, but many are, and most require constant vigilance in spite of their structured nature. Finally, contemporary industry work in this province is not convincingly tragic. The same changes in industry practices that have made worker retention important enough that the attractive towns with dense amenities were developed have robbed the work of the individual drama that made early workers who survived compelling, and even awe-inspiring. Mills and mines are now heavily mechanized and reliant on skilled equipment operators and the millwrights who maintain the equipment. In general, the work is safer than it was, wages are higher, and each employer can respond very rapidly to changes in the market for its product with production slowdowns and shutdowns. Workers have the right to collective bargaining and far greater legal protection than they had in the early days of resource rushes. Fewer

people are needed to maintain high output, but the heavy machinery that has replaced so many workers also protects those who remain: they are usually further from the rock face and the kicking boards, and many of them have highly specialized tasks. The story of the British Columbian worksite itself might remain one of tension between the now very-distant employers and the local union workers, but it is rarely the broad pathos of a capitalist's reckless disregard for the lives of the employees. Without the spectre of co-workers' frequent deaths on the job, work, however unpleasant or challenging, does not in itself make workers admirable.

Most importantly, contemporary work is a poor source of narrative for building an identity for a small resource town because it emphasizes the fragility of the new settlers' attachment to place, the weakness of their connections to each other, and the structural inequalities that result from the entrenched gender divisions in industry employment.

All that said, British Columbian resource extraction does provide the public narrators of a few resource boom-era towns with a central narrative and a symbol of their identity, and it provides cultural heroes in the figures of the logger and the prospector. These narratives, however, are not stories of contemporary work, they are not stories that attach workers to any specific home, and they are not even necessarily stories of work in the resource industry that fuels the town. The City of Quesnel, for example, is the only resource municipality I could find that centres its annual festival on a symbolic resource worker — the miner, Billy Barker — despite the facts that Barker is not exactly local, and that Quesnel's rapid expansion 1970s depended on a timber boom — a boom that has nothing to do with Barker's legendary mining activities.

While there are examples of miners and forestry workers as potential heroes exemplifying specific values (i.e. bravery and sacrifice) that might coincide with the values typical of a community, these heroic figures are rare and tend to be most present in public narrative, especially as embodied in sculpture; more contemplative presentations of these early resource workers, such as are found in collections of loggers' poetry, tend to emphasize resource workers' risk-taking and bravado as responses to, or even a form of, desperation. While early resource workers' feats, such as displaying the skills necessary to extract resources from the sites of continuing environmental change, establish them as potential representative heroes, their unsettled status as temporary inhabitants of any community they are drawn to for the sole purpose of work similarly establishes their lack of contribution to the values fostered by the planners and local groups who envision more anchored and civically-engaged inhabitants for small resource towns.

Both my searches through community-produced media and my search for stories set in mills or mines reveal a strange paradox: the places where most of the main wage earners in town spend most of their time seem to be almost invisible. This might be because I have overlooked a large body of work, or it might be because the worksites are emphatically not community places — at least not for the full community or residents. In general, men work at the mine or mill, the worksite is not visible from the residential areas, and women work in town, usually at service jobs, or not at all. In spite of recent programs offering mill and mine tours, women and children, and non-industry workers in

general, rarely enter these workspaces.<sup>28</sup> There is little larger cultural familiarity with the work to aid anyone's imagination, either: I have found no equivalent of a show set in a diner, a corner gas station, a hospital, a police station, a ski hill, a ranger station, or an office. The most common worksites in British Columbian resource industries likewise seem to have very little literary presence, either in popular or literary fiction.

Resource industries themselves have something of a public and popular presence in community narrative. Statues and other symbols (such as gold pans) of prospectors and lumberjacks appear at selected municipal boundary markers or visitors centres as a means of connecting the town's origins with these industries. On the surface, these statues seem to indicate a fairly robust recognition of resource extraction and some pride in its history, if not an actual unabashed strategy specifically designed to establish a town's connection with romanticized early histories of these industries.<sup>29</sup> But this recognition is only superficial: instead, prospector and logger figures tend to be adopted by towns that have little historical connection to them. Indeed, the wood-processing hub of Quesnel has long

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<sup>28</sup>For a discussion of women's very limited and strongly segregated role in the forestry workforce of Port Alberni throughout the post-war resource boom and in the period of greatest decline (1950-1980, 1980-1998), see Brian Egan and Susanne Klausen's "Female in a Forest Town." The authors emphasize the long-standing community acceptance of heavily gendered roles in all areas of community life as a product of historical prejudice maintained by union protection for the already employed, and *worsened* by industry restructuring in the late 1980s and 1990s. Port Alberni was largely a single-industry town in this period, although far larger than any town in this study.

<sup>29</sup> I found the prospectors in 3 Valley Gap, Cache Creek, Quesnel, Hope, Fort St. James, and New Hazelton, with pans at Quesnel and Barkerville. The loggers are in Sooke (2), Squamish, Chetwynd, Fort St. John (at Charlie Lake), Campbell River, Hosmer (near Fernie), Fort St. James, and New Hazelton. There are likely more such figures. All of these except the one at Charlie Lake are either at town entrances or Visitor's centres. (For comparison, I found about twenty depicting cowboys or farm animals, and at least a dozen of orchard fruit, although Kelowna and Penticton have several fruit sculptures each.)

chosen to identify the town with the province's mining history through their Billy Barker Days festival. A close examination of the Quesnel festival association's public story of Barker is instrumental in understanding why these community-defined connections might be *more useful* when they have little to do with mining or immediate, contemporary local history. The City of Quesnel's Billy Barker celebration is a rare clear public narrative, and combines being a free celebration for the townspeople with a distinct attempt to define the community to visitors.

As in other parts of the Interior, gold panning is promoted as a tourist activity in Quesnel, a largely forestry-dependent community whose development corporation claims has about 11,000 working adults, of whom about 3,500- 4,000 are wood products industry workers, working in both in logging and the six mills (three sawmills, two pulp mills, a plywood plant, and a MDF [medium-density fibreboard] plant) (Quesnel Community and Economic Development Corporation 5-6).<sup>30</sup> Quesnel has been a settlement since the Cariboo gold rush, and its public narrators and civic bodies seem to identify it strongly with its history as a gold rush town. For example, a portion of Quesnel's downtown riverfront is set aside as a recreational area, where tourists can pan for gold (British Columbia Ministry of Energy 1). The gold panning re-enactments on this riverbank and at the community fair are promoted as a sort of romantic historical tourism. The narrative of prospectors searching for gold in unmapped creeks also frames the town's annual municipal celebration, Billy Barker Days. In actuality, Quesnel was not where Barker found gold, and the town's association with him is tenuous. However,

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<sup>30</sup>The exact proportion directly dependent on wood harvesting and processing is difficult to determine, as forestry, goods transportation, and manufacturing are distinct categories.

Quesnel was the nearest supply depot to Barker's boomtown, and, more importantly, Quesnel is a point on the route tourists must take to travel to the heritage town of Barkerville. Barkerville began to be developed as a national historical site in 1958; the City of Quesnel, however, started its gold rush commemoration only in 1974, after it became a wood-processing centre.

While the nearby national historic site of Barkerville might represent an idealized and unrecoverable past, the festival committee of Quesnel's appropriation of the nearby town's founder (Billy Barker) in order to promote itself for tourism purposes — and, thus, financial gain — demonstrates the community's use of a legendary figure for the purpose of sustaining the community. When the large Cariboo Pulp and Paper mill was finished in 1973, in spite of the town's already century-old position as a supply centre, community organizers in Quesnel seem to have developed a desire for a distinct and very public town character, both in the sense of a mascot and in the sense of an identity (Hayter 164-165). A large part of the motivation seems to have been to attract the notice of summer tourists, although the town's rapid expansion in the 1970s (an expansion that places it in the scope of this project) also contributed to the rise of this event.

Why did Quesnel's festival committee choose a miner and not some local version of Paul Bunyan? Possibly, a forestry identity needed to be specifically avoided, even though the town also needed something to help the thousands of new residents to invest in building community. Billy Barker Days started the year after the large Cariboo Pulp and Paper mill opened, bringing an influx of new residents and a new model of off-shore ownership for the town's major industry. With the opening of a second pulp mill, Quesnel River Pulp, in 1981 (Hayter 164-165), Quesnel had doubled in size in a decade,

with 1215 new houses joining the 1300 that had been built since the town's founding in 1861 (Canada. Statistics Canada *2006 Census*). This festival created a narrative that allowed established residents to develop a deeper connection with their community while simultaneously encouraging the influx of new residents to identify with their new home in a way that was both easy to access and provided common ground on which new and old residents could meet.

The adoption of Barker as a festival mascot creates a narrative about Quesnel as a lucky strike in British Columbia history, eliding its sudden development as a mid-20th century forestry centre. In 2015, the “new” workers are now old town families in forty-to fifty-year-old houses, but the town still does not celebrate its second industry beginning the way it does its association with gold rush prospecting. Instead, the City of Quesnel describes the community as one founded in the *ranching* that developed in order to supply the miners of Barkerville. Emphasizing this link between the oldest ranches and the nearby boomtown, “Billy Barker Days” runs concurrently with the Quesnel Rodeo.<sup>31</sup> Together, the events support a civic construction of Quesnel's identity as a western frontier town, populated by entrepreneurs who endured great hardship to achieve their success. The forest sector, the employer of most of the newer residents and many of the older ones, is not visible in the celebration. Neither is contemporary mining, or even

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<sup>31</sup>The municipal website explains, “Quesnel was, at first, reached by land over First Nations trails and later by the Cariboo Wagon Road. The appearance of steamships made it possible to carry more supplies and gold seekers up the Fraser River. As more and more people recognized the profit to be made in the supply town of Quesnel, many settlers chose to stay. Thus, Quesnel sustained continued growth in the years following the gold rush, while many other towns in the area were abandoned and left to crumble”(City of Quesnel “Quesnel History”).

contemporary “supply” in the form of trucking, another significant industry in the town, seen. Instead, festival committee’s association of Quesnel with the gold rush, its “legendary” miner, and the rodeo that accompanies Billy Barker Days offer both a story of a clear settler progression on the town site and one defined set of shared values for the residents of the town and area. The puzzle is this: what are these values, and how do they bind a community of industry employees and their families together?

In fact, there is little connection between the public narrators’ carefully cultivated image of a prospecting- and mining-based history and the reality of the early settler community of Quesnel. However, the early community of Quesnel’s reflection in a *ranching* narrative is more robust than is its gold rush tale, and it has a stronger historical root. The grounds in Quesnel host two rodeos a summer, the second because the city is regularly chosen to host the provincial rodeo association finals. The town is not committed to a “cowboy” identity in the way promoters in Williams Lake or Calgary are; like most places in this study, Quesnel does not have any single representation. Nonetheless, the rodeo club, founded in 1966, is a large and visible volunteer community organization that takes part in the yearly celebrations in a way no other club in town seems to, and the club’s description of itself strives to define town culture — including the yearly gold rush and midway hoopla — through horses and cattle (Peterson).<sup>32</sup> The

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<sup>32</sup> Mel Peterson, 2015 president of the Quesnel Rodeo Club, explains that the annual rodeo operates with a core volunteer group of about 40 people, 20 of whom are club members who work on the project throughout the year, that donations from community partners is about \$150,000 annually, that other town businesses associate themselves with the rodeo by commissioning murals, and that the museum and archives make the rodeo and ranching heritage prominent in several displays, notably a collection of photographs of early First Nations cowboys. Peterson explains that club’s executives believe that the “generous financial and moral support which [they](QRC) receive from local

Quesnel Rodeo Club explicitly ties its construction of the values of the early gold miners, especially those who became successful ranchers, to the values of all contemporary Quesnel residents who honour these early settlers through the spectacle of the rodeo:

The roots of the Quesnel Rodeo goes [sic] back... to the 1860's, when enterprising cattlemen and their hardy cowboys drove thousands of cattle into the Cariboo from present day Washington and Idaho States to feed the hungry miners searching for gold during the Cariboo Gold Rush. ... A number of these miners found success when they gave up searching for that elusive yellow metal in the ground and started some of the earliest cattle ranches in the Cariboo, then sold beef to the miners. Some of these ranches are still in operation today.

The same skills, determination, commitment, fortitude and willingness to, as they say "Cowboy-Up" that was required by the cowboys and cowgirls who first drove cattle into the Cariboo and started these early ranches, is reflected and valued by the cowboys and cowgirls who compete at the Quesnel Rodeo. ("Our Roots")

In this description, the Quesnel Rodeo Club creates an ideal resident as someone who could strike out for new prospects but, instead, recognizes a market to be exploited and there finds "success." These miners, unlike the miners who continued to work unpromising claims, are "enterprising" in the way the Americans driving cattle in were. Moreover, their adoption of ranching, which shortened the cattle drives by over a thousand kilometres, seems to make them equal in "skills, determination, commitment,

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government, business leaders and community members is *the direct result* of the fact that rodeo (with its strong connection with our western heritage, history, values and roots) is a significant part of [their] community's culture."

fortitude and willingness” to the cattlemen they displaced.<sup>33</sup> The values are not quite the same as the solitary prospector’s, who includes a little more of what must be understood either as the whimsy or the desperation of a reliance on chance, and perhaps a little less of good sense.

Unlike the site of the gold-rush themed festival, the rodeo’s website history page does mention town settlers who were prospectors in the Cariboo gold rush, although it does not name them. The rodeo is very clear on the role of miners in its narrative of the heritage of Quesnel: miners who abandoned mining for ranching are credited for establishing present day Quesnel. The perceived community values are those of pioneer prospectors-turned-ranchers whose solid business plans and comparatively controlled risks in raising cattle to feed the miners meant they could stay, prosper, and raise families (“Our Roots”). For the rodeo club, these values are the centre of “Quesnel’s” self-description, and they are almost antithetical to those evoked by the solitary prospector. Moreover, when these values appear in the Chamber of Commerce’s 2014 tourist guide as part of a description of the early ranchers, they are forged both through the acumen and ambition of the cattlemen and through an adopted indigenous heritage (Wegner 18).<sup>34</sup> In

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<sup>33</sup>In *Exploring Washington’s Past*, Ruth Kirk and Carmel Alexander explain that Ben Snipes of Washington had cattle driven from the Yakima Valley up the Columbia River Valley, through the Okanagan, and into the Cariboo, approximately 1400 km (53-54).

<sup>34</sup>The Quesnel and District Chamber of Commerce’s *Quesnel Tourism Guide 2014* identifies these early ranchers as both “ambitious and hardy cowboys” who came first on long cattle drives from the United States, and as “sensible souls [who] originated from the First Nations”(Wegner 18). The guide then explains that many of these cowboys were “related to Caucasian ranches through marriage”(18). This is most likely to mean that settler men who owned ranches had children with First Nations women, so these non-settler cowboys would have to be the brothers-in-law or sons of ranch owners. The write up seems to both hide and reveal the social status of these men: they seem to be related to

the rodeo's construction of community, both the legendary/ historical Barker and the half-naked degenerate his suited descendent seems to be appealing because the excesses of their lives, good and bad, have little place in the contemporary town except in a carnival atmosphere of temporary self-indulgence. Solitary miners such as Barker model a certain resilience and exuberance but do so in a way that is not useful for a community trying to build interdependence. It makes sense, suddenly, that the solemn town celebration is about the ranchers and the exuberant but trivial one about the resource workers.

It is likely that almost no one takes the festival committee's interpretation of Billy Barker as a serious representation of gold rush participants. The hardships, endurance, and tragedies of the legions of unknown miners who failed are probably better known than are the details of Barker's strike. Instead, prospectors have resonance as sort of classless heroes: they explore unknown land, risk all they have on a dream, and seek a prize as elusive as the grail. The mythologized prospector is merely one example of the sort of figures who could possibly represent the resource industries of the province to local residents. Admittedly, however, Barker does not translate well to a comparable role in Twenty-First century industry, and my attempt to find any figure that conclusively does represent something admirable in contemporary industry has proven to be mostly a thought experiment. Contemporary resource rushes are the battlefields of large mining companies; with enormous corporate assets such companies can leverage against the risk of new ventures. A man with a pan and a bit of hope has no place in such a venture. In spite of the reality of the resource company's exploration practice, however, and in the

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ranches, rather than to people, and to have the sort of security of home of serfdom rather than sovereignty, as they do not hold the title to the land.

absence of statues of coalminers with ore carts and pickaxes, which I have not found in British Columbia, mining as the quest of the prospector reasonably could stand in for early mineral exploration and extraction in a fairly general way. Public narrators in contemporary mining towns might reasonably use prospectors as symbols and borrow their adventurousness, hope, and endurance as community values.

Through associating themselves with gold pans and solitary miners, residents of planned towns could associate themselves with the vision and tenacity these searchers displayed. Thus, even though the prospector draws only on gold rush history, he might distil the heavy and ugly work of all rock-moving, gravel-sifting, and pit-digging industry into a small, weathered body. As a symbol for the daily life of mining in general, it seems to me he should work, but he does not, even though prospectors are clearly compelling. In fact, the prospector as presented in statue form is even romanticized further from his typical historical struggles by making him solitary: he has no partner, much less an employer, and he uses the simplest and least effective equipment. Although in the Cariboo gold rush, as Jacqueline Holler, Richard Mackie, and Graeme Wynn explain in their editorial for the *BC Studies* 2015 special issue on Barkerville: “extracting gold from the overburden [required] capital investment and... shafts, drills, tunnels, sluices, wingdams, flumes, spillways, water wheels, reservoirs, immense ditch systems, and large companies of men” (7), it seems the gold prospector almost *has* to be unaccompanied for his values to retain their narrative force. Town sculptures in 3 Valley Gap, Cache Creek, Quesnel, Hope, Fort St. James, and New Hazelton depict the prospector walking, sometimes with a pack mule, rather than chopping trees, constructing flumes, damming a creek, or shovelling gravel. Even walking, he is alone.

The symbolic solitary prospector, then, relies on nothing and affects almost nothing, but, once married to the history of any specific place, he does construct a very narrow version of everyman. In practice, nearly everyone is excluded from plausible identification with him, and nearly all historical context is cleared away when he is embodied in a public monument. Nothing in the public images suggests the presence of the many associated businesses that supported and took advantage of the resource rush, or the other family members who made the treks. The prospectors, when identifiably a “race,” are white men, all with thick beards.<sup>35</sup> The damage the diggings and deforestation (for construction) did to steep slopes and salmon spawning creeks are minimized in the representative gold pan, and the resistance of the First Nations’ people, especially the T’silquotin, to the miners and everything they brought, is never suggested by these figures of dreaming men. The prospector also tends to be anonymous rather than associated, as is Quesnel’s Barker, with a great success.

While the prospector’s solitariness itself is not a value, his self-reliance could be considered nonetheless desirable. Popular history and fiction round out the portrait of the gold panner, and gold rush themed books are on offer in every interior plateau town I have visited. As Christopher Douglas Herbert explains in his survey essay on the state of Barkerville studies in 2015, the early authors whom popular historians and writers still

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<sup>35</sup>For recent essays examining both ancillary businesses and First Nations and Chinese workers in Barkerville, see Ramona Boyle and Richard Mackie’s “The Hudson’s Bay Company in Barkerville,” Mica Jorgenson’s “‘Into that Country to Work’: Aboriginal Economic Activities during Barkerville’s Gold Rush,” Tzu-I Chung’s “Kwong Lee & Company and Early Trans-Pacific Trade: From Canton, Hong Kong, to Victoria and Barkerville,” and Douglas E. Ross’s “Barkerville in Context: Archaeology of Chinese in British Columbia” in *BC Studies* 185.

emulate “understand the ‘real’ miners of the Cariboo as the ‘solitary and determined’ white men who came with wants that were ‘not simple and modest’ “ (15; Herbert is quoting Agnes Laut’s 1916 account *Cariboo Trail*.)<sup>36</sup> Two of the most persistently available collections are F.W. Lindsay’s series of self-published miscellanies *The Cariboo Story*, *Cariboo Yarns*, and *The Cariboo Dream*, and Richard Wright’s successive expansions of his 1984 *Barkerville: A Gold Rush Experience*, most recently reworked as *Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields*. In the brief, historically based tales in these and other books, not every prospector leads to a cowboy, as Billy Barker seems to in Quesnel. However, every prospector seems to share most of the features of Kent Ladd Steckmesser’s “Western hero.” Steckmesser identifies the characteristics of this figure as “genteel qualities, clever traits, prowess, and epic significance” (241). A prospector like Barker, who strikes it rich where his competitors thought he was foolish to dig, proves clever, and the prospectors as a group — representing the events that prompted minute non-Indigenous exploration of, major roads built into, and colonial settlement of western North America — could reasonably be called epic in stature. Few miners, however, have attracted tales of high-mindedness, extraordinary strength or skill,

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<sup>36</sup>The prospector, more than the lumberjack or railway worker, seems to have mythic significance and specific personality traits. In “Old Age in British Columbia: The Case of the Lonesome Prospector,” for example, historian Megan J. Davies uses “the lone prospector” as a metonym for all life-long resource workers without families, a group of settler men so overrepresented in the elderly population of the early province that their need for assistance when they could no longer work prompted the development of the provincial social welfare system (44, 54, 57). She describes their character, as inscribed in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century governmental literature, as “feisty old men, still living a vagabond existence,” but also possessing an appealing “needy vulnerability” resulting from their inability to continue working (62). She also notes that the state, more than the population of the province these men aged into, recognized that their predicament at the end of their lives was the result of the settler demographics and conditions of the resource economy, rather than improvidence (54-55).

or what Steckmesser called “genteel qualities” of refined speech, tee-totalling, and generally moral behaviour.<sup>37</sup>

There is, however, at least one nurseling Steckmesser hero in British Columbian popular gold rush history. He is Richard Willoughby, a historical figure who seems to have once gathered a set of folk legends around his name much like those Steckmesser found gathered to Kit Carson, William Bonney, Bill Hickok, and George Custer. In *The Cariboo Story*, Lindsay introduces Willoughby as the miner credited with first finding gold at Lowhee Creek, but he also imputes to him a colourful, if improbable and certainly unprovable history including teenage work as a scout in the Indian wars in Missouri, then as a Texas Ranger. By age 19, Lindsay’s Willoughby was a wagon boss leading 400 carts to the Californian gold fields. Within a few years, Lindsay’s Willoughby led men to victory during a garbled version of the McLoughlin Creek battle, wherein the settlers were outnumbered fifteen to one (*The Cariboo Story* 43-44). Willoughby reappears in Wright, with only the McLoughlin Creek incident omitted (*Barkerville and the Cariboo Goldfields* 26-28).<sup>38</sup> Wright introduces his Willoughby as a historical man who is also

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<sup>37</sup>Steckmesser summarizes how “the hero’s speech, character, philosophy, appearance, and actions are altered” in the “ironbound tradition in frontier biography”: “All heroes are given conventional purified language. None of them smoke, drink, or use profanity. They are all required to serve good causes. They all have philosophical depth and are self-conscious about their historical roles. Lapses from the genteel pattern...are excused as temporary aberrations or justified as accepted habits of the period”(241-242).

<sup>38</sup>The year of the event is given as 1858, and is described as an “ambush” of Willoughby and “100 volunteer miners” (44) by over 1500 “warriors” under “Chief Tenasket.” In *Exploring Washington’s Past*, Ruth Kirk and Carmela Alexander explain the encounter as a dispute over a failed treaty, that the “Okanogans” involved were led by Chief Moses, and that the more than 150 miners, followed by three similar groups of men, were lead by a James McLoughlin. They also write that Chief Moses had warned that he would attack if his territory were invaded (61-62).

man from “a Louis L’Amour novel” (26), but it could well be that Willoughby seems so fictional because his history has never been untangled from the folk hero he seems to have nearly become. In Willoughby’s case, unlike Steckmesser’s similarly simultaneously historical and fictional men, the would-be hero fails to thrive: the concrete man does not define the Cariboo (there is no Dick Willoughby festival) and the defining man — the extraordinarily skilled, daring, high-minded, and genteel prospector — fails to gather details into a defining figure. We get a man or a spirit, but not a hero.

Either way, while the prospector as a figure has a strong popular presence in visual and narrative representations in nonurban British Columbia, depictions of contemporary miners have none. This may be in part because it is difficult to place contemporary miners, even gold prospectors, in a setting that these characters would view as lawless, dangerous, and isolating. A contemporary geologist cannot be ignorant of the terrain he will encounter or under-equipped for the elements and still retain readers’ sympathy. K.C. McTaggart’s *Golden Fleece* (2000) illustrates the difficulty of updating the prospector’s story. McTaggart, a retired Geology professor, marries the science of contemporary prospecting with stock stories of claim jumping, secret murder, a lost mine, and a rival addled with gold fever. The insights into contemporary assaying and the brief geology lessons of *Golden Fleece* are good, even exciting, because they suggest there are still treasure hunts with great rewards. As Lindsay argues in *The Cariboo Story*, claim productions of gold per foot, alone among statistics, might be irresistibly interesting (41). McTaggart conveys the joy of imagining a discovery, once having his protagonist, Bill, predict where the gold from sunken Spanish ships might re-emerge in the mountains of Peru in fourteen million years (106-108). What is missing in *Golden Fleece* is more

telling, however, than what is present. Wright and Lindsay's success stories, usually only a few thousand words long, all have the immediate contrasts of other miners who suffer loss, theft, murder, missed opportunities, bankruptcy, scurvy, starvation, drowning or falling off cliffs. In these older stories, even when all goes well for the prospector, it does so because he endures months of building, digging, standing in frigid water, and frequent injury in order to get the gold out. The comical characters suffer "gold fever" and continue to search when it is madness to do so, and the villains, who are often also thieves, are motivated by pure greed, but the main context for the whole rush seems to be desperation masquerading as a restless lust for adventure. McTaggart cannot recreate this conventional historical context for the genre, and his single villain ends up not crazed by anything, but merely crazy. Without his desperation, and without his lost compatriots, the prospecting protagonist has no extraordinary triumph of spirit to accompany his strike, and he has nothing to offer as a cultural hero.

Rather than update the activity of prospecting, a story of the prospector could have weight as the narrator's proposed model of contemporary resource worker values if the story transplanted these values to the historical setting of the Gold Rush, where death could still convincingly sort exemplary people from weak or bad ones. Susan Dobbie's 2009 novel *River of Gold* constructs the background of adventure motivated by desperation, in part through making her main characters, two Hawaiian ex-HBC employees and two ex-slaves (one a black man and one a Q'eyts'i woman [51]), unusual among the miners in that they are relatively well off and extremely sensibly provisioned. Most of the novel tells of their travels to the goldfields over the newly constructed Cariboo Road, and they spend months passing thin and tattered men walking back toward

them (47, 92), watching corpses float down the Fraser (47, 63), and seeing terrified mules slip off the road (87). Just before they turn off the main track to reach the creek they will mine, they find and bury a man who sat down to die with a leg broken so badly that he could not move. His last act had been to pin a note with his name and circumstances to his own chest (118). With him, the protagonists' party buries the ideal of the lone prospector, and they replace him in his work as a corporate cooperative and a family.

In *Kimo*, Dobbie creates a protagonist who survives where others do not largely because he is able to minimize risks other miners are compelled to take, and so, in a way, makes a double for the reader of the historical fiction in that they are both following the gold trail in search of a modest adventure. *Kimo* remains sympathetic because he is an exemplar of values that look very little like the independence, canniness, exuberance, and bravado of the lone prospector celebrated in Lindsay's histories. The lone prospector is a man gone slightly wild, one who has ceased to calculate except in the extremes of death or immeasurable wealth, and he is willing to suffer anything for a chance at that glory. Dobbie's characters, in contrast, are primarily social and reasonable. *Kimo*, in particular, is compassionate, meditative, and self-controlled. He leaves his claim when he has enough gold to set himself up with enough land to farm (196). Rolling out of the Cariboo on Barnard's Express, *Kimo* thinks, "Though I'm not staying. I appreciate the fabulous lunacy of those who do. . . . I've taken no great fortune in the Cariboo, no great Billy Barker strike, but have more than enough to build me a new life. . . . And that's fortune enough for any man" (197). *Kimo*'s aesthetic appreciation for the imaginative scope "fabulous lunacy" provides and his adherence to his own more modest but more disparate goals — including a secure future, a family life, and land near his friends'

properties — together model a cultural containment *and even abandonment* of the values that make heroes in favour of values that can make a stable, place-based community.

In fact, Kimo exemplifies that the strategies Quesnel Rodeo Association glorifies in its history of miners who prudently decide to abandon their search for gold in order to found the ranches that will supply waves of miners: while Kimo does not remain on the land from which he extracted his resources, he does use the proceeds to make the land claim of home near the HBC lands in Fort Langley, where he supports a family with farming (196). Meanwhile, he leaves behind those “fabulous lunatics” who, much like the rodeo or carnival clowns, seem at first to embody heroic values, but are instead merely naked, unkempt, undisciplined, and seductively exuberant jesters, wearing their solitary life like a clown’s costume — men who never find home. Instead, these lone prospectors all suffer a fate similar to the corpse with the note, so bereft of community that they cannot rely on even gaining the space of a grave.

If early miners, and solitary gold panners in particular, are unavailable as symbols of what community building organizations and planners imagine to be ideal contemporary resource town values (where towns are composed of workers, dependents, and all the professional and service workers who enable a good quality of life), it is because they represent a heroic response to desperate circumstances, a response composed of extreme courage and independence, a refusal to calculate risk, unusual skill in their field (but little outside it), and bold-faced reliance on luck. These values are antithetical to the values of civic engagement, stability built through family life, and attachment to place that Halseth and Sullivan identify as necessary to a small resource town if the town is to retain workers through downturns, keep social ills to a minimum,

and promote cooperation and trust.<sup>39</sup> Although there is no particular reason a hero cannot be female, the values of the solitary hero have also traditionally been heavily gendered, primarily attached to men and contrasted with the dependence of women, who appear in story in passive roles, unless tending stricken men. The character of the lone prospector as a hero reinforces therefore the trenchant gender division in resource industry work, with its resulting income disparity, that tends to make women at least partially dependent on men's wages, and he encourages blindness to the ubiquity of the dependent families that make up the contemporary town.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, lone prospectors as embodiments of heroic values provide no narrative for an attachment to *specific places*, because the prospector passes through each place in pursuit of his goal, and because his virtues and accomplishments wane when his interdependence on family and companions becomes a part of the story, as it does at home.

Even if resource work were again to become as unhitched from family and home as it was in the gold rush and the early logging boom, as it could be through the proliferation of post-boom fly-in/fly-out and drive-in/drive-out work sites, the “fabulous

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<sup>39</sup> To “build community,” the place-based group must develop similar identities and find common purposes, and to build a community that has a future, the identity needs to be civic-minded and neighbourly, and the purposes contribute to the towns' liveability (Halseth and Sullivan Building Community 254-56; see also Allison Gill's “Respecting Context in Northern Resource Town Planning” 116-117).

<sup>40</sup> Anne Cameron retains these courage, independence, and skill for her female hero, Anne, in *The Journey*. Anne is an outlaw escaping through the Canadian and American West and gathering other escapees as she goes. The friends join a pack train to the Cariboo (166), arrive at gold fields, recognize the quest as madness (191), head for the coast, and squat on an abandoned farm (209). Maureen Reed's continuing work on women in forestry towns since the industry shut down suggests that the gender privilege Egan and Klausen's “Female in a Forest Town” detailed in industry employment has been repeated in even in “gender-neutral” retraining opportunities: women are not often counted as forestry sector employees, and are not able to access these programs (Reed “Reproducing the Gender Order”).

lunacy” of the heroic values listed above cannot have the same advantages to the contemporary worker who adopts them as they did for the few prospectors who really succeeded.<sup>41</sup> Significantly for the contemporary resource industry town, the values of the solitary prospector, as values born of desperation, are not an admirable response to the hardships of a wage employee, as the risks the employee feels compelled to take directly benefit his employer and endanger only him. Yielding to an employer’s pressure to take unnecessary risks forces the worker to confront his own dependency, misfortune, and lack of freedom rather than think only of his courage and independence, and his reliance on both his exceptional skill and luck often becomes a humdrum part of the job.<sup>42</sup> Such a hero can be at best the blind Sampson performing in chains. Of course, loggers themselves have long recognized their quandary, and nowhere is the complicated legacy

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<sup>41</sup>For a summary of the complex effects of this shift from on-site family “towns” (company or open) to commuting on both the depopulated “permanent communities” that lose local workers and the enriched but often overwhelmed “host” communities that serve as bases for the men working in the bush, see Keith Storey’s “Fly-in/Fly-out: Implications for Community Sustainability,” particularly section 4.1 and 4.2 (1163-1168). Storey summarizes the known effects of the shift (from building new settler towns near resources to recruiting commuting workers) on local First Nations workers in 4.3 and 4.4 of the same article (1168- 1171). In all scenarios, the greatest challenge of the shift to commuting workforces is making wages contribute to local funds that support small community infrastructure: commuting workers who have their flights paid for, even those from First Nations groups in the project development areas, tend to settle in large communities (1163, 1171).

<sup>42</sup>In “Explaining Workplace Injuries Among BC Loggers,” political scientist James Lawson provides a good summary of how the understanding of a worker’s “lapse in judgment” can be explained as resulting from either a culture of desperation, resulting from job insecurity and pressure from employers and customers to increase productivity (58), or a culture of risk, resulting from the “patterns of bravura and non-complaint, reinforced by peer pressure and by irrational, status-based ideas about courage and masculinity” (58). Lawson elaborates on this understanding of masculinity, “Rather than avoid dangerous situations or report incidents, workers remain silent and take risks. They do these things out of a sense of fatalism and/or misplaced courage” (58).

of the cultural valorization of individual risk and the meaninglessness of risk taken only for pay explored as consistently as it is in loggers' writing.

In popular fiction and public art, when logging culture is celebrated, it is not for the slow, cumulative risk of a lifetime of poverty and isolation endured for the chance at success (as in prospecting), but for the immediate risk of instant death mastered daily. On the whole, the statues of loggers resemble those of prospectors in that they are distinctly of men whose ways of making a living are no longer necessary, but they differ in that they clearly depict two of the most skilled and dangerous roles in the logging show.<sup>43</sup> In the nine statues I have found (two in Sooke, and one in each of Squamish, Chetwynd, Fort St. John, Campbell River, Hosmer, Fort St. James, and New Hazelton), five of the loggers are hand fallers, three are high riggers and only one, a faller with a chainsaw in Fort St. James, could represent a contemporary forest sector job. In spite of their emphasis on past logging jobs, however, the logger statues and the industries they represent seem to have a different, more intimate role in both public and popular small town narratives than do the miners like Barker. Eight of the figures are in towns that still rely heavily on the forestry industry. The final statue, the largest of all, rests his foot on a round of wood whose cut surface reads, "Squamish Days Festival Featuring Loggers' Sports." When the pulp mill closed in 2006, the town's last significant connection to the

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<sup>43</sup>These jobs are high status among loggers because of the skill involved: In his 1993 novel *Grogan's Café*, logger and poet Peter Trower asserts that "fallers are the highest paid of the woods workers" because "it is still highly dangerous work, fraught with many hazards"(232).

forestry sector vanished, but the Squamish sports day is in its sixth decade.<sup>44</sup> At the Squamish festival, visitors can sometimes witness an entertainer dance or juggle on top of the (very short) spar pole he has just climbed, but these antics, though perhaps equally nostalgic, bear little resemblance to generic clownishness of Quesnel’s mascot “Billy.” Loggers, or people competing as loggers, entertain by re-enacting the skilled work of the industry in a way not expected of the prospector mascot, and they perform both the assumption and the management of risk: all competitors must use safety equipment and the Canlog (Canadian Logger Sports Association) home page bears the title and subtitle “Logging Sports as its Best!: Safety in Logger Sports is the same as safety in the woods.” In cutting wood at the sports days and exhibitions, the competitors engage in a ritual display of both skill and courage once common across the province, thereby enacting a heritage of the single settler activity necessary to all permanent settlement in the province — if only because settlers’ houses are made of trees.

In 2014, there were loggers’ sports competitions in Kaslo, Port McNeill, Ucluelet, Campbell River, Port Alberni, Sandspit, and Squamish, and Revelstoke (Canlog “News”). Jack Hodgins includes competitions in the 1970s and 1950s in *The Invention of the World* and *The Macken Charm* and suggests in each that his whole logging-dependent communities attended (*Macken* 35). Logging sports competitions were big local events, and they seem to have been everywhere.<sup>45</sup> By and large, however, these sports

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<sup>44</sup>Sylvie Paillard gives a very succinct summary of forestry around Squamish in a brief article for the local newspaper, “Squamish’s Rich Forestry Heritage has had its Ups and Downs.”

<sup>45</sup>Of the six “instant” towns that were set up for the forest sector, at least three have had loggers’ sports days in the past: Gold River in the late 1970s (Moore, “Loggers’ Sports

competitions and exhibitions are disappearing.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, logger sports seem never to have been more than one way a community celebrated a heritage and were a relative latecomer. A survey of their rise and decline in British Columbia suggests that logger sports competitions and exhibitions were not mainly about showing who was the best logger in the woods but about a comparatively safe re-enactment of the skill, energy, strength, and courage it took to make a living in a pre-mechanized logging show: in fact, they seems to have started when the more spectacular of the skills displayed were no longer needed. The long-running competition in Sooke started in 1935, about eighty years after the first commercial logging and sawmilling in the area (Robin Wark; Elena Muir “History of Sooke”). In 2003, the Sooke Community Association decided that this re-enactment was no longer representative of the town or its people.<sup>47</sup> Five years later,

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Now Official” 18), Port McNeill (2010-now), and Port Alice (at Jeune Landing, where the event was held from 1977-2009, relocated to Port McNeill [“Logger Sports Belong Here” 6]). Two more have hosted exhibitions: *Marks on the Forest Floor*, a history of Houston, reproduces the program for a “Centennial Days” festival, including a loggers’ sports show (Smith 97), and an MLA claims to have just visited the Tahsis loggers’ sports day in a 1982 discussion at the legislature (Colin Gabelman 8198).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>46</sup>In 2014, what was “Bella Coola Fall Fair and Loggers’ Sports Festival” (Mongol Media *Guide 2013* 48) dropped the latter part of its title and reduced the “sports” to fun fair audience participation events of axe throwing and sawing (Mongol Media *Guide 2014* 48; Caitlin Thompson 1). The decline in community identifications with the wood workers in jobs that have now largely been mechanized is both longstanding and steady. In a 2007 article for *The Globe and Mail* on female competitors, Suzanne Ahearne noted that the number of competitions on the B.C Logging sports circuit had dropped from 18 to 9 in a decade (1). In 2014, it was down to 6 (Canlog “Canlog Shows”).

<sup>47</sup>2002 was the last year the logging sports competition was held in Sooke, and the community association announced its cancellation in telling terms: “After much deliberation, the directors of the Sooke community Association regretfully announce the cancellation of All Sooke Day 2003. Just as the two-man cross cut saw and the steam donkey became outdated, so too has the annual event become outdated, cumbersome, and financially inefficient to operate” (Robin Wark). The association of the sports day with obsolescence is interesting because, on the whole, these sports days were organized as a way of showcasing and honouring the skills that had just recently become obsolete due to

journalist Suzanne Ahearne speculates that an overall change in British Columbia's shared values is behind the disappearance of the sports days:

It's hard to ignore the fact that the province is turning away from forestry, once an economic pillar. There are even those who speculate that the public perception of logging has sunk so low that many former sponsors no longer want to be associated with it. (Ahearne 1)

Whatever the state of the "public perception of logging," the logger as he appears in logging sports clearly has the same drawbacks as a symbol for a town culture as does the prospector: his is a heavily gendered role, he valorizes irrational risk-taking, and he passes through rather than settles in the land he changes. Although theirs was a sociable world compared to the imagined one of the lone prospector, the old-time loggers whose performances are re-enacted in sports days rarely had families or permanent homes.

The logger himself, and particularly the high rigger, became a literary folk hero with distinct characteristics, the most enduring of which are a dangerous showmanship on the work site and exceptional storytelling ability. In British Columbia, the most intense period of the recording, and perhaps construction, of this folk-hero was very recent in comparison with the miner, however, and it is most clearly the work of several industry

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mechanization. Most competitions are less than 60 years old, coinciding in their rise with the end of high rigger as an integral part of the logging show (the steel spar was invented by Madill of Nanaimo in 1955, and steel spars were in almost universal use by the late 1960s ["About Us".]) In other words, Wark is suggesting that the *nostalgia* for early industry is outdated.

workers who began publishing in the 1970s, particularly Howard White, Peter Trower, and David Day.<sup>48</sup>

Popular collections of largely celebratory bunkhouse narratives — as oral history, memoir, fiction, song and poetry — have been around at least since M. Allerdale Grainger’s 1908 *Woodsmen of the West*. Howard White, who grew up in a float camp “in the last days of the old coast when every bay had a gyppo booming logs” (“Minstrel Island” 43), claims to have started the *Raincoast Chronicles* “to rescue the coast” — the working coast of loggers and logging culture — that White believed to be “a place of legend,” from “oblivion” (42). *Raincoast Chronicles* has preserved and fostered accounts of this culture since its first issue in 1972, providing a roughly yearly magazine that has collected short prose and poetry by Robert Swanson, Peter Trower, Hubert Evans, David Day, Anne Cameron, and White himself. Not an issue produced in the first twenty years lacked a description of loggers’ culture. Even a casual browse through the twenty-two volumes, however, suggests two things: first, that logging culture and contemporary mill culture share so little common ground that millworkers contribute almost nothing to the large story of the industry as collected in the *Chronicles*; second, that the logging culture as represented in the stories is mobile, almost entirely homosocial, and so self-referential that it remains detached from both the culture of the towns and cities that house the loggers and from the culture of non-logger friends and family (at least, as these places

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<sup>48</sup>All of these writers started their projects after Steckmesser’s work was published, and some may have been influenced to search for a local mythic originary figure for British Columbian culture by *The Western Hero* or works like it. In “Minstrel Island,” a 1987 article about 1974 trip to talk to old loggers, White makes it clear that he was looking for a legendary past when he started *Raincoast Chronicles*, admitting that he looked back on the coast he had left as “a place of legend”(43), and describing his effort to record it as a search for “the holy grail of regional character”(43-44).

and cultures appear through the collected works of the periodical). The logger-writers of the *Raincoast Chronicles* often seem to understand themselves as translators of the culture to lay readers, as is shown most dramatically by the frequent inclusions of glossaries with the articles.

In a way, the logger's identity as a figure in the larger provincial culture, even more than the prospector's, has always been that of a misunderstood outsider. The type of the eternal prospector is a man who is either ennobled by a quest, or who is reduced by a monomania. The logger, however, is a man whose intelligence, humanity, and worth has to be repeatedly proven against a background assumption that he is a grunting materialist, prone to drunken violence and unaware of the beauty his work destroys: a "bush ape." Since the early twentieth century, there have been works that both preserve this general image while undercutting it with so many qualifications and exceptions that the bush can seem filled with scholars and poets. M. Allerdale Grainger, like Earle Birney, Peter Trower, Howard White, Sean Virgo, Robert Swanson, David Day, Peter Trower and, it seems, every other writer who has spent time in a work camp, emphasizes the eternal presence of readers, writers, and thoughtful men in the woods.<sup>49</sup> This trend is most

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<sup>49</sup>See Grainger 60, 105, 120-122, and his portrait of the hand logger Mike Kendall 202-203 and 212-213; Birney 40-41; White's introduction to his poetry collection *The Men There Were Then*; Virgo 18-19; Swanson 9; Day's introduction to *Men of the Forest*; and Trower's bibliography "The Written Woods," which collects and reviews what he considers the best of books that "deal in any sort of authentic way with the west coast logging camps," and are appropriate for "the average [rather than academic] reader," though only after asserting that logging "is unlikely to draw many cerebral types" (30). Charles Lillard provides a more catholic bibliography in "Logging Fact and Fiction" (73-77). For a meditation on logging that examines the place of storytelling in the logging camp and the place of the storytelling camp in West Coast literature, see Laurie Ricou's file, "Woodswords" from *The Arbutus/ Madrone Files* (117-136). Ricou specifically

sharply shown in the most succinct and organized anthology of writing exclusively on British Columbian logging culture, David Day's *Men of the Forest*, a 1977 edition of B.C. Archive's *Sound Heritage*.

Day's project is especially interesting because he seems to have understood himself as presenting a portrait of the roots of a still-extant culture, an understanding marked by his inclusion of his own poems and those of his contemporaries, Brian Brett, Mark (M.C.) Warrior, and Tom Wayman.<sup>50</sup> He introduces the volume by explaining that it is "a gathering of the poetry and voices, the histories, and the myths of men who are able to write and speak about a life-style with the kind of knowledge that is born from direct, often rough, experience" (1). Day partly creates the industry continuity he asserts by illustrating the lyrics about the writers' experiences logging with photographs from the B.C. Archives. While the poems and interviews seem to be from the 1970s, the pictures accompanying them are all from much earlier, before hardhats, steel spars, or truck logging. Day also presents the woods as exclusively a man's world: not a woman, much less a child, is ever mentioned as present in camp, in spite of the inclusion of a photo of eight cooks, four whom seem to be women, outside a row of bunkhouses (65).

Day and White, like the writers they include in their 1970s collections, were intensely involved in two projects at once: a provincial myth-making that attempted to provide god-like settler ancestors for the forestry-dependent province in the figures of

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identifies three "flavours" of logging poetry (123): "mocking ballads" for other loggers (123), "documentary poems" whose theme is almost invariably the physical violence and danger of logging" (126), and poems that place lyrical emphasis on a "loggers' verbal universe" (128), typified by Swanson, White, and Trower respectively.

<sup>50</sup>Wayman's speaker is a man who listens to his friends who have, unlike him, become loggers.

loggers as pioneers of a sort, and the complementary project of showing the fragility, humanity, and frequent misfortune of these same men. The province as a body is no longer engaged in project of identifying itself through its settler origins in destructive industry, but the portrait of loggers found in *The Raincoast Chronicles*, *Men of the Forest* and chapbooks of logging and industrial poetry is still a powerful one for contemporary workers. On the whole, it is also an uncritical portrait: the loggers love what they destroy, and the record of their love for it, combined with their strength and endurance, is all that need be presented.

In a review of a book of Day's poems for *Raincoast Chronicles Six/Ten*, Peter Trower praises Day's understanding of what he calls "the logger's predicament" ("*The Cowichan*" 51). Loggers' writing, especially poetry, shows this predicament to be both psychic and physical. Expositions of the men's intelligent mastery of the risks of the work and their skill with their tools emphasize their distance from the disposable animals they seem to be as employees. Logging is still deadly, and anywhere from a dozen to more than forty fallers die every year, but the conditions before the unionization and improved safety of the post-war period, were what Trower summarizes as "low wages, animalistic living quarters and disregard for human limb or life" ("*The Cowichan*" 52).<sup>51</sup>

The men's psychic distress at the effects of their industry on the forest is a similarly constant thread in loggers' writing. In Day's anthology, Robert Swanson describes a logger who left a corner of a show unlogged to preserve a hummingbird's nest ("*Engineering and Balladeering in the Western Woods*" 9), Mark Warrior recognizes that

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<sup>51</sup>For accident rates, see Lawson (51).

he has helped to create a “white desert” (“Macmillan Blodel Limited, Franklin River Division” 26), Day, on clearcutting what he calls a “cathedral,” declares “all men love the black earth” (“The White Raven” 35), and Earle Birney (in a memoir) declares that, in 1921, “even the engineers spoke with deference of the big tree flats” they were about to mark for cutting (“Evergreen Summer, 1921” 47). In just the sixth volume of *Raincoast Chronicles*, White includes a story by Sean Virgo that has an old logger kill himself by falling a tree on his head because he has been ordered to cut it when he wished to leave it for the nestling blackbirds in it (“Mother Holly” 18-19), and a Bus Griffiths comic that includes a panel with the superscription of it explaining that the slash it depicts is a “stark rape of the land” (“Now you’re Logging” 48). In “Letter to Malcolm Lowry,” Peter Trower writes of the destruction of the hills and woods Lowry “clung to . . . with a desperate love” as “browner and less,” although he emphasizes that the city itself is the “Hell” that “gobbles up the green” (*RC Six/Ten* 199). Trower’s poetry frequently describes the beauty of the woods in which he worked. In his own poetry collection *The Men There Were Then*, Howard White includes “Levelling the Revelstoke,” where he describes the land he has just rased a crewmate to bulldoze as a “wrecked valley floor” (64). As far as I can determine, only a Patrick Lane poem breaks from this tradition of a mixed and melancholy love for logging, loggers, and the trees they kill. Lane’s contribution to *Men of the Forest* describes slash burning by lighting diesel poured on stumps as a salve for “the brutal anger that cannot be relieved/ except on things” and allowing “the pride that takes its pleasure/ in the flame.” The brief poem suggests that the destruction provides the speaker the same relief as drunkenness provides an alcoholic,

and he awaits “the shaking/ the terrible shaking/ when it’s time to quit” (“Slash Burning on Silver Star” 53).

As early as 1994, White anticipated the speculation of Suzanne Ahearne and the Sooke Community Association that changing understandings of both the greatest importance of the woods to British Columbians and a rejection of resource workers as too-visible representatives of environmental destruction would make the industry workers so generally reviled that their culture would be considered best buried (Ahearne 1; Wark). In his introduction to *Raincoast Chronicles Eleven Up*, White writes of “the nineties generation of city-dwellers”:

When they look to the country they want to see nothing less than unspoiled wilderness. Nature in this view has become... a place to *recreate* in, to salve the spirit, a kind of ultimate therapy encounter. To work the spell needed to relieve urban angst, nature must be unmarred by human hand.

The pride firstcomers took in making daylight in the swamp... is... regarded with dismay. Contemporary opposition to traditional resource industries because of their disturbance of ecosystems rejects the historical culture of the workers into the bargain. (7-8)

*Raincoast Chronicles* sells to city-dwellers as well as rural resource industry workers, and White’s comments seem to be directed more to these urbanites. Historical workers may well be ideals of a sort in small towns (whether or not they show up in public narration), but White’s sense that they are pariahs to the larger culture suggests that those who remain in the resource jobs keenly feel their increasing outsider status and sense that they are rejected along with the “historical culture” White mentions.

As with the prospector above, this chapter's collection of the traces of loggers in popular culture is about their inability to represent what Halseth and Sullivan identify as of town planners' (and through them public narrators') preferred community values of civic engagement, family focus, and attachment to specific place (*Building Community* 21, 71). Like prospectors, early loggers themselves, in spite of their courage, seem to end up representing values that are incompatible with the needs of the community: the hyper-masculinity of the bunkhouse as it appears in first-hand accounts tends to celebrate what reappear in all types of narrative as the men's entrenched habits of violence, substance abuse, and itinerancy. The celebration of individual skill, which remains memorialized to some degree in the statues, loggers' admirable strength and resilience, and even their frequent maimings and deaths, are hard to frame narratively as sacrifices for a greater good, especially given that the modest earnings secure only board feet of timber for employers and do not directly create homes (in the bush or in town) for the men themselves, much less whatever family they may have.<sup>52</sup>

If a story of the work of the logger makes a hero of the man, therefore, he is only heroic in the moment of decision and only for the duration of the work. The men of a logging show rely on each other the way settlers in an isolated and besieged community might, and single men among them must be vigilant and responsive to threat, but the group itself does not seem to have become a source of a dominant unifying story either for the province or even for individual resource communities. In order for early loggers to sustain the role of pioneers who, in White's image, permanently cleared the shadows of

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<sup>52</sup>*WelcomeBC*, a Province of British Columbia resource for new immigrants, lists the average yearly earning for a faller to be \$42,861 in 2015 "Tree Faller: (NOC 8421)."

the swamp for the invading settlers, they have to be stripped of their role as employees and endowed with a narrative of continuity with the later families, families relatively few of them raised, and even fewer raised outside the larger centres where they tended to sign up to crews.<sup>53</sup> Worse, the following may be the most brutal legacy of the valorization of the culture of risk/desperation of these early workers: as James Lawson suggests in “Explaining Workplace Injuries,” this culture of heroism *still* provides a model of masculinity for young and vigorous men, a model that encourages competitive risk-taking at work and hedonistic excess in the off hours. These are values that might deliberately and even sanely mitigate the psychological pains of surviving in a culture consisting almost entirely of single, unpropertied, working men moving from one dangerous and insecure job to another to survive. In Jack Hodgins’s work at least, however, in order to be fathers, never mind forefathers, men must be able to entirely abandon this culture — a move that requires money, social connections (at the very least in the form of a lover), and a willingness to appear prudent in a way that could be mocked as cowardly.

Contemplations of the implications of community pressure on men to fulfill the role of the western hero through their work do not seem to be common, but Hodgins provides one in his 1995 novel *The Macken Charm*. This book suggests that adopting the role of a hero marks a man not as *freer* of restraint and fear than other men, but as more bound by them. In *The Macken Charm*, Jack Hodgins follows Rusty Macken, an adolescent, as he searches for his uncle and hero, Toby Macken, on the day of Toby’s

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<sup>53</sup> A sense of the gender imbalance that persisted in the working populations of camps can be gained from fiction (notably Peter Trower’s novels *Grogan’s Café* and *Dead Man’s Ticket*), from the popular history collected in White’s *Chronicles*, and from scholarly articles such as Davies’ “Old Age in British Columbia.”

wife's funeral. Toby fails to appear for most of the novel and for most of the day, leaving the reader both awaiting the excitement he promises to bring and frustrated with his lack of responsibility — just as his wife, Glory, waited. Readers learn that Glory has killed herself after years of leaving Toby, only to return repeatedly to the half-built shack that he had promised to transform into a home for them. Toby is the focus of family and town legends. Although the owner of a small sawmill (36) and not a high rigger, he is a loggers' sports champion, one who dances on the spar pole (11). He drinks, he fights, and he chases women. He avenges his employees' accidental injuries and deaths by destroying the machinery involved. Toby, initially appealing in his antics, becomes disappointing and repulsive. It becomes hard for readers to retain sympathy for him even at his wife's funeral, as the book makes it clear that she died, as much as from anything else, from his neglect. Hodgins's Toby is a narcissistic and dangerous buffoon; however, he is also imprisoned in his role by his extensive family. His restless and unfulfillable ambition to rise above everything around him proves to have always been a struggle against despair.

As Peter Butenhuis observes in his review, "Rusty's problem is that his Uncle Toby had always been his role model, part of the illusory life he has led," and Toby is a poor model. *Distance*, set in 1995 in the same town, confirms this, and readers learn the rarely sober Toby died young (and drunk) in a car crash (Hodgins 128). Toby's "charm" is an enchantment that proves deadly for Glory and dangerous for Rusty, his greatest fan. At the end of *The Macken Charm*, Rusty recognizes he has a better model in his dad, "the most sensible man in a crowd" (289), although he still goes on to a roof with Toby, planning to climb the ridgepole to hang a flag (290-291). The family man, who has

worked as logger long enough and well enough to send his son to university, and who would always “put wife and children before pride or anyone else’s idea of what ought to be done” (289), is still not the man the adolescent Rusty looks to for his “cues” (290), even when he wants to.

Where is this steady family man, the equivalent of Eddie Macken, in popular narratives? Although Halseth and Sullivan’s summaries of planned communities suggest that he is the underpinning of town planning, in itself a sort of story made physical, my research would suggest that he is not to be found as a protagonist — not in public, in popular, or in literary narratives. No community hosts a yearly safe practices festival. If something were to mark the 1960s to 1980s ideal worker, a family man and highly skilled machine operator, as the model for a community, it might be a story or an object that evokes a worker *in control* on a technological worksite. Such stories and images almost appear, but never quite do. Most notably, I could not find a single public monument of a person working a contemporary sawmill, pulp mill, or mining job — not even a mannequin placed in the cab of a truck. The images of contemporary work are there, often as permanently parked equipment, but, lacking operators, they are incomplete. Some towns municipal grounds’ custodial groups in particular seem to make some effort to associate themselves visually with markers of the sophistication of technology and even the grand scale of the worksite operations, but only in that they display now obsolete but once unique pieces of machinery.<sup>54</sup> What is generally missing, however, is

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<sup>54</sup>For examples, Mackenzie’s municipal website and its welcome sign at the town limits identify it as the “Home of the World’s Largest Tree Crusher,” on display in town and Logan Lake’s local attractions listing directs visitors to a mining haulage truck and a

any suggestion of the operators of any of these machines. At best, the viewers can see in a driver's seat the invitation to imagine themselves in control of an exotic vehicle. This invitation is a very different one from the invitation to imagine themselves as hand loggers or prospectors, where the legendary men's extraordinary endurance is a humbling challenge. Instead, all the strength and intelligence seem to be in the machine, and viewers can imagine themselves with immediate access to great power without accompanying deprivation.

This project does not consider much poetry because of its comparatively small circulation and the relative rarity of clear plot in the poems themselves. There is nonetheless a strong tradition of the description of production line and other factory work in poetry, including British Columbian works. I wondered whether this tradition could trace a group narrative for resource communities, given the major features of the poems — descriptions of the tools of each trade and their use, accounts of injury and death and occasional catalogues of workplace roles and structural hierarchies — and whether the tradition might collectively suggest an ideal worker and the values (usually he) embodies. I am not certain a consistent set of values can be seen, even hazily, but there are a few trends worth noting.

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shovel. Tumbler Ridge has a dragline bucket as a display in a little park on an island in front of city hall and Tahsis has the anchor from a lumber hauling ship as a monument in a village park – presumably both with at least the approval of the municipal councils. Heavy machinery is also on display in other small industry towns, however they were incorporated: parked on municipal land, with explanatory plaques nearby, Terrace has an unusual spar tree holder (which held a wooden tree in a collar, as an compromise between a rooted spar tree and a portable steel spar), Sparwood has an enormous truck, 100 Mile House has several pieces of old logging and sawmill equipment at its visitor centre. The heritage society in (much larger) Quesnel has recently developed an antique machinery park, with farming, logging, and early sawmilling equipment.

The anthology *A Government Job at Last*, edited by Tom Wayman, and *Company Town*, a collection by Michael Turner, are particularly good examples of workplace poems in that they feature poems that slow their readers down to linger in “the madness that is standard practice on so many jobs” (Wayman x), pacing the reader through the discrete steps of each job, which is slow action for narrative but fast for a body. The poems in Wayman’s and Turner’s anthologies are usually species of what Laurie Ricou calls “documentary” works. In *The Arbutus/Madrone Files*, Ricou identifies in these works a trend of representing the commonness of “common speech” through “casual bravado when talking to the insider group” (126).

Perhaps seeing a necessary continuity with Dorothy Livesay’s works, notably *Day and Night*, Ricou presents these “documentary” works as a sort of proletarian worldview of protest, but so strong a statement is hard to support unambiguously. Using the example of Howard White’s anthology *The Men There Were Then*, which concentrates on tales of industrial accidents, Ricou argues that the poet’s representation of this group habit of understatement about struggle, danger, and death in the workplace “embodies a proletarian vision: anger and shock for the lot of the worker whose violent injury or death seems casually disregarded by those in power” (126). Although the workers in these poems are arguably abject, caught in dangerous work, this “proletarian vision” could reasonably be a source of group narrative. If the story of death in the workplace is a *group* narrative, however, it is more obviously the narrative of an archetypal cautionary tale, an adult Red Riding Hood, than it is *necessarily* a call to arms in a class war: above all else, the poems share instructions on how to avoid dying in job after job after job. White’s “I Kill and Maim Myself” shows the necessary place of imagination for a

speaker who is successively a logger, a construction worker, a heavy-duty mechanic, and a commercial fisherman or pulp millworker. The speaker anticipates ways of dying on each job:

The moment I arrive in presence  
of a new machine, I surrender myself.  
I watch its bearings strain and  
break as the soles of my shoes  
disappear and I come out below,  
gear tracks in pink froth, foreman  
cursing my stupidity, men wondering  
who'll get number seven now. ...  
I torment myself alive.  
I kill and maim myself and daily pray  
to confine disaster to the mind. (*The Men There Were* 30-31)

White seems to emphasize the rigour and intelligence required in all survival activity — the speaker's preparations do not differ from what a traditional hunter would learn, for example. Poems that are sparse and rhythmic encapsulations of narratives of disaster emphasize the role of ritual and imagination in helping actors to retain fear after habituation to dangerous activity, but they are not clearly different except in scale from other safety rituals, like the “stop, look, and listen” children learn before they may cross a street on their own. White's inclusion of the foreman's anger and the other workers' possible opportunism *may* be a Marxist criticism of a capitalist understanding of workers as infinitely interchangeable assets, but it may also be just another deflection of grief and

fear, another manifestation of the comfort with danger that characterizes the idealized masculinity of the worker-hero. Instead of an expression of Ricou's "anger and shock" of the proletariat reacting to the indifference of the powerful, it may emphasize the skill and intelligence of the men who have avoided killing or maiming themselves. Many poems in working literature anthologies are clearly critical of management, owners, and government as huge and amoral powers over workers' lives, but not all are.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>In *A Government Job at Last*, see Patrick Lane's "Thirty Below" (20), Brian Brett's "The Bullshit Boys" (36), and especially M.C. Warrior's "We're Here to Log." In *Company Town*, Michael Turner is explicitly critical of the consolidation of canneries under foreign ownership as destructive of the century-old culture of seasonal cannery life (11-12), but he speaks of this life as "feudal" in structure rather than capitalistic, with a family "overseeing an indentured population of workers"(13). Turner is clear, however, that the life was also somewhat desirable to him, and he dreamed of "working year round" for the cannery, a dream crushed by the recession in the 1980s. Turner's subsequent career as a musician, poet, and novelist seems to have been a second choice (14). His poems "7:59A.M." and "Dead Labour" focus on exploitation and power imbalance in the factory structure. Wayman's title poem from *The Face of Jack Munro* chronicles the causes and events of the 1983 Solidarity Strike, which started with government clerical workers and seemed able to unite resource industry trade unions and provincial employees' public unions in a general strike. The trade unions did not go on strike, however, and the government employees most affected were visible in small resource towns primarily through the teachers, as administrative centres tended to be larger places. Industry workers themselves have an uneasy presence in the poem. Wayman emphasizes the Social Credit government's enthusiasm for privatization of public assets and rapid increases in resource exploitation. If these industries and the profits they bring are subject to criticism, so are their employees. Thus, although Wayman includes the "woodyard / by the creek" in the group Munro and Bennett betray, the emphasis is on a betrayal of smaller local producers, rather than the multinational companies that had already come to employ most resource workers (130).

Wayman's identification of the heavily regulated activity of much modern work as a type of madness is richly connotative, and very revealing if considered alongside the poems that describe what workers do and what they say about work. It seems possible that workers need habits that are symptoms of various mental illnesses in order to do their jobs properly: they anthropomorphize machinery and raw materials, circulate nightmarish stories of gruesome injury, and, above all, repeat actions mechanically and obsessively. The madness is in the structure of the work, the poems suggest, rather than in the people, and every bit of regulation and instruction associated with any job, as well as the lunchroom talk of what happens when people make mistakes, teaches workers to mimic the precise manifestation of craziness that their job requires. If Wayman is right, then the general theme of these poems describing work and the workplace is also a message in the stories of home that settlers in resource communities *do* circulate more robustly, which are stories of pioneer ancestors, of agricultural industry, and of spiritual connection to the land itself. The theme, very generally, is this: resource workers do not become the standard practices they must follow; in fact, standard practice in resource work remains a culture so alien to each worker that it is never fully learned. The comforts of home must be elsewhere, if anywhere.

Like both Ricou and Wayman, I think I should be able to find a sort of proletarian narrative of home, somehow showing a community built of a family of workers. Surprisingly, the superficially plausible case for a lived narrative of historical and contemporary unions as definitive of resource community identity has proven very difficult to back up with strong examples of stories of small town culture. Although there are several scholarly and many popular accounts of the province's labour history (notably

Myrtle Bergen's memoir of camp activism in *Tough Timber*), and, in my anecdotal experience, a strong tradition of oral accounts of labour action, I have found that only the museum curators of the Village of Cumberland seem to strongly identify with union history or union heroes. Even in *Raincoast Chronicles*, I can find no fiction in which the union is central to the plot, although there is a single short memoir of a violent encounter on a picket line (set in Vancouver and outside the scope of this project) by Bill White, the former president of the Marine Workers and Boilermakers union ("The Tools of Power" *RC Six/Ten* 190-193).

The uniting of only union workers means that, in a town claiming a home for more than its male industry employees and striving to build an alternative economy, the union narrative stresses the community's entrenched inequalities. The inherent contradiction of a union that cannot represent all people in a community is most vivid in some of Wayman's own poetry: his poems, which bear witness to working life, contain repeated calls for the complete sharing of the products of all labour (rather than concentration of profit into executive and investor hands under capitalism). Included in Wayman's criticism of recompense for non-labour (investors' profits) is a dream of recompense for currently unpaid labour, and therefore a freedom from dependency for homemakers and people whose wages can do no more than supplement a primary family income — but it is a dream. Even if representative unions appeared as symbols for history in place and provided a strong narrative of home for settler families in a town, they would still have significant disadvantages as sources of story of home when placed against competing claims to home through stories of pioneer settlers, farmers who tend the land, or spiritual connection to the local land because their unions represent the

collective action of a structured association rather than individual struggle. Because unions have to be large, united by interest rather than place, and well-organized in order to provide workers with the valuable protections that are part of their industry legacy, they can even be understood to be a part of the machine that emasculates the worker, the trope explored in the next chapter.

Despite the prominence of resource industry towns in British Columbia history, few narratives of place, whether popular or literary, feature loggers or miners as central figures, or the logging camp or mine as settings. The reason is simple: their work is a poor source of narrative for a small resource town because it emphasizes the fragility of the new settlers' attachment to place, the weakness of their connections to each other, and the structural inequalities that result from the entrenched gender divisions in industry employment. The values identified by Halseth and Sullivan as central to the creation of community in long boom era resource industry towns are not exemplified by the actual work that resource industry workers do. Even those communities that, like Quesnel, have public narratives that mobilize the figure of the resource worker to create a historical connection to place do so by emphasizing that that town resulted from their *failure* as miners, and their subsequent turn to alternative livelihoods like ranching.

## **Chapter 2: Unmanning Work: Stories of Contemporary Resource Workers**

This chapter examines three novels that have long boom era (male) millworkers as protagonists, tracing a pattern of representation of industry and the culture that forms around it as inevitably damaging or stunting of the men and, through them, destructive of family and community bonds. Together, these stories portray a contemporary resource town culture that is thoroughly alienating, and the stories suggest that the characters' aspirations (it is hard to call them values) range from being comfortably absorbed by their mechanized work to dominating a violent social field of open predation.

Stories about early loggers and miners workers engaged in the life or death struggles of epic heroes are not the only stories about resource workers and community in British Columbian literature. In addition to these embodiments of potential community ideals (unaccompanied though they were by resource town settings), I found portraits of contemporary industry workers, living in towns and raising families. I examine Jack Hodgins's Slim Potts in *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* and Spit Delaney in *Spit Delaney's Island*, Mitch Cooper in D.W. Wilson's short story cycle *Once You Break a Knuckle*, and Tom Stark in Patrick Lane's novel *Red Dog, Red Dog*. These self-consciously literary texts share a more complicated sense of what it means to be a man in a mill town, exploring the ideas of masculinity and of heroism in depicting relationships between family members such as fathers and sons, husbands and wives, and brothers. However, the role of paid work in supporting settlers' claims to be at home is a qualified one, because the resource worker protagonists who show up in these fictional towns fail

to be at home in any sense until they reject their work as how they define themselves or their relationships. The values are much the same in the lone prospector/ logger public narrative and in these more literary ones: men should be self-sufficient, should feel no pain, and should feel no need to engage in any social interaction, other than to protect the vulnerable (interestingly, usually animals, infants, or less manly men, not women).

In British Columbian literary fiction, resource work both injures and imprisons men, and therefore makes them people unworthy of home, even if the story does not introduce better people who might be in any particular place. The stories that appear in this chapter make the barest suggestion of a general pattern, and (unlike the previous stories), a relatively recent one. Contemporary resource workers in B.C. stories are rare, more rarely central figures, and still more rarely ideals. When they do appear, they tend to serve as cautionary figures whose self-definition as resource workers undermines their ability to claim home in the small towns that serve as hubs for the destructive practice of resource extraction. Only Hodgins presents characters who are clearly exclusively defined by their work, but Lane and Wilson also present a sort of mill town culture wherein men working in the primary resource industries go through their days in seemingly inescapable pain and isolation, often failing to recognize their distance from their loved ones until it is too late. Slim dies in a landslide. Spit loses his wife and family. The adulterous Mitch can only look at his lit windows from the driveway, unwilling to approach the door because he has not convinced his son, whom he has disappointed, to leave the RCMP lock-up and return to the house. Tom, who tries to build a life of love and trust within his predatory family and their exploitative mill town, is unable to prevent any of the climactic violence in Lane's book, as he is incapacitated by two neglected

infections — a physical one started when he caught his hand on a splinter, deepened through his dirty work at the mill, and a spiritual one, started when he killed his father. They are all millworkers, and they are the only millworker protagonists I could find.<sup>56</sup> In fact, other than Spit's equally lonely and equally homeless drinking buddy Marsden, and the older but naïve dogfight aficionado Carl, Tom's friend and mentor, they are the only millworkers identified as such in their books.<sup>57</sup>

Small-town loggers and mill-workers have a long history as community builders in literary Canadian fiction. In Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, Mariposa endures the yearly spring invasion of the “shanty men [who have] come down from the lumber woods” (5). While they “lie round drunk on the sidewalk outside of Smith's Hotel,” Mariposa is “a fierce, dangerous lumber town, calculated to terrorize the soul of a newcomer.” However, the “shanty-men” are not an impediment to the development of the town because they are not full-time loggers: “presently the rough-looking shanty-men will change their clothes and turn back again into farmers” (5). Similarly, the loggers in Ralph Connor's *The Man from Glengarry* (at least, the Presbyterian ones) are community builders in disguise, cutting down the forest in order to replace it with farms filled with Scotch-Canadian families who demonstrate the characteristics of “white enterprise,” “a valuation of energy, will, discovery, the building of nations, the organization of labour,

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<sup>56</sup>I found a few very minor characters as well. Anne Cameron has one pulp mill employee as a temporary husband in one of her dozens of novels and two dysfunctional sawmill workers in the previous generation (*Aftermath* 181, 12), and Hodgins has one millworker cousin amongst the Macken clan (*Spit Delaney's Island* 77). In both cases they are notable for making decent wages and for failed marriages.

<sup>57</sup>I have not deliberately narrowed the scope to millworkers. I found no miner, oil or gas worker, or trucker protagonists.

and especially leadership” (Coleman 12). Ranald MacDonald emigrates to British Columbia, where he introduces his principles of Christian business management to a lumber mill, and negotiates with John A. MacDonald to keep B.C. in Canada. Significantly, he chooses his employees from among emigrant men from his own Ontario county, Glengarry, and his goal is to recreate the kind of “home” that Glengarry represents, in British Columbia. Even the dysfunctional and impoverished Nova Scotian miners of in the novels of Atlantic writers Alistair MacLeod and Leo McKay Jr. remain community men in ways that none of these British Columbian millworkers are.

In contrast, Slim Potts and Spit Delaney in Jack Hodgins’s fiction, Mitch Cooper in D.W. Wilson’s short story cycle *Once You Break a Knuckle*, and Tom Stark in Patrick Lane’s *Red Dog*, *Red Dog* are destructive (and self-destructive) men whose jobs as loggers and mill-workers, while clearly requiring skill and experience, interfere with their ability to act as community builders. Choosing to count working well at a mill as a virtue is a bad start in these works, because it allows a man to hide from himself both that his dedication is missed elsewhere and that working well means striving to be more perfectly like the machines around him.

The narrativized resource workers in the last chapter roughly coalesced into heroic figures, and the writing about them ranged from unabashed celebration and hero-making, through more critical reportage, to considerations of the costs to a community of holding these strongly gendered and heroic ideals. The men in this chapter also form a sort of single figure, a stunted or maimed man. This man is neither a villain nor a victim, as is clear from the contrast he makes to other characters. Instead, he is a thwarted hero, rare in his town in that he has the potential to be great — morally, spiritually,

intellectually, and (usually) physically. Very broadly, mill workers are men damaged physically and psychologically, and they in turn damage their families. In the dystopian work of Wilson and Lane, the culture of the town populated by these families is one that retards individual spiritual growth and forms tight-knit bonds only through shared predation. It is not that there is no culture in these literary towns, but that it is bad culture.<sup>58</sup> Equally importantly, however, the stunted men do not initially share the values of the communities around them. In the work of Wilson and Lane, this means they must *become* violent, uncommunicative, anti-intellectual, and explicitly materialistic in order to be “at home” in town. Wilson’s main protagonists, Mitch Cooper and his friend Will Crease, resign themselves to adopting the roles of small town men, stopping only at the predation characteristic of the “real locals.” Lane’s Tom Stark seems instead to accept the isolation that rejecting his town’s cultural norm of wanting to be dead inside will entail. As is so often the case, nothing so tidy happens in Hodgins’s books. Spit certainly changes, and profoundly, but we know nothing of his world other than that he had it wrong — presumably (but not necessarily) more wrong than most of the other people around him — and misunderstood what he should prize most, but there is no suggestion in Hodgins’s stories that violence, murder, child neglect and abandonment, or substance abuse are the mill town community’s norms. There is also no hint, however, that millworkers other than Spit (and Slim) are usually enmeshed in whatever the communal life is.

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<sup>58</sup>When I say the culture is “bad,” I mean it has values that are antithetical to the widely shared values of the larger society, including the imagined readers.

The “fit” between these protagonists and their small town cultures is a loose one, so in this chapter I present a reading of Wilson’s Invermere, Lane’s unnamed town, and Hodgins’s Vancouver Island (assuming they are the same place across several stories). I also identify the potential community-builders and, through them, the nature of virtue; their male doubles, who are more clearly victims of the town culture; the town villains, who embody the dominant town culture that the protagonists would have to defeat, contain, or evade to be heroic; and the female characters. I linger over the roles the authors assign the women of their communities, in order to emphasize the potential these women seem to be given as community-builders, and examine whether their virtues differ from the men’s.

On the whole, D. W. Wilson’s short story cycle, *Once You Break A Knuckle*, seems to be celebratory of small-town trades workers and optimistic in its inclusion of competent female electricians, house painters, and shop teachers. As in Howard White’s construction of loggers as physically and verbally adept, and competitively so, Wilson’s tradesmen share the virtues of fighting prowess, professional skill, and quick-wittedness.<sup>59</sup> His desirable women, who are never the protagonists and so not shown in thought, differ from the men only in being slightly more inclined to drink and take drugs, slightly more inclined to initiate violence, slightly less professional and painstaking in their work (which they are not quite as good at), and universally uninterested in either intellectual pursuits or any culture unlike that of the town.<sup>60</sup> All but the last of these

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<sup>59</sup>They speak little, so this last is shown in through first-person narration and limited omniscience in third person narration rather than through conversation.

<sup>60</sup>Vic Crane does seem to attend university (177), but returns and is mentioned further only as Paul Cooper’s wife (203).

characteristics of Wilson's idealized femininity are drawn from the idealized masculinity of the resource worker hero seen in the works of White, David Day, and Peter Trower — as are, of course, the traits of his idealized men. The last characteristic of the women, their desire to remain in place, combined with Wilson's less sympathetic portrayals of men, however, reveal the author to be presenting working class, small town culture as specifically destructive of men's potential, in part because the culture leads men to believe their inherent heroism is best expressed in physical risk, particularly risk in the workplace.

Virtue in Wilson's short stories has a certain comic book hero flavour, and the only man who seems to remain admirable throughout his life in town is Will Crease, not an industry worker but a police officer who abandons a budding writing career to return to Invermere and marry his high school sweetheart — something inexplicably both possible and inevitable once he joins the RCMP. Wilson's men and women alike ignore pain and are unimpaired by even grave injuries. In the title story, for example, Will Crease loses a tug-of-war with his father, Constable John Crease, and is drawn fingers-first into the winch through which the rope was threaded. Will's knuckles are crushed, but his only reaction is laughter (240). The men also demonstrate intellectual and physical vigour, spouting aphorisms while fighting each other in a judo match (11), and Will — a fairly small man — passes the RCMP physical and firearms tests even though his left index and second finger have been “flattened” (240), as he is Constable Crease in

“The Millworker” (206).<sup>61</sup> Will has been accepted to a Master’s creative writing program when he chooses the “real” work of policing (221). Mitch, eldest son of a famous naturalist who works for Parks Canada tracking birds in the backcountry of B.C. and Alberta, is enough of a backwoods expert by his early twenties that he leads the police on a search for an armed man in the Purcell Mountains (211). In spite of Wilson’s emphasis on these two characters’ intelligence and relative sophistication, however, all their confrontations with antagonists are physical, as they tend to be for superheroes. They are violent because the antagonists’ *only* actions are violent. Throughout the short story cycle, more villainous men are given to motiveless violence rather than thought, and nothing but superior force can stop them. Crease senior, who communicates primarily through aggressive slogans on his t-shirts, relentlessly trains the slightly built Will to fight from the moment they arrive in Invermere, telling the eight-year-old, “Some people don’t like the police.... They’ll tell their kids to pick on you. Only fight if you have to. You’ll probably have to” (80).

For all their potential, Will and his best friend are strangely cramped in their thought and action, and they never live up to their fathers’ examples. Mitch, Will’s best friend from childhood, decides early to remain in Invermere, and is married by the time he and Will are in their early twenties. He describes himself, in contrast to Will, as one of the “smalltowners, boys who hadn’t and wouldn’t move on from the ‘Mere” (216), in spite of his academic aptitude (201). Mitch’s father was “once a bit legendary across the valley” (211) and survived two days lying with a back broken from a fall on a solo hiking

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<sup>61</sup>The stories partially contradict each other: in “Once You Break,” Mitch reports that Will did go on to do his Masters, as his father had made him promise he would. Either the two stories are alternate futures, or Will enters the force after he starts his second degree.

expedition (90). As John is for Will, Larry Cooper seems to be the model for Mitch's own skills. However, John Crease is posted into Invermere, voluntarily rejecting chances at promotion because the changes would be hard on his only family, Will, and because he understands the smallest communities (postings necessary for promotions) to be the ones where Will would most likely become "a user or a gang member" (4). At "nearly fifty" (5), John Crease chooses to go on a peacekeeping exercise in Kosovo (5), where he is shot in the lung (15). He is back on the job within six months (84). Larry Cooper is a "world-famous naturalist" (106), specifically a paid ornithologist ("bird-watcher by trade") in the 1980s and 1990s — a career that would have required considerable post-secondary education, some travel, and regular publication.<sup>62</sup> These men of the older generation are not "smalltowners" and certainly not ones who stayed in town to marry their high school girlfriends and build houses for them, as Mitch and Will tell each other they will (211, 243).

The details above suggest that Will and Mitch at once tread in their fathers' footsteps and lead far more circumscribed lives. Will and Mitch are sons fallen from their fathers' greatness, partly by trying to emulate men who emulated no one, but, more significantly, through their adoption of town culture and their love for local women. What makes them potential heroes, unlike their peers, however, is that they once *wanted* to leave: they knew early that they could not be great in this small place. At some point

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<sup>62</sup>John Crease and Larry Cooper are, I suspect, sort of amalgamations of John Wayne and Gary Cooper roles reimagined for a late 20th century Kootenays town. Each is physically similar to the screen star he evokes.

before Will reappears in town and marries Mitch's sister, Mitch recounts some of his thoughts looking out over Invermere with Will:

We were never the kids who ran this town — it never felt like ours, probably because none of us ever intended to stay. As it turned out, only Will escaped. The rest of us got claimed by the mill, or by our dads' careers, or by girls. That's the small-town curse. It's not a bad life, don't get me wrong. But it's a life you should only choose after you've got the know-how to choose. (220)

If Mitch seems resigned to mediocrity as a young married man in his twenties, it is perhaps because he has failed himself, having caused a boy's death and carried the guilt of his responsibility since he was thirteen ("Don't Touch the Ground" 104-117). He used his skills as a woodsman to sneak to a rope swing the local bully and his gang controlled and cut through its branch. Will, the narrator of the piece, says of Mitch that these are the same skills that would let him, as an adult, "ward off a cougar with one liners from Dirty Harry and a pair of sticks held akimbo," among other Davy-Crockett-like feats (109-110). After the boy's death, however, Mitch "would walk around like a beaten kid for months" (116). For all his skill, Mitch's trajectory is ever downward from this, his first young appearance. In "Once You Break," he owns his own contracting company and builds his own house. Twenty years later, in "The Millworker," however, he works "shoving lumber," a job that has already been automated in most mills (194) and he does so little upkeep on the house that it takes weeks for him to change a burnt bulb (194). Mitch is about forty, an age at which Wilson suggests tradesmen (though not policemen) are likely to have their bodies "at last" fail them so thoroughly that they can neither work nor maintain an erection ("Persistence" 37, 43). In the penultimate story,

“The Millworker,” Mitch is forty, and has become defined by his job. The story takes place over about twenty-four hours, all but three of which he is either at work or pretending to be at work. He has been atoning in an incoherent way for an affair by working extra shifts, and avoiding home by claiming to be at work even when he is having coffee with his younger brother, Paul (194, 204).

The contrast between the Cooper brothers is significant, as it shows a reversal of fortune since their youth. Paul’s trajectory is rising, but he is no more a hero than is Mitch. Paul Cooper has become the contracting magnate the young Mitch seemed destined to be, and it is he, not Mitch, who now “could [be] Larry Cooper incarnate” (200). Paul wears Larry Cooper’s old coonskin hat; as independent and powerful as he is as a businessman, however, his type of work still emasculates him in comparison with his father: the last time he appears, the two cellphones he needs to run his operations rest in his pockets forming “weird, square breasts” (203). Mitch, denied their father’s crowning glory, the hat, has acquired the internationally renowned Larry’s jacket, and it is the only thing that makes him visible even to the people he works with day after day, year after year. The elder Cooper once dressed to be hidden in the wood as part of his work (106), but Mitch wears Larry’s tattered bushwhacking jacket at the mill, having “patched it with reflectors so the late-shifters [won’t] knock him blindly into a presser” (194). In making him visible, the jacket protects him, but it also shows him to be a poor and partial reproduction of his father, about as like him as the boards are like the trees.

Mitch is the most dignified of Wilson’s many stunted protagonists, most of whom are tradesmen. (The only two besides Will who are not tradesmen are teachers. These are both slight men, one of whom also enters his father’s profession [45-46], and one of

whom becomes a math teacher because he is too clumsy to handle the tools of any trade [53] — the implication is that they teach because they are too weak to build.) These damaged men are still men generally striving to be good, but they are the counterparts of Will and the young Mitch in that they have little potential to ever be admirable. They are puny, impotent, cuckolded, fitted with hee-haw accents, beaten by mobs, sexually abused, driven to suicide, or exposed as under-endowed.<sup>63</sup> They are prey for both the villains and the feckless women of the town. They also tend to be what one character, the narrator in “the Mathematics of Friedrich Gauss” calls “bluecollars” rather than “rednecks” (60).

This man’s drywaller wife has left him, taking the eight-year-old son who may not be his, after the boy was beaten up at school.<sup>64</sup> Describing this event, the narrator says:

A week ago my son had his first run-in with the locals. I mean the hicks — the right-wing gun toters who exploit our unemployment system, who pop welfare

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<sup>63</sup>The father in “Valley Echo,” a grey-market labourer all his life, works in a barium mine near Invermere after losing a finger pipefitting. He is a coke addict, beats his ex-wife rather than calling the police after she assaults his father, and, though a second generation Valley resident, speaks with what appears to be a Texan accent, as do his father and his son (164-5). Winch is the only protagonist who might be read to be on the rise, but it is not much of a rise: he ends up with a place in an apprenticeship program, but no high school diploma. When his grandfather dies, he finds out both that his father never wanted a son and that he has immediately sold the house to pay for his coke habit, so he steals his father’s truck and goes to the home of the shop teacher he has a crush on, who is also his dad’s former lover. His dad appears, and Winch beats him up and sends him off with the truck. The teacher patches Winch up and then starts undressing him. They have sex, after which he lies awake, “hoping she would circle her tough arms around him.” She does not, and he drops out of high school to work for a mechanic she has prompted to offer him a job (167).

<sup>64</sup>This is the only mother who takes her child when she leaves. The book has at least seven single fathers.

cheques on dope.... Their children are the type who shatter Kokanee bottles on semi-trailers, who pelt windshields with clumps of clay... who find genuine humour in the suffering of others. (63)

Wilson's mill town culture is embodied in these people the math teacher calls "locals," and it is an inherently evil culture that corrupts every man who partakes in it. The children of these "hicks" — the "cockroaches" (63) against whom John Crease trains Will before they even arrive in town (80) and the ones who beat Mitch, prompting his deadly sabotage of a popular rope swing (104, 116-117) — were kicking a thin boy, and the narrator's son "stepped in" (63). He was badly beaten. At the end of the story (after blaming his own now-constant drinking on his fear of what the drug-ridden culture of town will do to his son) the speaker reveals that, though his wife has left him and he does not know what he has done wrong, he believes she has prevented his son from becoming a "bluecollar" among these "locals":

She has taken him away from the drudgery he'll suffer as a boy in a small town, from the hockey louts he'll fall in with and the mill job he'll get into and the girl he will drug with Rohypnol. (67)

Although only this narrator explains the town classes, if they can be called that, so explicitly, Will, Mitch, and the speaker in "Sediment," a second-generation teacher who finished school in town, repeat his condemnations of the "hicks." The one protagonist who seems to be a "local," Winch of "Valley Echo," still recognizes other youth but not himself as members of this group: he calls them the "welfare hicks" — who catcall the shop teacher — and the "jocks" (presumably the "hockey louts" rather than any group that could contain the judo fighters John and Will Crease) (152). Winch recalls that these

men, about eighteen to twenty-five, “never showed their faces at school but would swarm like maggots at the first sign of a fight” (154). In their encounter, the locals seem to be threatening to beat Winch and gang rape his girlfriend (154-55). In Wilson’s stories, then, villainy seems synonymous with localness, and the “local” is a mob. Its members hate any representatives of authority, of high culture, or of difference, and are inarticulate in their hatred, calling their victims “fags” and “jews” as terms of general abuse (107). The locals prey on the families of the police, on teachers, and on government employees — beating the sons, egging houses and keying cars, throwing bottles, and driving around drunk, looking for people and things to destroy. Anarchy seems to be prevented only by the most brutal incarnation of police control cum private justice, John Crease. Crease calls his fists “Six Months in Hospital” and “Instant Death,” (4) and seems to arrange special protection or even retaliation by the police force for his friend Larry Cooper, whose house has been vandalized (81-82). Crease can control and contain the “cockroaches” (63) but he has little to do with either law or order, as he is seen at work only when he is doing what is more vigilante work — for Larry by intimidating vandals, and on his own, taking Mitch on a private hunt for his lost classmate, Duncan.

Aside from the mob whose members are distinguishable only by being either fat and grunting or fit and grunting, Wilson’s men, for all their shared understanding of ideal masculinity, are finely realized and distinct characters. The female characters tend to be secondary or even bit parts, seen only in interaction with the male protagonists. While most of the men, even the mob of locals, have circles of friends, the females have no friends at all. Most of the stories are about family life, and fathers’ fear and expectations dominate the young men’s thoughts, just as self-recrimination dominates the older men’s

ones. In spite of this focus on family, however, there are only three mothers in the whole book. Of the women in town, only the two motherly figures, Karen, and the (statutory rapist) shop teacher, Emily, have unambiguously feminine names. The rest of the named women — Alex, Tracey, Ash, Charlie, Austin, Vic, Andie, Kelly, Rickie, Chris — bear men’s names, usually diminutives.<sup>65</sup> The women are muscular and lean (25, 31, 33, 49, 53, 96, 98, 119, 120, 166, 170), or even raw-boned to the point of knobiness: even the math teacher’s wife’s hips are pronounced not because she is female, but because she has “excess bone” on them (54). They work in the trades, if at all (21, 25, 58, 98, 137), they communicate through punches (87, 122, 190, 221), they have their toddlers fetch them drinks (58), and they hit their male friends with bottles if they feel provoked (151,175). Like the local mob, they usually enter the stories drunk or stoned (25, 49, 119, 151).

In Wilson’s works, these traits and habits are pretty attractive in women, inspiring both lust and commitment. Women thus embody whatever it is that is seductive in local culture — something that Matt, the potato-cannon wielding narrator of “Accelerant” (173), specifically identifies as a corruptive nostalgia, one that will accompany marriage to a “small town girl” (173). John Crease, lone hero, long arm of the law, and single

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<sup>65</sup>Paul’s wife, Vic, seems to be the granddaughter of Biff Crane, as her father was an electrician. That would make her mother the left wing, Liberal-voting Calgarian mathematician living in Invermere in the 1970s or 1980s. Vic and her father are still in town after her parent’s break-up (the subject of “Big Bitchin’ Cow,”) so her father would be yet another single father in Wilson’s town. Vic drywalls as a young woman (175) and is the only female who goes to university, to study biology (177). She also seems to be inconstant to Mitch’s friend, Duncan (175), taking his money and giving it to a guy she is flirting with (178). Duncan kills himself after she dumps him (191). Like Ash and Andie, she is a middle-aged housewife in her hometown by 2030, with no sign of employment. The irony here is that her higher education was exactly what separated her from Duncan (192).

father, fears he will lose his son to this nostalgia and begs Mitch to stop his sister, Ash, from marrying Will:

— Don't let Will throw his life away.

— Okay, I said.

— You're a good friend, Mitch. (235)

Mitch and John's exchange shows what is most chilling about Wilson's portrayal of women's role in resource town culture: their needs, desires, and even their humanity are as entirely unconsidered as is the taken-for-granted background functioning of the municipal services. Even the ones who must be around and intimate with the protagonists for the full time span of the book are strikingly unimportant. Karen Cooper appears once (in a scene that the adolescent and motherless Will thinks of nostalgically as emblematic of childhood *while it is happening*), makes dinner, speaks once to affirm what her younger son says, makes cocoa, and disappears from thought (83-89). Only three other mothers appear: the "fire-blooded" (26) siren Alex, who has sent her daughter to a sitter so that she can attempt to seduce her husband's best friend (33), the violent, thieving "cokehead" Rickie of "Valley Echo," who abandons her two year old son to go on a binge with a pregnant friend — the only female friend to be found in Wilson — (120), and Andie Cooper, who is imagined as a housewife with a teenaged son in about 2030-2035.

Andie's limited role in her family story is worth a pause, though she has little to say. Thirty years after Karen made cocoa for five men and Ash (the only daughter or sister anyone has), Andie, Mitch's wife for at least two decades, makes coffee (195), makes soup (203), vaguely comforts her unresponsive but silently penitent philandering

husband (197, 206), and reports to him that their son has quit the job his father got him (204). Mitch, not Andie, identifies Luke's rejection of the job as a response to Mitch's betrayal (204, 209). Luke, the son, works. Mitch works. Luke says what he thinks and feels (208-209). Mitch thinks and feels and says some of it. Andie produces no thought and appears to feel nothing beyond a concern for her son and a duty of care to her husband. She asks Mitch one question. He lies in response, even while recognizing there is no reason to (204). She suggests once that he hurry home, and once that he stay home (202, 207). He ignores her both times. When he looks at his wife, he does not think of their lost emotional closeness, or of her continuing kindness to him, but of her beauty (195, 207). Readers learn nothing about her except that she is from Saskatchewan (195).

The seventeen-page story about a family crisis precipitated by a man cheating on his wife develops so that the crisis is not in the marriage, but in the father-son relationship, and the means to atonement is not through the marriage, but at the worksite. Even Mitch's now-estranged best friend and brother-in-law, Will Crease, appears as a love lost and regretted, and Mitch is sensitive enough to read that Will must "shrug off bitter memories" upon seeing him (208), but Mitch still designates Andie the clichéd "ball and chain" (202) and regards her as a resented judge, though she voices no judgment, rather than a friend whose pain moves him (197).

In the twenty-four hours of "The Millworker," Mitch and Luke range all over town, contemplate the lake, the wildlife, and the mountains; they go to work and quit work, and talk and reach some clarity. In a few hours Mitch will start again to "shove lumber until all his muscles trembled and all that kept him from shutdown was some primal drive to work his way to redemption" (210). The men strain against the limits of

their culture and the limits of their own bodies. Mitch sits in the truck in the driveway, watching the son he has just picked up from jail in the lit bedroom window, and he seems confident that Andie, who never leaves the house, is asleep behind the walls of flaking paint (210). Mitch recognizes that he wants to buy back some respect, but from whom? He will work at the mill it seems, but not, though he promised, on the house. His employer and not his wife will benefit from his “primal drive” to make things right (210). As much as the women make Wilson’s small town culture through their strangely seductive charms, they have no place in it, and no discernible community in it, either in private friendships or in public roles.

Wilson’s homosocial Invermere cannot be redeemed as a settler home through its workers’ good stewardship, either. The community members in *Once you Break A Knuckle* are tied to the land (in the sense that the town exists because of its economic role to facilitate resource extraction) and the relationship between most of the town inhabitants and the natural world is violent, hateful and exploitive. They beat and rape each other, but they also sink old vehicles in the lake and work with barium without controlling the hazardous by-products, contrary to both safety and environmental regulations. The town culture of relationships between individuals partakes of the violent and exploitive nature of resource extraction, and even relationships between men and women, and parents and children are filled with episodes of domestic abuse and selfishness. While the main protagonists are separated out from the “hicks” and “blue collars” by their self-awareness and potential (as much as their professions), they are unable (or unwilling) to oppose the culture of exploitation and anger that surrounds them. The book contains no acknowledgement of the history of colonialism that makes the town

possible, and no contemporary presence of First Nations people. The representation of the town in *Once You Break a Knuckle* illustrates the way that contemporary literary texts figure the resource town as having no culture except violence, and no history beyond that of the rugged individual hero, be he prospector or miner, with no model for the creation of a thriving, mutually dependent and peaceful social order.

In Patrick Lane's *Red Dog Red Dog*, as in Wilson's *Once You Break a Knuckle*, the protagonist's hometown is a hell on earth, as is obvious from the first line, "It didn't take him long to bury me" (1). An infant ghost is speaking, and her animalistic father, dirt in his "ox's wool" and "fur," struggles at his bad task in bad light, hacking at bad soil with bad tools. Worms and gall blight the "bitter" apples "withering" above her, and even the stars and moon fret the sky, shedding silt rather than dew. Her father did nothing to keep her alive, but he mourns her, having wanted a daughter to "grow into a woman to look after him in the years to come" (6). Eldon Stark, the man digging in an orchard, might seem to be a farmer, but he is not, and the bank seizes the tractor<sup>66</sup> he might use in 1949 and his dump truck in 1951 (57). He remains vaguely an equipment driver for hire (51,117), though much of his income comes from theft and fraud, notably a 1939 contract setting fires so that the logging companies have work to do (116).

The horror of the perversity of Eldon's employment, and (to a lesser extent) that of the mid-century lumber economy are acute and startling to contemporary British Columbian readers, as both Mark Diotte and George Grinnell underline in opening their studies of *Red Dog Red Dog* by drawing attention to the contrast between Lane's sterile

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<sup>66</sup>The tractor mysteriously still exists, rusting and neglected, in 1958.

land and the orchard, lake, and wine country that is “now a four–season tourist playground” supporting the leisure economy of visitors and retirees (Grinnell 109).<sup>67</sup> As Grinnell puts it, readers “are shocked that this valley... could have such a grim past of subsistence labour, the abuse of drugs, women, and animals, and that for these settlers [the ones in the book] it was an infertile and barren desert that held no history and little future” (113). Grinnell takes this *possible* history as less of a fantasy than the Okanagan of the tourist brochures in order to support his exercise in reading the human interaction with the land from outside the perspective the novel explicitly creates. Grinnell’s end is to both acknowledge Lane’s recognition of his own limited telling and, more importantly, to lead his own readers to the difficult ecocritical point that any sense of place (shareable, Grinnell suggests in his use of “our”) “depends upon not knowing it in ways that others do, human and animal” (122). Grinnell’s reading leads him to claim that *Red Dog Red Dog* encourages readers to look at both nature and “what is excluded from efforts to see

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<sup>67</sup> Reviewers Diotte and Lisa Grekul take it as straightforward, as I do, that Lane’s use of description of the natural world is primarily within a literary tradition of representing the psychological and cultural development of the story in its setting. Grekul notes that the howling of coyotes and the sound of wind on dry grass reproduce the “brutality” and “lack” (of love and compassion, in particular) that distinguish the characters’ lives. Diotte sees the descriptions of the surrounding world as at once arid and decayed as way of replacing “traditional gothic architecture” with landscape while retaining the oppressive mood. Grinnell, in contrast, suggests that Lane is deliberately writing “the truth of a place” and that the book’s “regard for nature often expresses a comforting relationship to the natural world that helps to hold human violence and neglect at bay” (110). I find this an intriguing but strained reading, in part because he argues that the book “marks psychology and history as embedded properties of place” (111). This is not compatible with what I see as Lane’s construction of a *wrong* culture, a culture of death. That death is a cultural choice even in this landscape is emphasized by Lane’s most pronounced omission from the environs: the characters never approach the lake, even though water “is where the living go to live. Out on the dry land is where you find the dead” (Lane 230). Grinnell quotes this passage without considering the obvious implication: Lane tells us these people are already dead (Grinnell 113).

and appreciate nature” and that the book thus “examines how loss might name a form of ethical attachment to place” (118). To support his claim that this is a project he shares with the book, he suggests that loss is not “alteration, separation, or diminution of a previously intact whole” (118). Grinnell’s reading seems to require, however, that Lane’s human world not be one fallen from something better or more whole — that it not be a site of unusual dysfunction, predation, trauma, and unnatural death. That Lane is writing against the contemporary official provincial narrative of the Okanagan Valley as a place of comfort, leisure, and an expansive worldliness is clear, but the novel can be fruitfully read as primarily concerned with what might happen to a community if its greatest shared value is one of predation – that is, if its members insist on understanding human relationships only as a permanent struggle for absolute power.<sup>68</sup>

Lane’s novel is about the Stark family, who live out an agony of unrequited and misshapen love — parent for child, child for parent, and children for each other. The younger men, 22 year old Eddy and 20 year old Tom, are the “red dogs” of the title. The family’s spirit is both shaped by and mirrored in the larger community, and that community is both tightly bonded and predatorily dysfunctional. Most significantly for an understanding of resource towns in British Columbian literature, Lane’s vision of the

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<sup>68</sup> Assuming that Lane has deliberately created a binary of a (dominant) culture of a desire for death and a (barely perceptible) culture of a desire for love and growth also resolves a few difficult ambiguities Grinnell discovers: the Starks *are* identified with bad water: not an insufficiency, but a poison (Grinnell 113; Lane 7); likewise, the freed fighting dog, who wanders undocked and untamed away from Tom and Marilyn (who rescued him), has not been guaranteed a survival but a freedom from an existence that had been unnaturally rigged to re-create him as driven by a blood-lust (Grinnell 125; Lane 332). As Grinnell puts it, the world at the end of the book “is not a future without violence, but a future... without certain forms of violence” (126).

working class community dynamics is that of a group that makes its own misery — primarily through fetishizing the brutal materialism of its most powerful man, Billy Holdman. Billy Holdman, his understanding of himself, and his relationship to the other characters matter more to the culture than anyone in the Stark family does, including the protagonist, Tom. Everyone is drawn to the exhibitions of power over life and death that consolidate Billy’s power and the dominance of the values he represents. Even the characters with the potential to form a new set of values, Tom and his girlfriend, Marilyn, come to the dog fights.<sup>69</sup>

Like Wilson’s, Lane’s resource town is intensely stratified into classes, although in Lane it is poor and rich rather than trades and professional groups. Lane’s poor, his focus, are roughly Wilson’s hicks rather than his bluecollars — a poor working class rather than a middle-income working class. Tom starts work before he is ten, picking vegetables, then apples, and finally starting on the greenchain at the mill at fifteen (117-118). This last is the job he holds during the action of the novel. Everyone who is not a peer of Tom and the rest of the Stark family — the police officer, the stupid, ever-drunk, and treacherous “town money” Wayne, and the often-mentioned but never seen rich folks with houses on the “Bench” — is part of a single, vague other class.<sup>70</sup> Lane’s working poor are not the resource workers of the then just-developing comprehensive town

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<sup>69</sup>Marilyn is so drawn to violence, in fact, that she climbs on an apple box to watch dog fights (299) and chants “*Do it, do it*” when a man holds a gun to another man’s head (85).

<sup>70</sup>In an interview with Alan Twigg, Lane explains his own youthful understanding of class in his hometown as very similar to the understanding of many of his characters, especially Eddy and his lifelong best friend, Harry: “I was a bizarre child paranoid wandering through the world with a malevolent view of how the social system worked. My brother and I would read all these books, from Socrates on. My brother and I read these things and then we’d compare notes. It wasn’t for personal enlightenment. We just wanted to know how the enemy thought.”

planning projects, although they resemble the spectres of unplanned culture the towns were expected to forestall. Instead, they are second and third generation residents, and are petty criminals and mill or factory workers living on failed farmland,<sup>71</sup> not recent arrivals in any wartime or post-war industry boom. Wayne, the Ukrainian refugee Joe Urbanowski (28), and the drug dealer Lester Coombs, are outsiders to the community: they are merely Billy Holdman's conduits to the greater power of the larger communities of the moneyed classes, the (manipulated) policed state, and organized crime. Billy, Joe, Lester, and Wayne make up the community's group of villains; Eddy Stark is its most mourned victim, and Norman Christensen, a would-be academic, a secondary (unmourned) one. Tom Stark, who murdered his father when greatly provoked and hid his brother's murder of a man he (Eddy) and his friend Harry robbed, persists in a belief that "there [are] limits somewhere" (24), and is the novel's true outcast hero — outcast because he does not share his "tribe's" ideals. Tom, who does not get drunk or use drugs, and who gave up helping out with his brother's petty thefts years before (135), is an outcast because he at least toys with a better potential set of values and a better possible community. His diligence as a shift worker at the sawmill is part of his flailing to reach a better place.

Evil and stupidity, like class divisions, are somewhat differently aligned in *Red Dog Red Dog* than in Wilson's stories — somewhat because almost everyone in the book is a murderer or rapist, if not a child murderer and child rapist: in the first three chapters,

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<sup>71</sup>Carl Janowski, who grows some crops on land his father cleared before dying, earns his living driving a forklift at the mill and renting his barn for Billy's dog fights (184, 274-275). No other farm seems as successful.

there are at least sixteen murders and about forty rapes, many of which are of which are child rapes. In Lane's unnamed town, however, the poor are sophisticated in thought and feeling, and the rich, represented by Wayne Reid, are stupid and soulless. The demonic are sorted from the tragically flawed through Lane's limited omniscience. The story can be understood as largely narrated by Alice Stark, the product of marital rape and one of the three infanticides. Alice knows her family's thoughts, and she merges into the narrator who knows Billy Holdman's. Her narration invites compassion for the four surviving Starks even as it chronicles their destructive violence: they do bad things, but they are comprehensible; they are not stupid, and they are worn into evil by generations of poverty, disillusionment, and meaninglessness. Alice, who loves the touch on her corpse of the father who has left her to die slowly in a crib (1), wraps up her account of her mother's refusal to nurse her by explaining:

That she denied me had to do with her dreams, where and who she came from.

The past makes us what we are. We fail daily in our desire to be whole. Mother and Father's lives were always less. (3)

"Mother," Lillian Stark, was the child of a farmer who hanged himself after years of failed crops on a distant farm (12), and "Father," Eldon Stark, was an abused child who ran away from his own murderous father, eventually wandering years later onto the dry farm the adolescent Lillian and her mother Nettie had occupied alone for years. By the time Alice is born, her parents are heavy drinkers who hate and persecute each other.

Wayne, the only character from a wealthy family in the group of young friends, is reserved the distinction of senselessly *choosing* not to be "whole": instead, he is "a fat boy who [likes] to be close to destruction," and he is hated by Eddy Stark (whom he

thinks is a friend) for “his weakness, his spoiled life” (26). In a book full of murderers, pimps, thieves, drug dealers, and rapists, Wayne seems a comparative innocent, but he is, in a way, the purest villain in the book because he has the power and freedom of choice that no one else does. Wayne finds the life and death struggles of the people he regards as “outlaw heroes” (26) a source of exhilaration and entertainment, and his thirst for action oddly enough sets the tone for the two crises in the main narrative, which is about the events leading up to the death of Eddy Stark, Tom’s brother and double. Wayne is the weak and sheltered spectator whose howls of delight at dog fights of all sorts feeds the culture of death, just as he compulsively feeds the roaring barrel fire lighting the dirt ring in which Billy first appears (25-26). Wayne, an ineffectual but would-be rapist (66), who rereads *Peyton Place* as though it were a holy book, whose life can be “contained precisely in columns of numbers with tiny notations” detailing where he buys everything from coffee to Brylcreem (241), and who keeps a collection of skeletons in his room, is a “horror” in a way that is mysterious to the Starks. He loves destruction, the more pathetic the better (he kills a peregrine falcon to collect its skull), but “knows nothing of its cost” (26). Like the rarely named and thuggish “hicks” in *Once you Break a Knuckle*, Wayne is a minor character but one who embodies the most mindless adoption of the community’s values, even though they make no sense in his more privileged life. He is Lane’s vision of the small town upper middle-class, the people who do not have to worry about need or injury, and have no cause for the anger or despair that make the poorer men think that their only avenue to power is their high-risk lives of violence and crime.

That Eddy declares Wayne at least the equal to any other horror is startling, because Eddy has become the town ideal of a man dead inside primarily through the

viciousness of the corrupt and exploitative sergeant who heads the local police. Sergeant Stanley raped the fourteen-year-old Eddy upon arresting him for stealing the cashbox at the Legion (18). Eddy spent a year in the Vancouver correctional centre, where he was further abused, and came back a heroin addict who has “drawn a hood” over himself inside (36). In Wilson’s stories, Constable John Crease was the representative of everything better in the outside world than in Invermere, and the local people were a mob to be controlled because they could not be improved, revelling as they did in others’ suffering. Lane and Wilson’s portrait of the small town relationship with the law is similarly antagonistic, and the special attention paid to crimes against the Parks Canada specialist Larry Cooper has a counterpart in the police’s cosiness with the residents of “the Bench.” In Lane’s book, however, the law rather than the local “tribe” is relentlessly and senselessly predatory: Sergeant Stanley rapes everyone he can even threaten with arrest or public embarrassment, including wealthy wives he discovers having affairs (17). Neither the sergeant nor the middle class boy, the cultural equivalents of Will Crease and Mitch Cooper, are potential heroes corrupted into a dehumanizing set of values, but Eddy Stark and Billy Holdman are.

The novel has twin crises, and both are at community gatherings. The first is a party at the Stark house that starts with a fight between Billy and Norman and ends with Eddy holding a gun to Billy’s head. The second, a week later, is at a dog fight Billy organizes. The first crisis, in which Eddy fires Lester’s pistol wildly and injures both Lester and Billy’s sister, Nancy, seems to set Eddy and Billy up as equal opponents in a struggle for power. Instead, through the vengeful Joe and the voyeuristic Wayne, it

actually delivers the group into Billy's exclusive control.<sup>72</sup> Wayne and Joe are both exiled at the end of the book, Wayne last seen peeing himself as Tom talks Eddy out of shooting him (246-7), and Joe rejected by Billy for going too far, both in drawing police attention to the community (277) and in presuming to usurp Billy as dog executioner (306-7).

Before anyone picks up a gun, however, Billy maims the group's representative of what might roughly be called a more enlightened culture, the aptly named Norman. No one cares much one way or the other for Norman, but he is the only person who lacks any love or admiration for Billy. Unfortunately, he also lacks fear of him (52-53). Norman, a reader, a writer, and a man who believes that what he imagines matters (24), has his cheek cut to the bone, struck with a hoe at the root of his slight power, his mouth.

Norman is out of place at Eddy Stark's party, believing as he does that respect will follow

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<sup>72</sup>Even the small part of the novel's plot that directly leads to Eddy's death is complex, and the death itself could be accident, suicide, or, given Billy's skill with fixing the odds through judicious compounding of drugs, murder. For the curious: Joe wants revenge on Tom Stark, who pinned him to the floor and released him unharmed when the tension eased at the party, and he sees the Starks as a unit. After he and Billy are overpowered by the Stark men at the end of the party that starts the action, Joe initiates the revenge tragedy portion of the novel by manipulating the community's values, which include a celebration of robbing the rich but do not include murder. He has Wayne tell Eddy's friend Harry about a supposedly unguarded home with cash hidden. Joe does not tell Wayne that the old man who owns the home never leaves it, and he tips the police off to the robbery. Wayne, the town boy who sees the desperation around him as a source of excitement, is only too happy to be a bit part of the action and never once considers the motives of anyone involved. Eddy surprises the homeowner and, fired upon, murders him—an outcome only Joe could have foreseen. Tom goes to the house to clean up and get the body, burying it in the Stark orchard with its five other corpses (157-174). A few days later, Eddy, although hiding from the police, shows up at the final dog fight to buy drugs from Billy, who is his dealer. Eddy drives off, uncut heroin in hand, and is later discovered to have gone over a cliff.

even self-serving displays of intelligence and learning (52).<sup>73</sup> In this he is also the “norm” of the world outside the town and likely of readers of the book. He is injured at the end of a fight with the much stronger man, Billy Holdman (he holds this norm-man and all others), because he mocked Billy for not knowing that Nietzsche’s Superman was not a comic book (52-53). Billy is the most powerful person in the novel’s culture of pure materialism, and, as his both his thought and action come to show, he bears a passing resemblance to the Nietzschean ideal. He calls Norman out to fight, beats him, and then, boring of Norman’s attempts to box, picks up a hoe and swings it. Norman and the potentially less deadly, more rule-bound field of power he represents are literally effaced. He is not destroyed entirely, because Tom Stark, who has a heart in spite of his sister’s declaration that the past should have moulded him differently, catches the hoe on the second downswing. When Norman reappears days later, he is swaddled and incomprehensible (133).

Norman’s injury starts a downward spiral in the party. Wayne fires a shotgun into the air (27), hinting at the action to come. The spectators who had ringed the fight now watch a poker game played by a truck driver, a mechanic, a pool shark, Lester (the visiting drug dealer), and Billy (77-78) -- a “razor-sharp” gambler used to winning (54). These five men, workers in legitimate blue-collar jobs and some mid-level criminals, are clearly peers. However, the truck driver has marked the deck, destroying the fragile trust that makes play possible, and prompting Lester to “lean over the table and grab” him (82). The sudden stillness that follows the discovery of the marks rouses Eddy from his

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<sup>73</sup>Tom, also a reader, is more sheepish about his habit (perhaps appropriately, in the context of the wild party), and Marilyn giggles when he awkwardly confesses to it (80).

heroin bliss and he runs into the room waving Lester's handgun. Eddy accidentally shoots Billy's sister, Nancy, who is not much injured. Most people leave as quickly as they can, and Billy yields to Eddy, saying, "enough" as he instructs his friends and sister to leave (83). It has been a very brief arms race, with advantage trumping advantage and symbolic power shifting to absolute power in seconds. However, it is no blood feud for anyone but Joe, who had once been an abused and bullied boy whom Tom had tried to help, thereby humiliating him further (134). The town circulates the stories of the party, relishing in the excitement even as they reassure each other that it was no big deal (85, 193-194).

The second crisis is played out symbolically, with a succession of dogs in a pit fight standing in for the people of the community. As it starts, Lane suddenly shifts from a narration that has followed only the Starks' thoughts (especially Tom's, often fairly clearly mediated by the infant Alice), to a limited omniscience pacing Billy's rumination as he prepares the dogs, the drugs he will give them, the arena that contains them, and the betting table through which he will profit off them.<sup>74</sup> Billy's thoughts render him bare and reveal just how a perfect citizen of Lane's dystopia must think in order to thrive – and Billy always thrives. The Billy the omniscient narrator reveals is a very strong contrast with the Billy Holdman that the group understands is its hero. Key to this revelation is the differences among the dog fights in the chapter and Billy's own understanding of which dog should win each and why. There are three fights. The first, off-stage, is between

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<sup>74</sup>Alice also seems able to partially read Marilyn's thoughts while the woman is in the house cleaning and dreaming of a future with Tom (195, 199, 201, 204-205), though these breaks into Marilyn's thought are brief and are limited to a chapter entirely about her and her encroachment into Lillian Stark's domain.

Billy's dog Badger, and Carl's dog King. Badger wins almost immediately and Billy must stitch King up to save his life. Joe notes that King "rolled" far more quickly than anyone would have expected, and that Billy consequently made a good deal on the fight. The second fight is between dogs named "Caesar" and "Chance." Again, Joe notes that Chance was favoured to win but only Billy predicted it. The last is between a dog named Rebel and Carl's second one, an unnamed and untried dog, meant to be a "schooler" (a dog that fighting dogs kill to sharpen their taste for killing). The schooler unexpectedly wins, contrary in this and in its further behaviour to everything Billy expects and teaches about fighting dogs and, by extension, the men around him (302-305).<sup>75</sup>

When he is introduced as Norman's assailant, Billy evokes compassion, as he seems to react impulsively to a clear insult about his learning, one a man pulled out of school to take his dead father's place as provider might feel acutely:

His mother... sent him to work setting chokers on a logging show. Billy had grown up hard, the years he'd laboured to feed and clothe his tribe only making him tougher. He had many ways, few of them clean, none of them legitimate. (25)

Billy's hard work, his isolation, and his powerful allegiance to his duty are moving. He fits the mould of the logger heroes found in Trower and Day.

Whatever he was before his father's death, however, he has little of the either the bravado or the mysticism these authors note in their loggers. The "toughened" Billy understands violence and its resulting blood sports to be inherent in human and canine

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<sup>75</sup>The first match was both uneven and unfair, the second, even and unfair, and the last uneven and fair. Billy sets the odds, controls the betting, guards the dogs alone, and does what he likes with the drugs and needles he carries. The dogs he backs win and others lose because he weights the matches with "his amphetamines, depressants, and oxygen" (284).

nature, certain that “dogs would fight whether they were in the pit or not” (279).

Moreover, he understands the best dogs to be naturally willing to kill:

He knew just what to look for in a pup. He’s said more than once that it wasn’t just a willingness to fight that counted. A good fighting dog had to want to go past hurting to another place entirely. (281)

This description of ideal traits is not a celebration of risks mastered or camaraderie of fellow oppressed and impoverished workers. Dogs do not appreciate other dogs’ showmanship — only uninvolved spectators betting on their misfortunes do. The logging camps abound with stories of fights, but not of fights to the death, with the caged men snapping and snarling at each other.

If Billy is the spirit of a resource town and the ideal of its industry employees, he is as unsustainable a model for a group that must build community order to weather hard times as is the sentimentalized questing prospector or the romanticized spar-dancing, devil-may-care high rigger. Billy is a businessman, and he subordinates every principle, affection, and loyalty he has to making money. He lacks the limits on his actions that Tom is certain must exist not because he lacks self-control, but because he lacks affection and the need for it. One of the unclean and illegitimate ways he makes money has always been to “sell his slow-witted sister, Nancy, out of a coal shed down by the tracks for nickels and dimes to older boys” (54).

Lane creates distance between the stories Billy tells himself about why the towns’ men, women, and dogs are the way they are, and the stories of all the other narrators.

Billy, more than anyone else, keeps Billy as the town’s “outlaw hero,” because he makes his money through other people’s fear of him, but a second set of possible values — ones

where love and life matter — leaks in unexpectedly all around him. When this set of values appears, he is unable to understand it, but nearly every other character responds to it, recognizing meaning and worth beyond the “no greater destiny” Billy sees of dying in a fight after a lifetime of fighting and killing (282).

Norman’s final appearance also emphasizes the limits and nature of Billy’s dominance: Norman has healed enough to talk and he has won over Vera, a woman with “a heart full of misguided love” (26) that Billy had brought to Eddy’s party (53, 291). Norman also shows that he, like Billy, can read people, and he recognizes that a fearless boy with a willow whip, who will soon face Billy down unflinching (295), is schooling himself to violence and “practising for his life” (292). Billy avoids Norman in this last meeting, certain that Norman’s “bullshit” observations about the boy will “provoke” him again (292). Norman has developed no awe of Billy after his defeat, and remains a muffled but audible opponent, positing that, while fearlessness may be natural to some, its rarefaction into bloodlust must be nurtured, and will only be nurtured if the fighter believes the stakes to be life or death. Norman underlines that Billy has been utterly wrong about fearlessness: in Lane, it comes equally from suicidal despair and from a completely irrational and irrepressible hope for love. Eddy Stark has no fear of death because he longs for it; in contrast, as a child, Tom takes beating after beating and eventually shoots his father for the love of a dog and, as an adult, wades into every fight going, first to preserve what remains of the brother he loves and then to protect his new girlfriend, Marilyn.

Whether his peers idealize him or not, Billy is a metaphor for the town’s main legitimate employer, a mill whose workers are paid the same minimum wage Lane

himself earned, workers whose suffering Lane claims motivate much of his writing (Twigg). Tom's work at the mill is terrible. It is so hot that the men remove the gloves that protect their hands (184-185). They work side by side but the constant noise means they are as isolated and as unable to socialize as are the money-making dogs in Billy's holding area, who know longer know anything but fighting. The men at the mill suffer the same volley of cuts to their hides in the course of their work that the dogs do in their fights; like the dogs, they must strive to be but never are inured to their suffering:

On the chain, his body repeated itself, not as a machine does, but as bone and muscle do, each move made identical and not, each board coming down the chain a variation upon every other board... the volume seemingly twice what a man could reasonably manage. (185)

The men are as much like the dogs as the host is like the indifferent company, both of which treat the striving soft parts of their industries as if they were machines, however unlikely the men and dogs are to perform as predictably as the owners would like. Billy's great end of summer event, the dog fight, even resembles a company picnic: children run around underfoot, men grill meat, and women bring potato salad and other refreshments. It seems to be a warm community celebration. People congratulate Billy on the organization and thank him for the opportunities he gives them. But Lane reveals that they are wrong to trust Billy or to impute altruism to him.

Billy owns the equipment, and, although he pays Carl for the use of the place, he takes more than his money back in training fees for Carl's dog. He also seems to drug the same dog so that he fights poorly, and charges Carl for the surgery and the drugs he uses to save the dog's life (291). He then uses Carl's gratitude for this action to persuade him

to enter the new dog he has developed a fondness for in the last fight, where it will almost certainly be killed (296). Every risk the townsfolk take at Billy's dogfight pays out to Billy more than it does to them. The event is a strategic investment for Billy, as fixed as was the card game, and it is exactly the delicately fostered sense of community and the trust accompanying it that allow Billy to fix the fights: a sense of intimacy tempered by the competition of the betting, the compelling but still disturbing sight of the dogs' suffering and death, and the seemingly inevitable loss. They all know the narrative and it is Billy's narrative: these dogs live to struggle against each other and their suffering ennobles them. Billy is good to give them a fitting place in which to do what they would anyway.<sup>76</sup>

Then a tiny woman, small as a child, jumps into the pit when the wrong dog wins, and the whole narrative falls apart. Billy and Billy's manager, Joe, aim guns at the dog who has upset the books, suggesting they are about to correct the outcome of the unfixed fight, even though everyone can see the other dog has lost. Billy quickly lowers his gun, but Joe does not. When Marilyn blocks Joe's line of fire, he aims at her, risking the revelation that Billy's community spirit and his meritocracy have always been a con (304-305). More importantly, however, Marilyn calms the dog down, and his "fighting spirit" is suddenly very clearly terror and confusion (305). For the second time in the book, Tom disarms a man with a weapon, this time Joe. Then the dog licks Marilyn, a stranger, and submits to affection when it would not to threat (306). Every other winning

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<sup>76</sup>This might be the community consensus on his treatment of Nancy as well, on whose back even his dogfight profits are built: he blackmails his pharmaceutical drugs and equipment out of a local doctor with photos he took of him and the then-child Nancy (280-281).

dog was carried out biting, snapping, and lunging at everyone but its owner. That too seems to be either learned or drug-induced: this unnamed dog shows that there is no natural pack or tribe. Finally, Billy takes Joe's gun from Tom and returns it to Joe, sending the latter away (306-307). In this gesture, he both makes Joe's strange action seem to be a part of the latter's known hatred for the Starks rather than a support of his own response to the fight's outcome, and rids himself of the devoted friend whom he has recently recognized as a liability. The story may have changed slightly, but Billy still seems to control it. Perhaps Marilyn has done no more than show one dog and one man that they can be loved.

Marilyn brings me to a final consideration of community in Lane, that of gender. Why is love Marilyn's business at all? In my discussion of *Once You Break a Knuckle* I suggested that Wilson's women at once perpetuated the small town culture because they seduced men into staying, and at the same time had no place or power within the culture except as less competent and responsible men, differing only slightly from the toxic mob of "hicks." To a point, Lane, like Wilson has a book of men and not-men, in that men are defined by their relationships with each other and their struggles for power. Women, in contrast, are defined by their relationships to men — every single one of them, from the dead Alice who rejoices in her father's touch, to the mad mother Lillian who stands like a siren beside her farm in a thin dress, hoping to lure the man of her dreams and catching only Eldon, to the undressed and half-dressed women at Eddy's party, to Vera of the misguided heart, and to Marilyn, who moves into Tom's house faster than she can heal his hand — every one of them longs only for a man's love, and their actions, when they are explained, have this longing as their reason.

If the ghost Alice narrates the full book (although it is certainly not clear that she does), then she both models and constructs the possible roles for women in the town, and her own ethereal nature underlines their limited humanity. Women are uncanny, but the men's emotions and actions are investments that make sense in a horribly corrupt economy of society. Alice is also the voice most condemnatory of her mother, who ignored her three children after Eddy and refused to nurse the two infant girls:

Father said mother killed both Rose and me from malice and deliberate neglect, but the truth was different. Mother had only emptiness in her for her own kind.

That she said she was in a dark place after our births doesn't change what she did and didn't do. (2)

Alice — who has the authority to quiet the neighbouring ghosts of her grandmother and her sister — tells the story of the trapped men around her and the women who carefully trap them, reserving space for compassion for the first but little for the second. Alice does not demonstrate that the men are good, but she does show that their choices are much harder than the women's are, their humanity much more complete, and their responses to the difficulties of their lives much more explicable than are the women's.

This difference in authorial attention, placed into a feminine spirit who embodies both innocence and knowledge and is entirely exempt from the economies of desire and failure, makes the women of *Red Dog Red Dog* able to perceive the godliness in men and even effect their fall from grace, but still far lesser creatures. In fact, they are so much the lesser that the rape and sexual exploitation of women and girls seems to be no big deal either to the women or the men — it is just part of the economy of life. The rape and sexual exploitation of boys, in contrast, mitigates all manner of nihilism, predation, and

revenge by the victims. Eddy Stark poisons a dog, and he commands the newly minted heroin addict who believes herself to be his girlfriend to dance naked for him and his friends while he issues unconcerned judgment on the progress of the violent party he is hosting (67, 71-72).<sup>77</sup> Eddy murders an innocent man. But Eddy has his reasons — unlike the dancing girl, he is not the way he is because he was looking for a little excitement (70). Eddy was raped, possibly by his mother, and certainly by the local police officer and the people in the youth prison. (He is not raped as much as Nancy is raped, but he is neither female nor “slow,” so he needs revenge, he needs lots of drugs, and he needs to die.)

The contrast between men’s motivated predation or self-destruction and women’s motiveless cruelty and hatred also appears in the earlier generation. Eldon Stark likewise rapes his wife, producing Tom and his murdered sisters, but only after his wife “rapes” him to get Eddy, a son who would be “an almost man” on whom she could focus her sexual passion. Eldon’s drunken mating, with whomever he can find, is a part of the tragic trap of his life. In contrast, her sexual impulses, like her abuses of her children and her utter lack of compassion for anyone or anything, are psychopathic.

I am not trying to suggest that Lane’s work is misogynistic or that it would be better if it were anything other than what it is. I want only to emphasize that it is a book about men and their struggles in the poor and unstably employed strata of a mid-twentieth

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<sup>77</sup>The scene might as well be that of a decadent emperor being entertained by a slave. Lane makes the woman’s acute humiliation clear, and Tom and his mother clothe her and hide her when Eddy forgets about her in the disintegration of the party, but Eddy remains the focus of Tom’s compassion.

century British Columbian mill town. Their anger, their frustration, their criminality, and even their living death are meant to be tragic. We are meant to recognize these men as analogous to the fighting dogs they love: bred to fight, caged except when fighting, loved for their aggression, drugged through their pain, admired most of all for dying without admitting defeat, and ignorant that they are kept so their owners can enjoy watching them destroy each other. The book is not about women, their emotions, their culture, or their lost potential. Women in Wilson's *Once You Break a Knuckle* are men without philosophy, accountability, or ambition, and women in Lane are a species of spirit — demonic or angelic, but inexplicable and removed from the struggle that defines men. The result however, is much the same: both books define small town culture as a man's world, in which women appear as motivators of action, but not significant actors in themselves unless they are predatory, and specifically adult sexual predators on boys.

Tom and Mitch both chuck boards on the greenchain for a living, day in and day out — deafening, isolating, and mind-numbing but still dangerous work. The job is a metaphor for the demands of social and sexual life, as work, society, and family merge into all-consuming machine that robs the would-be poet, artist, hero or leader of time, energy, and independence. What is left is a man who feels himself so limited in his actions that he seems almost automated himself, without the comfort of an accompanying loss of responsibility and consequence.

The novels would suggest that the most reasonable response to such narrowed prospects is anger and despair, and a culture built on them that idealizes pain. The most heroic men, the Crease men and Tom, are slightly unreasonable in that they strive to contain the culture of misery. Lane's novel sets up a choice between two opposing sets of

values for his poor workers' culture, embraced by each of his two Stark brothers: Eddy's abandonment to despair so complete that he becomes a celebrity of a dominant culture of destruction, and Tom's confused struggle for a subculture of both altruism and reciprocal kindness. Children are slightly safer from parents and rape is offstage in Wilson's world, but the world is still much the same as Lane's: the local culture, from the schoolyard to the workplace, is one of people taking "genuine pleasure in the suffering of others" (Wilson 63). In both works, the few people who are decent enough not to attach their joy to others' suffering see the good life as what the authors present as the "half dreams" that maintain the hell of the whole towns: houses, marriage, and stuff — little more than freedom from poverty, violence, and dirt. The young men strive for wisps of autonomy, if only the autonomy of being free of their parents' control.

Both authors' damnations of their towns prevent these fictional places from being stories of belonging in place that a community can support, largely because the novels assume a better place somewhere out there. These better places are built on the men having the scope to be greater men. Will's choice and his ultimate defeat hangs on a policeman being a man different in degree as well as kind from a writer, as Mitch's does on a millworker being a diminishment of an ornithologist's son. Will becomes only a cop, Mitch only a shift worker. For Tom and Mitch, work thrums in the background, hated, punishing, and dangerous, and the best friends and family can do is prevent it killing them, as Marilyn cures the infected hand that cripples Tom at work and Larry's jacket protects Mitch on the floor for thirty years.

The more public narratives of the lone prospector and the handloggers of the last chapter and the popular narratives, even as they appear in Lane and Wilson, are in fact

very similar. Under both the public and popular narrative is a premise that men are all potential supermen, and they all want to be heroes. Men are pretty awesome and miss greatness largely through being ground down by women and wage work. Women and work are also what draw them away from their desire for survivalist interaction with the land — even the Stark brothers are happiest when tramping the hillsides or sleeping in caves. The values in these dystopias of trapped working men do not shift from those in the lone prospector/ logger public narrative: men are all individuals who matter, real men are never dependent, notice no pain, do not need company, and are prompted to social interaction only when they intervene to protect animals and weaker people. The public/popular contrast of stories celebrating historical workers and mourning contemporary ones is really the same story then, and it fairly neatly fits with the discussion in social policy about resource work culture developing idealized masculinity that can result from either as a culture of risk or one of desperation, or both.

But there can be more to a worker's life than Lane and Wilson have explored in their novels. Trower's logging poems in particular suggest that the activity of mastering and rendering new or exceptional the rigours of rigidly structured work might resemble the activity of mastering an art form such as poetry, and what is true for logging might well be true for other forms of labour. If any writer has explored this question, it is Jack Hodgins, and if he has an answer to whether millwrights and machine operators make home by loving their machines, the answer is probably no, they do not. Men who love engines and attempt, in one way or another, to replace the radical creation and movement of life with the masterable production and oscillation of machines appear in many of Hodgins's works. Most notable of these characters are Spit Delaney, *The Resurrection of*

*Joseph Bourne's* Slim Potts, and (most recently) *Cadillac Cathedral's* Arvo Saarikoski. All spend their leisure time with their machines rather than friends or family, and are roundly cursed by these others for their habit. All are also, in a basic sense, good men — they have no predatory habits, they are gentle, and, if not notably loving, at least far more inclined to be loving than hating. The communities they stand aloof from are similarly mild places, with internal rivalries, snobberies and malicious hatreds, but no murders or rapes, rare violence and rarer predation, no dominant police force (good or evil), comparatively few drunks and no other addicts, and only a few beaten children, and those mostly in older generations. In their middle-aged contentment with their modest wages and the lives they have built on them, they are unrecognizable as men of the same generation as Lane's Stark brothers and their friends, in spite of their comparable opportunities. In fact, Hodgins's criticism of these men and their culture is almost precisely that they are too comfortable. Spit Delaney is emblematic of Hodgins's men cradled in their slumber by their hammocks of gears and grease, but Hodgins's assessment of the risks of fostering the small town British Columbian values that are promoted by town planning is most obvious in the lone literary "instant" town, Port Annie, and its buried blue-collar patriarch, Slim Potts.

In focussing on the way the novel articulates a set of community values that render culture minimally disruptive of industrial interests, my analysis differs from that of David Jeffrey and Tim Struthers. In "A Crust for the Critics" Jeffrey identifies the moral polarity of "charity and cupidity" in all of Hodgins' novels, with the divine good embodied in *The Resurrection* by Bourne himself; Struthers mainly concurs, identifying the self-serving materialism in the novel as represented in Jeremy Fell and Fat Annie

(Jeffrey “A Crust”; Struthers “Thinking”). In contrast, I would argue that Slim Potts shows the “unselfish love” of a good person, but it is misdirected to a sterile end: Potts does not realize that he is a materialist or, as Struthers say of Annie, that he has “retreated from the human contract” (“Thinking”). Andrew Lesk and Stolar Batia pick up on the key point of Hodgins’s machine men in an article on Spit Delaney’s masculinity, explaining that it is Spit’s “unnatural relationship with the steam engine that he daily operates, that ultimately works to define and naturalize his identity.” I think limiting a study of machine love in Hodgins to part of a consideration of Spit’s misdirected desire, understanding it as only an expression of a crippling form of masculinity and a repressed sexuality, misses the repetition of these figures in Hodgins’s work and the male characters’ repeated habit of substituting collections for communities and efforts to know machines for relationships with people. Spit and Slim’s role in the community allows Hodgins the room to think through the problem of *planning* a town spirit into place as a thing with a material end, which is what a community design for corporate efficiency does. Millworker masculinity and the limited, purely economic contribution men can assume in the community makes Spit and Slim something like counterfeit men and links them to what W.J. Keith explores as the role of counterfeits in Hodgins’s *The Invention of the World*. Keith explains a distinction that Hodgins mines between “invention” and “creation” as roughly a lifeless recombination of what is already known — a trick — and the difficult organic development of something new that comes from a quest for a true reality (“Jack Hodgins and the Sources of Invention”).

Hodgins sets two puzzles with the death of Slim: why does Slim, rather than anyone else, die, and why does he die in a bulldozer? The answer might lie in the

interrelation between the imaginary town and the provincial culture that produced its model, Port Alice, an instant town Hodgins visited about a decade after it opened. In the six years between 1965 and 1971, four planned towns were incorporated on northern Vancouver Island (Port Alice, Gold River, Port McNeil, and Tahsis), all with the concentrated planning and development designed to attract families and discourage the rowdier and more transient single workers of older industry booms: they were very deliberate overlays of a new (as yet theoretical) culture on the distinct (but undesirable) known industry culture.

Hodgins envisions the change as an almost religious mission, in which the old settler gods, a float camp operator and her husband, have been driven out and replaced. Slim Potts is installed as new divine consort beside the new “settled” female god, Jenny Chambers.<sup>78</sup> Like Port Alice, the Port Annie of the 1970s is a second town built on the

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<sup>78</sup>This reading of Annie’s death *as a loss* to the town differs significantly from Tim Struthers’ argument of an opposition between two gods: Fat Annie, whom he connects with the biblical Leviathan, Milton’s Satan, greed, lust and darkness generally, and Joseph Bourne, whom he connects with “true community, “authentic love” and “family”( *On the Coasts of Eternity* 114-116). Assuming a Judeo-Christian story framework hides allusions to Greek and Roman tradition, and to First Nations transformer stories, both of which allow more room for multiple divinities and for these figures to have unfixed moral positions. Struthers’ reading of Bourne’s symbolism is convincing, but it ignores the parallel waxing of Bourne’s godhood with the waning and perversion of Annie’s (lost like her fat): Bourne starts as the embodiment of death and the hidden but remembered Annie that of life (for a discussion of this vertical dynamic, see Lucia Boldrini). The “tub of love” Annie was the spirit that could bind the first industry colonists. These colonists were loggers — single men who found community, love, and family with each other through their longing for her and who were both provided for and

remains of an earlier logging camp. Port Annie's heart is the hotel that houses the Kick and Kill bar and, upstairs, the withering demigod and first founder, Fat Annie (a transformed whale). When the planned town is constructed, the bones of Annie's husband are found on the hotel site. Dieter Fartenberg had died when the stump of a recently cut tree righted itself, tipping back to bury him. Annie eats Dieter's crushed bones, retreats to the upper floor of the new building and does not reappear until the landslide at the climax of the novel, when she too dies. Slim, like Dieter, is swallowed by the earth and, like Dieter before his unearthing, is something of a defining spirit of the place — a ghost of the working everyman whose need for a wage creates the community. Annie and Jenny are also paralleled, drawing together the sexual desire of all the working men.

The two couples likewise differ from each other much as the two working communities do. Dieter was a hand-logger; Slim is a foreman at the pulp mill. Annie was the boss and had boisterous lovemaking sessions with whomever she chose; Jenny, a talented stripper, came to town on a booking from her agent. The logging camp was a floating one, a hodgepodge of cabins whose residents literally rocked each other with their actions; the planned town is laid out in streets of varying status, where the community is something that exists only when it self-consciously assembles in a building set aside for it, such as the library. In the newer world, therefore everything is mediated through an alienating structure of some sort. The first founders' spontaneity and

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comforted by her endless and entrepreneurial appetite. By the time of the action, this same appetite has devolved into support for the evil "demon of the west" (Struthers' term) of soulless commercial development and is a mindless reduction of all of human life to a pursuit of wealth, embodied in Daemon West, Jeremy Fell, and mayor Joseph Weins (116). Appetite itself is good in this book, as it marks both vitality and an embrace of all that is living; in fact, the resurrected Bourne is also marked by an insatiable appetite, and he eats as ceaselessly as he teaches, comforts, and helps.

autonomy in work and interaction is not even possible in the re-established town. The townspeople of Port Annie, Jenny the stripper, and Slim the foreman are always acting roles in a previously established structure. They are planned into the planned community, and that means (unlike Annie and Dieter) they are not integral to it until they shed these roles and their structuring authority.

Of all the townspeople, only Slim, the millworker, and Eva McCarthy, a relentlessly redecorating housewife, cannot change. Instead, whenever he appears in the action, he retreats to work on one of his machines, leaving Jenny to run the house and all the other townsfolk to gather to puzzle out the import of the community events. Perhaps, in his devotion to his work and the trappings of work, Slim has become no more than a “pot,” hollowed out to contain something significant, but unimportant in himself. In the last chapter, I mentioned recently retired and obsolete heavy machinery sometimes parked as monuments to industry in small resource towns. I suggested that these found sculptures occasionally rise so far as to make an invitation to viewers to imagine themselves in the drivers’ seats, and I pointed out that the machine emphasized how infinitely replaceable the operator was. Slim proves sadly replaceable even in his domestic life. The town renames his children after his common-law partner, Jenny Chambers, even before he is dead. He collects old earthmovers, parks them in his backyard, and works on them in his spare hours. Slim has spare hours because he pays no attention to his eight “rotten brats” (17), whose backyard has become the whole town, and whose parents are more or less everyone and no one. Like his town, he is productive but not passionate or nurturing. Slim dies sitting in the cab of one of his machines. His faith in their power has been misplaced: the earth they once moved moves right back on

top of them. His body is unrecoverable. Slim dies because he represents what is wrong in place, and his death is cataclysmic, wiping out the whole town because it takes a landslide to bury a bulldozer, and those bulldozers had to be buried.

Like Slim, Spit Delaney entirely misplaces his love. Spit Delaney, probably the best-known millworker in British Columbian literature, is an unhappy man when we meet him, but he is not a victim of anything except his own former complacency, his own desire for a distinct lack of action in life. Until his job becomes obsolete and his wife decides to leave him, Spit has always considered himself lucky, although he is an exact contemporary of Tom Stark and in the same work. Both are about twenty in 1958, and Spit has been married twenty years when “Separating” opens. Spit’s young world has been a remarkably innocent one in comparison with Tom Stark’s. As a young man, he hits on the unattractively bony Stella, who is engaged to a logger, and she shifts her affections to him. There is no rape, no drug-laden despair, and no need for a woman without obvious charms or a wealthy family to limit herself to the “calculating half-dreams of the poor” (Lane 53). Spit, Stella, and the world around them are presented as steady when they meet, steady as they raise their children, steady right until Spit faces an unwanted change at work and is thrown into unfamiliar metaphysical speculation on “the dividing line... between what is and what isn’t” (Hodgins 7-8). Spit eventually learns that not only is the world changing, it always has been.

The second unwanted change to Spit’s stasis is that the engine he drives at the pulp mill, his steam “loci,” locus of his love, his understanding of himself, and his daily effort, old number one, has become obsolete. Spit does not throw himself into the puzzle of learning the new machine; he is not possessed of a general love of engines or a pride in

exceptional performance. He also does not suddenly realize that he has always been the equivalent of a fighting dog stoked to pride and passion for the heartless mill owner's benefit. Instead, he mourns his loss. In fact, through Spit, who initially wishes to be defined only through his work, Hodgins suggests that the psychological crippling and multiple levels of alienation taken for granted in the popular narrative of industrial workers are nearly impossible to maintain. Hodgins has started from a premise about millworker masculinity and boom-era town values that is entirely incompatible with a focus on heroes, even crippled ones. He suggests that people are drawn to both planned towns and millwork because they are timid and because they seek isolation. Their desire to be separate is exactly what they have to overcome. Work doesn't twist men; it cocoons them. Spit is not oppressed by having dependents — he is astonished to find out they are simply not dependent on him. He has no obvious risk, no desperation, and there is no value whatsoever to his mastery of his tools.

Spit Delaney's progress would suggest that virtue for a worker in Hodgins encompasses the risks of knowing himself and others, the risk of needing meaning in order to live, and the risk of being important to other people (and disappointing them). This virtue is exactly the opposite of the virtue of the lone prospector, who relies on nothing and is shown affecting nothing. In an early draft of scene of millworkers in the Kick-and-Kill, Port Annie's town bar, Hodgins suggests that the people drawn to resource towns are already anti-heroic: they are not adventurers or pioneers, but frightened, "dead-end" people escaping both the insecurities of other ways of making a living and the vulnerabilities and potential pains of dense societies ("A Conversation in the Kick and Kill" 55). In Hodgins' writing, it takes courage to survive family ties and to

live with friends and neighbours. Work and obsession about work, even strict workplace identities, give people, particularly men, ways of escaping these ties or allowing their pains to flow in only one direction (they are hurt by others but not guilty about hurt they cause, as they understand themselves to have fulfilled their social and familial roles purely through sharing their wages — they expect not to be called on for anything else). These men very carefully and very deliberately take their friends and family for granted. Like Wilson's men, they avoid speech and see weakness in communication. What is strangest about Hodgins's exploration of working masculinity, however, is not that he criticizes the ideals of the western hero, especially as they are found in figures like the isolated prospector, but that he makes these ideals' mistakes mere iterations of the mistakes everyone of every class makes. The effect is that he stands against the argument that work dehumanizes workers. In Hodgins's fiction, wanting to be dead is not an ennui that poor men in small towns invent to avoid the oppressions of a society with little room for spiritual growth — it's what everyone everywhere does because connection is hard work with uncertain recompense.

Hodgins's men do not spend their adolescence weighted down with angst, having already given up, and taken up reading Nietzsche for a sort of hollow comfort. Rather, they bumble along looking for role models, and they never know what is going on around them. People who are deeply involved in family and community life tend to be more expert at most things, and women, in general, have things more together than men do. Most of all, from *Spit Delaney's Island* to *Cadillac Cathedral*, work (especially with heavy machinery, but even in the fine arts, as in *The Honorary Patron*) makes men too comfortable to notice that they are alone and unhappy about it. Overall, Hodgins argues

that identifying with work is a dodge and, in *Port Annie*, the definition of town culture through popular resource worker masculinity gives men space to ignore their own dependency, to pretend that the world is more material and more of a machine than it is, and to disguise their timidity as stoicism.

In this and in other works, Hodgins also imagines that people's aloneness in general and the too-muted life that he suggests accompanies tolerable isolation (as Spit once enjoyed) have their roots in the vagaries of individual fears and desires rather than in the specific evils of late twentieth century small town British Columbian culture. Both the popular and the serious literature, however, show the workers in particular to have bad values, which they must abandon or lose every chance of making a home because these values prize isolation over community and earnings as the greatest contribution a man makes to his family.

In Hodgins's *Port Annie*, as in *Once you Break a Knuckle* and *Red Dog, Red Dog*, these bad values are explicitly the community ones, and the dystopias the authors create highlight the limitations of reading literary cultures as witnesses testifying to conditions in real towns.<sup>79</sup> None of these works is mass-market genre fiction, whatever popular tropes they may use, and all are written in the past four decades. Their readers, following the emotional and spiritual struggles of the protagonists, do not necessarily expect the men to be exemplars or to complete arcs, either comic or tragic, that renew harmony in their communities. In spite of their shared nature as thematic explorations of crippling

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<sup>79</sup>In interview, Lane has described his writing as bearing witness to poor people's lives, and Tom Stark has the same first job Lane did, in the same year, at a mill in a town whose streets bear the same names as Lane's hometown (Twigg).

masculinities, however, the cultures depicted *Red Dog Red Dog* and *Once You Break* are dependent on authorial fantasies about social behaviour in a way that Hodgins's culture is not, in spite of all the miracles it witnesses. Lane and Wilson present stories of young men struggling to define themselves through their relationships with other men, particularly their fathers, and the stories model various ways of being a man. The small town settings make the intimate arena of peers momentous and the complete absence or impotence of any mediating authority plausible. The protagonists are learning to be men, and they learn from other men even when they reject the models they see. Women are small parts of the cast of these two works largely because they appear in such stories most when they illustrate something about a kind of man, when they promise a sexual rite of passage, or when they somehow divide men from each other. Neither author sets out to explore women's complexities or the nature of their relationships with other women, so it makes sense that most of the women are set dressing of a sort.

Nevertheless, the women in *Red Dog Red Dog* and *Once you Break a Knuckle* matter because both authors underscore the momentousness of their men's decisions by contracting the autonomy of the few women present and giving them only the most unimaginative and conventional of ambitions, and they matter because the books do represent recognizable places. No woman with a walk-on part in either work has a clear ambition other than marriage, and none works after marriage.<sup>80</sup> In a full hundred years of imaginary forestry towns, therefore, neither author has ever imagined a man dependent on a woman's wage. In Lane's novel, this might be unsurprising, as his work does not

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<sup>80</sup>In Wilson, two working women who abandon their husbands appear in the men's ruminations (one also leaves her son). Two other mothers abandon their sons. One is a drug addict and the other has a math degree. Neither seems to work.

look forward and the wartime boom in women's sawmill employment has no more place in his story than does the war itself. Wilson's imagined past, present, and future, however, assume that what he seems to present as the basic culture of industry towns has remained stable since the 1950s and will for at least another generation. In Wilson's 2030 Invermere families, the factory or contracting job, held by the man, would be the main income and the highest wage; the man would not marry a doctor, lawyer, successful entrepreneur, or high-salary government employee, and (above all), the alpha women would choose to become married homemakers in their hometown, seeing such a role as the highest possible attainment, and so would perpetuate the sharply-divided working class gender roles no matter what they knew of their changed opportunities.

These heavily gendered stereotypes of employed men and house-hungry women have literary legs. They are affirmed as men's and women's forms of materialism in Jack Hodgins's *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, where their most extreme versions — Slim Potts and Eva McCarthy — are wiped away with the blighted town. Even in Hodgins, Slim is likeable in spite of his attention to the machines he maintains at the expense of his large family, but Eva is not. She is a spirit of pointless purchasing, and, after a lifetime of not allowing people to visit except to admire the house she endlessly redecorates, she dies refusing to leave it.

Lane and Wilson's stories do not reflect contemporary trends of resource town youth's post-secondary movements or attainments (women are slightly more likely to excel in school, to do four year degrees, and to enter professions, and male and female

workforce participation rates are both high<sup>81</sup>) any more than their almost all male casts and Wilson's single father households reflect town demographics. But Lane, Wilson and occasionally Hodgins might reproduce a dominant cultural narrative that itself does not reflect actual behaviour. In spite of the how I must exaggerate the tendency of literature to represent exemplars and reflect real world demographic trends in order to consider these works as potential contributors to resource town claims to home, therefore, I still think I have a core narrative of what culture work is held to make in resource towns. The key part of this story is that industry work and marriage are equally traps that destroy men's potential.

In this core narrative, town culture is defined by masculinity. The adolescent male interacts with his father through physical competition or outright violence. He develops a desire to leave town and excel in a field, thereby dominating the world with talent, intelligence, business success, or brute strength. This growth in ambition coincides with his sexual awakening in what appears to be casual sex, but the young man develops a sense of responsibility for his sexual partner. His maturation ends in his marriage and therein his renunciation of ambition, especially of a livelihood outside the work of the town. To support this story, there must be a matching narrative of femininity. In it, an adolescent female learns domestic skills from her mother, whom she largely emulates, without having the sort of fraught competition the boy does with his father. She develops a desire to remain at home and have her own house to keep. In her sexual initiation, she is

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<sup>81</sup>As an illustration, the 2011 NHS (National Household Survey) indicates there were 2,865 women aged 24-64 with Bachelor's degrees or above in the East Kootenays, compared with 2,230 men. 90% of male degree holders were in the labour force, and 87% employed, compared with 80% participating and 79% employed for female degree holders. (Canada. Statscan. National Household Survey, "East Kootenay").

able to select a partner, but her own desirability relative to other women will determine whether her partner will be trapped into marriage. She matures into a domestic manager, notably supervising the labouring man in household repairs. Her ambitions are therefore fulfilled and, if tempered, tempered only by the inadequate performance of the man in his duties of care.

Men have the potential to be great, and they might have opportunity, but women have more opportunity relative to their ambition, as they have little potential. The men learn to understand themselves as significant because they are wage earners, but they could have been heroes. Wage earners are interchangeable at work, and in Wilson in particular, prove so at home as well. Wilson's faithless wives reinforce the men's interchangeability, but the women's social and psychological complexity, their agnosis, if they have any, contributes nothing to the fictional town culture.

The protagonists in this chapter all appear in extended works of fiction, and so are developed enough in broad enough settings that it is possible to test whether the pattern they form, as far as it is a pattern, could reflect a general narrative through which any residents of mill towns who chose to circulate and promote it might assert their claims to home against other possible claims. As the fictional men fail to build community even within their families and have no clear virtues, and the women have little presence, it is hard to see how the stories could be used either to knit a community together or to justify its presence on contested land. In spite of the strong tradition of poetry about line work, mentioned in the last in chapter, that emphasizes the learning, agency, and creativity possible in mundane employment, the narrative of the modern resource worker contrasts sharply with the slight but celebratory tradition of identifying with prospectors and high

riggers through stories and displays of individual skill and courage. Stories could make heroes of modern industry workers by exhibiting their mastery of their chosen tools, but British Columbian fiction instead shows these (exclusively male) workers enmeshed in the machinery they operate, making them parts as interchangeable and as void of individual will as all other moving parts. Protagonists become shaped by their equipment, the demands of their employment, and the world commodities markets that has reduced their source of meaning in life to a set of repetitive actions performed to the single purpose of greatest possible productivity. This same process leaves men cut off from family, society, the natural world, and other potential sources of both meaning and healing. In addition, portrayals of these machine men sketch the local culture and show the men's interactions with their communities to be mutually destructive. The communities, which are best represented by the undeveloped female characters, contribute to the men's oppression, and the men's material, social, and psychological inadequacies damage the people who love and depend on them.

### **Chapter 3: Homesteads: Stories of Small Town Home as a Pioneer Legacy**

In the first chapter, I argued that the stories of early resource workers were largely unavailable as narratives of community building at least in part because they were stories of unpropertied and fairly transient men without families: prospectors and loggers were, because of the nature of resource extraction itself, unable to produce the social values that the late twentieth century communities could reasonably take as a representative of their own culture. Farming (and ranching) could more reasonably be expected to provide those values. Agriculture features in several of the literary fictions discussed in previous chapters: Wilson's most sympathetic "local," Winch, grows up on his grandfather's farm; likewise, the Starks in Lane's *Red Dog Red Dog* live on property housing at least a garden, a hayfield, and an orchard, however unproductive. Even Hodgins's Spit Delany has to drive past the herds belonging to "a gigantic dairy farm" (189) when he takes Phemie Porter, the poet who successfully needles him into growth, to the mountains, and many of the other stories in the collection are set on farms or mention them. This chapter will be concerned with both popular and literary stories that mobilize the pioneer farmer and rancher, as homesteaders, to explain and justify the existence of small British Columbian settler towns and, by association, small resource towns. These stories are articulated in a variety of forms including tourism websites, local histories, and historic sites, as well as literary fiction by Jack Hodgins and Gail Anderson-Dargatz.

The goals of many popular farming narratives are clear: to create stories of long-standing, multi-generational links to local settler ancestry dating to the early twentieth

century (even for towns that were only incorporated in the 1970s or 80s) and so provide residents with a sense of identity and connection to place; and to attract or retain residents who can form a municipal tax base and visitors who will spend in the area with a portrait of a dense, stable, and knowable culture. As in much of the physical province, those early fictional settlers may be imagined to have survived by working in packing, forestry or mining, but the stories suggest that no matter what they did for a living, they intended to establish homes on family farms, and their enterprise was undertaken to keep them in place.<sup>82</sup> The distinction between settler and investor, between farmer and commercial developer, is made clear in Paul St. Pierre's hero "Smith," who stubbornly carries on homesteaders' foundational activities as much as possible in the modern world:

Smith had come into Namko Country to build a ranch on the four-thousand-foot contour of the fifty-third parallel of north latitude. One might say men like him should have more sense. One might be right, indeed, in the current view of government and industry, such country is better left unsettled until such a time as a large corporation is prepared to establish instant towns therein, complete with pre-sliced bread and dripless candles. Nevertheless Smith went there and tried to build up a ranch. (3-4)

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<sup>82</sup>For historical ranching activity near Invermere, see "Ranches in the Windermere Valley," a virtual display from the Windermere Valley Museum; Vernon's town history explains that Vernon and Coldwater did have booms of moderately successful ranching and farming (wheat and fruit) enterprises. Vernon is not really in the scope of this project, as the local economy has always been diverse and the town has grown steadily, without a significant settler depopulation or overwhelming increase. (Okanagan Valley Economic Development Society, 22-25). Its fictional counterpart is included in the project only because Lane made Tom a millworker in a small town, blue-collar culture, and such figures are very hard to find.

St. Pierre clearly constructs a contrast between Smith's business and that of a "large corporation," between his land management and the post-war province's, between the slow "building up" of his ranch and the instant nature of the imagined towns, and between the sort of man he is and the sort of people the residents of those towns would be. St Pierre also makes it clear that Smith is a *settler* — albeit a very late one, as the first Smith book is set no earlier than 1955 — so his values, whatever they prove to be, are as much possible contemporary ones as are the ones that make people want pre-sliced bread.

Smith probably *feels* familiar. He might be almost an instant hero to settler readers, reluctantly recalled from his struggles in the unrelentingly harsh Chilcotin winter to protect a vulnerable "Chilcotin" [T'silquotin] man from a overzealous and uncomprehending justice system — he seems to know everything and manage the local land and culture with an instinctive wisdom and courage, affirmed even by the First Nations people.<sup>83</sup> In general, representative homesteaders, like Smith and unlike miners and loggers, provide a dense narrative of continuous local settler families with strong and continuous attachment to a specific bit of land, and they combine the virtues associated with pioneers and those associated with farmers. There is nothing surprising about settlers attempting to establish a right to be in place through the main colonial activity that brought permanent settlement across the country for the entire age of empire: farms

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<sup>83</sup> The 1966 book provides no insight into T'silquotin culture and, however all-encompassing its satire, destabilizes few if any of the stereotypes explored by Thomas King in *The Truth about Stories* (especially in the essay "You're not the Indian I had in Mind") or by Daniel Francis *The Imaginary Indian*. In a brief remark in *A Wilder West: Rodeo in Western Canada*, Mary-ellen Kelm suggests St. Pierre's characters' friendly interactions are written in and partly against what she indicates the author recognizes was an *increasing* racialization and segregation in the Williams Lake area (204).

supplied some of the food for military and trading posts from Fort Anne in Nova Scotia to Fort Saint James in northern British Columbia, and these forts are sometimes the oldest continuously inhabited settler sites in any area. What is surprising, however, is the pervasiveness of the habit of attaching early “town” history to an early White “homesteader,” whether or not settlers lived on the townsite or had descendants, and in spite of the contrasts St. Pierre points out between the presumed character of independent ranchers in marginal country and that of the wage employees in a booming industry.

The municipal body of one Cariboo mining town, Logan Lake, uses its website to connect itself to a long history of ranching even though its current viability as a municipality relies on its being an affordable bedroom community for the city of Kamloops. Its commuter residents enable the town to remain open too to the dwindling number of residents still employed in mining and forestry (District of Logan Lake). Logan Lake did not exist before 1970, but the website conjures the sun-bleached romance of Hollywood cowboys by featuring a photograph of a horse-riding pair, both complete with plaid shirts, jeans, and cowboy hats, on its official 2013 page on the province’s tourism site (BC Destination BC “Logan Lake”; David Young “Saddle Up!”).

As in the festival committee of Quesnel’s adoption of Billy Barker, the public narrator in Logan Lake is drawing on a widespread nostalgia more than on an immediately local history. This nostalgia, one for pioneering homesteaders, is part of a widespread set of stories supporting settlers’ stories of home in other resource towns, in the province as a whole, and in all of North America. The story is one of settlement as an improvement to the land, and of settlers as the ideal citizens of a democratic empire that expands through a combination of exploration, trade, and settlement that is understood as

progress. This story is a predominantly secular one, even in its ideological roots, as the relationship between the settler and the land is prompted by a grant of land from the state: the settlers understand themselves to be granted the opportunity to create home by the highest authority over the land in either the colony of British Columbia or the nation of Canada. This narrative has two notable features: it almost always defines first settlers as ranching or farming homesteaders (even if it acknowledges earlier First Nations people farming or raising livestock<sup>84</sup>) no matter what economic activity actually enabled their survival (if they survived); and it establishes continuity of settlement and implied ancestry for non-indigenous people even in the most “instant” resource-based towns (as in this representation of Logan Lake), and even where settlement has been interrupted.

Continuity is made through naming, through location, or (as in Logan Lake), through a vague regional association with older non-indigenous habitation. For example, the town of Hudson’s Hope, base for the thousands of workers building the W.A.C Bennett dam and incorporated in 1965, nonetheless celebrated its bicentennial in 2005, through the municipal council’s choice to circulate the municipality’s link to Rocky Mountain Portage Post, a Northwest Company trading post established in 1805. The post itself was moved and rebuilt twice, and lay abandoned from the 1820s to the 1860s, but its rough geographical location remained a portage and trading hub into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and it was, at one point, renamed “Hudson’s Hope.” “Hudson’s Hope” could also have

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<sup>84</sup>The Houston Centennial Committee’s 1970 history, discussed below, opens with a chapter on “The Originals,” in which it gives the histories of several local First Nations families, indirectly dating at least one First Nations farm, that of a Dakelh man called Bill Nye, to no later than 1910 —contemporaneous with the earliest settlers (Smith, 12). The later chapters on agriculture (10) and pioneers’ memories (4) do not mention Nye as a farmer.

claimed a centennial in 2012, if it were to boast of 100 years of continuous settler ownership of land since the opening of the Peace River Block to agricultural homesteading. Whatever its founding date, until the mid 1950s, only about 100 people lived on or near the townsite. By 1966, there were 3000, and during the peak dam construction, as many as 6000 (Hudson Hope Museum “Timeline”). Since then, like most other resource towns, it has been slowly depopulated — and some of the agricultural land that drew its first permanent settler families will be flooded if the site C dam is built.

Even more surprisingly, the District of Elkford, an entirely pre-built town in a part of the Elk Valley where no town or even trading post existed until coal became profitable in 1968, hosts “Wildcat Charlie Days,” a “celebration” of “Wildcat Charlie,” supposedly its founder, characterized in the municipal tourism guide as “a solitary, but cheerful German rancher” (Brian Coombs 24). Contradictorily, Charlie is also described as a “trapper” living in the hills far above the Elk Valley in a 2011 *Fernie Free Press* article (Jensen).

Houston and Fraser Lake, part of the more densely populated Bulkley Valley-Lakes District, are two more examples of towns whose public narrators and memoirists claim a history *dominated* by farming despite their location in a region of logging contractors and truckers and their rapid development in the boom era. A side-by-side reading of two local histories from the 1970s, one a municipal publication and one a memoir, is largely a study of contrasts in that the municipal history presents the initial homesteaders as successful farmers, and the memoir asserts that the same people’s farms

failed.<sup>85</sup> Both agree, however, that the first settlers wanted to be farmers and only became forest industry contractors and workers in order to save their farms. *Marks on the Forest Floor*, the 1970 history of the Houston area edited by Elnora Smith and published just as the town was incorporated in anticipation of the first of three waves of new forestry and mining employees, at once asserts that “the story of wood in Houston is a somewhat new story” dating back “only a few years” (99), only to immediately contradict itself by saying that by the 1920s, farmers had to rely on tie hacking because there was no market for produce: the first settler families usually drew their income from wood sales (99).<sup>86</sup> As the same book dates the first farmer on the Houston townsite to 1904, the first farmer in the whole Bulkley Valley to only a year earlier (133), and the first woman to about 1908 (59), the “somewhat new” story is only slightly newer than the first settler one.<sup>87</sup> In other words, if the story is “new,” it is new only as a story that defines the town, because wood sales were always the economic base of the settlement. Jack Mould’s memoir *Stumpfarms and Broadaxes*, set near (but not in) Fraser Lake, confirms that settlement and tie hacking were simultaneous, with those settlers who could hire unpropertied tie hackers to help them clear their land making enough money to survive their farms’

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<sup>85</sup>The municipal history’s suggestion of broad success is possibly an artefact of its construction, as the editors and compilers collected accounts by long-time settler residents and former residents with strong ties to the community to form their accounts of the early settlement (Smith 151).

<sup>86</sup>Whatever they relied on for income, the settlers continued to define themselves as “farmers” in 1928, as the polling division record shows 34 farmers, 18 housewives, and one each of rancher, prospector, hotelkeeper, merchant, foreman, woodsman, postmistress, and teacher. The last two were female (Smith 35).

<sup>87</sup>As far as I can determine, the first permanent “Houston” settler, Charles Barrett, was a rancher about ten kilometres away who earned his living through association with the same industry—railroad building—that employed the farmers. He supplied the industry with pack animals and feed (Smith 70-71).

recurrent crop and winter stock losses. Mould, who repeatedly asserts that the first settlers throughout the Bulkley Valley had farming ambitions, also explains that many “stump farmers” either lost their homesteads in the 1930s or held on to them only through the “relief work allowances” (141) and a program that allowed them to pay their land taxes through road maintenance (143). Mould also suggests that some local settlers were even forced into “slave work” in the nearby government relief camp (141-142) in the 1930s.<sup>88</sup>

Few if any publicly produced homesteader narratives from small resource industry towns emphasize, as Jack Mould does, that homesteads were often abandoned. The Houston municipal website seems unusual in that it mentions that the farmers also held wage jobs and that farming was largely a temporary industry, here supplying the railroad crews (“History”). The Houston history notes that settlers employed local First Nations people for haying and especially for tie cutting, but does not give any sense of the large crews of tie hackers, mostly men migrating for the winter work, who populate Mould’s book. If Mould’s calculations of how many ties a man could produce in a year are right, there were an average of 330 tie cutters, and many people in associated jobs including hauling, loading, and construction, and therefore working with the wood-harvesting farmers every winter in the Bulkley Valley- Lakes district alone,<sup>89</sup> but their histories are not part of the settler town of Houston’s story in the Centennial Committee’s publication: the only wage earners in the tie industry named in *Marks on the Forest Floor*

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<sup>88</sup>The father and uncle of the protagonist in Alistair MacLeod’s *No Great Mischief* migrate to Pictou County, Nova Scotia, for similar work during the Depression (111-113).

<sup>89</sup>Mould states 5,000,000 ties came from the area from 1924 to 1930 (37), although the industry started in 1919. He estimates 2000-3000 ties per tie hacker a season, or 20-25 a day, if the hacking was not broken into smaller tasks (57).

are the (Dene) Jim family, who worked as loaders (13-14).<sup>90</sup> It might seem to make sense that the hired men, who moved around, are not a part of a story of continuous home — except that they were clearly essential to settlement, and, when re-inserted, they make the stories recounting settlement far, far more crowded, far more densely commercial, and far more obviously disruptive of previous residents and their land practices. Perhaps more than an understandable focus on long-time resident families is at work here: in the Centennial Committee’s history, settlers enjoy friendly, even benevolent, relations with the First Nations people and they aim to work in balance with the land. Both the inclusion of the Dalkeh man Bill Nye’s farm as part of the local settlement and the near-erasure of employed workers rapidly altering the landscape (leaving only farmers) suggest that the story of settlement contained in this 1970 book is largely congruent with the national myths that Eva Mackey outlines in “Becoming Indigenous” (Smith 12; Mackey 156).

The relatively arable Bulkley Valley’s boom era town memoirists and civic narrators are not alone in their foregrounding of non-industrial homesteaders as the first settlers on site. In fact, municipal bodies or heritage societies/museums (or both) sometimes claim homesteading heritages for their community, even for long boom-era resource towns that are not on the sites of older settler communities.<sup>91</sup> Historical

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<sup>90</sup>I know that at least one hired cutter somehow weathered the Depression to settle permanently in the area, as I went to school with his grandchildren.

<sup>91</sup>As far as I could tell, between 2009 and 2015, these comprehensively planned towns incorporated under the instant towns policy, had no municipal, tourist, commercial, and historical societies that made no claims of growing from early agricultural homesteads: Mackenzie, whose town web site nonetheless mentions the agricultural settlements in the Peace River Block flooded by the W.A.C. Bennett dam; Port Alice, (template for Hodgins’s Port Annie) which was a replacing a now- derelict town; Granisle, named for Granby Mining; Gold River, whose municipal website emphasizes its proximity to where

narratives and fictional narratives that emphasize homesteading origins, specifically in settlers' family farms, tend to overlay the significance of the raising of livestock, the cultivation of crops, and household self-sufficiency to permanent settlement in and economic viability of many regions of the province. The recurrence of these homesteading narratives claiming first settlement as part of small resource towns' publically-promoted identities suggests that such narratives support the current residents' claim to home, even though the stories of homesteaders' activities and their desires, with their emphasis on independence through agriculture, seem to create a norm that excludes from "home" both the historical non-land owning resource workers and the contemporary populations of the towns — the very people whose municipal councils and societies use these narratives to demonstrate that the residents' heritage is continuous with the early settler farms.

Previous chapters demonstrated a strong disjunction between what public narratives of resource workers I could find (which celebrate the poverty, recklessness, and homosocial culture that planned towns were designed to replace) and several purely fictional representations of resource workers (which show them to be unformed or maimed). In contrast, the representations of pioneer farmers that chambers of commerce, festival associations, museum societies, heritage associations, and some local memoirists

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Cook met Maquinna; Fraser Lake, whose website curator leaves its history as a brief note that it was established during the railroad construction (Fraser Lake n.pag.), and Port McNeill, where a few roads, the theatre and the hockey team are named "Pioneer," after the Pioneer logging company. The town of Port McNeil's online history ignores the role of the other founding logging company, a Japanese-owned firm whose property was expropriated in the Second World War (Valerie Green 153), and the Fraser Lake site makes no mention of the town's status as the nearest settler community to the residential school at LeJac.

produce tend to share their narrative arcs and social function with thoroughly fictional works.

Broadly, public histories, popular fiction, and more contemplative literature all suggest initial friendly trade with and a limited cultural reliance on local First Nations people, often suggesting that settlers are somewhat guided by First Nations people in learning about their new “home,” who seem thereby to “help settlers become indigenous,” as Mackey puts it (152). Much as Elizabeth Furniss found in her exploration of the dominant cultural assumptions in the settler population of 1990s Williams Lake, I note that small resource town B.C. settler stories in general do not suggest that early settlers knowingly competed for resources with the local residents (*The Burden of History* 55). Once the original relative benignity of local contact has been established in the narrative, stories of pioneers focus on family-scale development and industry, from attempting to clear land for cultivation to somehow building a business (whether it is a farm, a small sawmill, or something else) through recognizing how best to work with the area’s resources. This “best use” of land that is hard to cultivate becomes a way of telling a story of resource extraction that makes it nearly congruent with the national myth of land use since contact as having progressed to become a shared First Nations/ settler project, a “transformative, yet ecologically sound endeavour” (Mackey 164). The local homesteader histories become foundational stories for the incoming resource workers both because they connect this specific site to non-indigenous home and because they are already recognizable to new residents as stories of how settlers make home in a new place.

The stories are not necessarily records of what caused the town to become what it is, especially after industry closures; in Logan Lake, for example, the resource employees were replaced by city commuters and retirees who do not draw their income from forestry or mining anymore than from fishing on the lake or riding in gymkanas. Although the website curator who oversaw the District of Logan Lake's contribution to the 2013 *Destination BC* entry clearly sought to evoke a cowboy narrative for tourists, the town histories are often found in websites specifically directed at residents, and books like *Marks on the Forest Floor* seem to be primarily made for locals by locals (the local MLA and the mayor both address the residents in letters written for *Marks*, for example [8, 149]). In other words, these homesteading stories are not created exclusively to recruit new residents or lure tourists, but define the communities to themselves. The stories are records of what their contemporary authors claim are the foundational values of settlement in the area, and these values seem to be largely those produced by the "liberal order framework" through which Canada creates itself, as Ian McKay explains it. They are values that emphasize willing participation in the construction of a social order of liberty and formal equality, but achieved through individual property ownership, where state and individual sovereignty over land is established through labour that changes it ("Canadian Passive Revolution" 363).

In public narratives, the historical homesteaders' values are usually congruent with classical liberalism, which undergird the racial, class, and gender privileges that let a pioneer homestead seem a representative microcosm of the early settler society: a white male homesteader, patriarch and representative fully-enfranchised individual, is surrounded by a family, dependent employees, and subordinate trading partners,

including the recently displaced First Nations. In these public narratives, the values of classical liberalism are rarely directly interrogated: the incorporation of land into property through work, seen as progress, the individual initiative that is often linked to entrepreneurial capitalism, and the increase of personal wealth (for the homesteader) and national wealth through the formalization of economic networks are presented as successes, not least in that they are continuous with the similar, if more egalitarian, values of the current community. These narratives also usually present the family as a mutually interdependent unit, where each person has specific duties to fulfill, but all labour in support of the main work of the patriarch. Sometimes, as through Smith's inclusion of the Dakelh patriarch Nye in a list of early local farmers, public narratives allow room to imagine that everyone in families and local economies had effective if not structural equality. More often, however, the narratives suggest that communities have progressed to contemporary values of equality, multiculturalism, and environmentalism. In this, they represent difference as unity, re-inscribe progress as the dominant narrative of contemporary Canadian culture (even as they praise sustainability and balance), and create settler innocence, all rhetorical processes as Mackey sees as key to settlers' effort to both "become indigenous" and avoid addressing contemporary injustices (170-171). In a sense, public narratives that suggest either a continuum or an evolution of values shared by early and contemporary non-indigenous landholders also represent violence as peace, as they rarely point out that the settlers were or sold granted land for which the crown had made no treaty.

Although they do not tend to teach residents where their food comes or came from except by analogy, narratives of historical first homesteads on townsites teach their

audiences the sort of ideals the communities value (where these stories of homesteaders create community, ideals incorporating self-sufficiency, industry, thrift, and a culture based on the nuclear family).<sup>92</sup> Perhaps because these ideals are common, these homesteading accounts are a commonly told part of the provincial small-town story, not just by public narrators in towns on old preemptions, such as Houston, but in areas that were never part of large agricultural settlement dreams. The Huble Homestead at Giscome Portage, a heritage society based in Prince George, for example, runs school programs for nearby city children, guiding them through butter churning and wool carding (Huble Homestead “Homestead”), even though a family lived in the house at the former commercial hub for only its last few years, and the Huble children spent their winters in the new but substantial town of Prince George.<sup>93</sup> The nuclear family was a late and tangential addition to the settler culture at the site rather than the foundation of that culture. In its combination of rigorous historical research on and archiving of the site’s multiple uses with activities that focus more generally on pioneer women’s and children’s

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<sup>92</sup>Farming for income is a small part of the economy during most of the 20th century. During the Second World War, the combination of increased prosperity and food rationing made some specific sectors of local farming profitable, as well as making kitchen gardens important for any residents who could maintain them. See John Lutz’s *Makúk* (151-152) for broad notes on wartime prosperity, *Stumpfarms and Broadaxes* (144), and Herman Ruiters’ account of the profitable period of seed growing and local vegetable sales in Smith’s *Marks on the Forest Floor* (119-120).

<sup>93</sup>Ironically, men like Albert Huble (who never hung on tenaciously in a marginal industry but sold his suddenly isolated property to someone hoping to create a tourist destination) are in some ways perfectly appropriate “ancestors” to local resource town residents. Huble had many jobs in industries that have become the major non-urban ones, notably retail and transport. Like the many of the Houston pioneers who remained and like Norman Lee, a contemporary who wrote a memoir of one of his own more spectacular failures, *The Klondike Cattle Drive*, Huble was a successful shopkeeper and businessman rather than a successful farmer. And, like many resource town residents, he worked in an instant industry for as long as the market held, then moved — sometimes to another place and sometimes to another form of employment.

tasks, the Huble Homestead and Giscome Portage Society might be an aberration in the British Columbian agricultural and historical tourism industry.<sup>94</sup> As far as I can discover, however, it is the norm rather than the exception, and the stories that the “homestead” overwrites are almost as similar as the resulting presented farms: usually, it seems they were centres outfitting resource and construction workers. Like the Huble store, the historical ranches at 108 Mile and Hat Creek were businesses on gold rush trails. The lone rancher in Houston was a government-contract packer supplying the telegraph construction crews, and his “ranch” was his packhorses’ forage (Houston “Barrett”). Even the cattle ranches of the Cariboo were not supplying beef to populations of growing towns, but to temporary and travelling construction crews and short-lived influxes of prospectors, an economic bubble that forms the background to *Klondike Cattle Drive*, memoirist Norman Lee’s account of his own late and ill-starred endeavours in the industry. Even though houses with gardens were a part of each of these site developments, the narrative of homesteading seems to replace resource extraction and associated transportation and supply industry as the impetus for settler interest in the land. This may be in part because, as Daniel Coleman, Ian McKay, and Eva Mackey (scholars in different fields all studying the development of Canada and Canadian narrative) all point out, part of the story of the Nation is that it has welcomed, even

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<sup>94</sup>The Society’s focus on women and children allows all visitors to imagine their own potential places in the culture, but it is also a part of a decades-old and continuing intellectual and artistic effort to re-insert settler and indigenous women into Canadian cultural memory. Recovery and publication of memoirs such as Susan Alison’s *A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia* and novels such as Daphne Marlatt’s *AnaHistoric* are British Columbian contributions to this effort.

selected immigrants to be settlers in Canada, and awarded them land, because of their virtues — creating these virtues in the process, as Coleman and McKay explain.

From a Twenty-First century perspective, one that, while still liberal in Ian McKay's sense in that it built on the logic of the primacy of the individual, is no longer classically liberal in that it is far closer to a hegemonic assumption of inherent self-possession, it is hard to understand why it had to be patriarchal settler families headed by would-be farmers that made towns into places and potential homes (as defined in this work).<sup>95</sup> These settler narratives in British Columbia draw on varied origins, notably *other* Canadian settlement narratives, but the one that is most important to the expansion of settlement in the early twentieth century (when most resource towns' public narratives date their ancestry), is a narrative of the citizen as a colonist who brings civilization, peace, and prosperity to a subjugated land by establishing a productive estate, overseeing local commerce, and integrating the new subjects into the empire. The story's immediate roots are various late eighteenth early twentieth century settlement programs, all of which aimed to secure the state's control of the land by allotting it to agricultural entrepreneurs based on some measure of their virtue, and part of this virtue was a civic engagement expressed through the willingness to take on military service.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Now, women, the poor, and non-Whites are understood as individuals.

<sup>96</sup>In "The Narcissism of Petty Differences?" Lawrence B. Hatter summarizes Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe's 1792 land policy Proclamation, which granted "at least 200 acres on token payment of fees" to "any settler willing to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown"(Hatter 137). Simcoe's conscious recreation of the hierarchical structure (consistent with McKay's definition of classical liberalism) of what he considered the stable British Empire shows particularly in the further provision that "settlers of good character" could be granted up to 1200 acres. Hatter explains that the agricultural project was specifically designed to expand the colony through commerce "by drawing settlers...to exchange their agricultural produce for British manufactured goods (137).

The twentieth century Canadian version of the citizen farmer was developed and promoted by the Soldier Settlement Board, and addressed extremely local and practical circumstances that were more than adequate to prompt its creation. At the end of the First World War, there were thousands of returning soldiers, more potential workers than could be immediately absorbed by urban industries. In light of the growing worldwide socialist movement, the unrest that led to the Winnipeg General Strike and similar protests, and the nation's definition of itself as "essentially an agricultural nation" (*Canada and Her Soldiers* 25), lending returning soldiers money to start or take over farms and making suitable land available had the potential to solve several problems at once. The men would have work and income, the country would develop its position in the world export market, and the potentially revolutionary masses of unemployed young men in the city would be dispersed. The individualism of farming, supported by a national lending program, also undergirded a commitment to democratic capitalism, although with increased state social intervention. In *Canada and Her Soldiers*, a pamphlet for soldiers about to be demobilized, the development of the program was framed as a sign of the state's benevolence and the nation's gratitude for service in the war (4).

The project was only moderately successful in its aim of having soldiers become successful farmers, although perhaps more successful in dampening the effects of Marxist agitation. As James Murton has explored as part of his work in *Creating a Modern*

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Hatter explains that this first settlement program did not anticipate a unified colony of equals sea to sea, stating that, under Simcoe, "Westerners, outside of Upper Canada, were clients, not citizens of a nation" (139).

*Countryside: Liberalism and Land Resettlement in British Columbia*, its successes were especially modest in British Columbia, where even the little arable land available was heavily forested and far from markets (47-71, 73-5). However, the national project of dreaming of farms and farming communities as the “essence” of the nation took a firm hold in British Columbia.

It is worth pausing to note that the hold this dream of the nation knowing itself to be at its best on the farm may still be increasing in a changed form, particularly among people who want to imagine, rather than run, farms. One form of the dream as it exists today, as the next chapter will show, constructs the Canadian family farm as a bulwark against an unsustainable globalized economic system, a system understood to aggressively conquer the world by extending the capitalist relationships of wage labour and mass consumption. In this dream, the farm is a refuge because the colonial age is not over, and the project of invasion of and change to indigenous cultures around the world continues under the name “Westernization” or “Americanization,” and Canada is at its best in its efforts to decolonize itself and dismantle its structural injustices. “Farming,” as an ideal in the corporate world is therefore a rejection of empire, even of government.

In retrospect, with knowledge of the loss of the cultural vision of the British Empire as good, which drew the Dominion of Canada into the war, and with knowledge of the widespread failure of the returned soldiers’ farms, two arguments dominant in twentieth century British Columbian farming novels become plausible: first that the farm *should* be a retreat from the material world of getting and spending and winning and losing and, more significantly for the loss of pioneering farmers as a story that can support a settler claim to home, that the farms failed because the farmers brought the war

in their hearts to their relationship with the land. (These “arguments” are cultural expectations, of course, and not descriptions of actual farmers’ businesses or their hearts.) At the end of the war, on the other hand, the soldiers-to-farmers project assumed a *kinship* between soldiering and farming, rather than a contrast between the two (again, the assumption is one cultural expectation and does not mean soldiering and farming have much in common). The assumed kinship existed in part because the roles of soldier and farmer had been at least intermittently understood since the classical era to be equally integral in building and maintaining a prosperous and just nation. A corollary of this was that land could be usurped so as to bring peace. This narrative had ancient roots, revived in eighteenth century visions of Britain as a new Roman Republic.<sup>97</sup> When postwar writers revisit soldiers’ farms in fiction, however, they tend to use the historical failure of the soldiers’ settlements to expose the values these soldiers were to represent as not virtues, but as either weaknesses or evils.

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<sup>97</sup>Citizens were farmers in the Roman Republic, and were soldiers in order to protect the home. Through the Marian reforms, the late Republic and early Roman Empire exploited this connection in order to make the expansion of enfranchisement and the expansion of the army co-dependent, leading to both a standing army of volunteers and a system of army pensions in the form of land and administration of them for soldiers. Moreover, the “goodness” of this system for even the lands into which the empire expanded was long understood to be considerable (as was, by analogy, the “goodness” of the British Empire for its colonies) because the trade networks and infrastructure the Roman Empire developed had a legacy of literacy, structural engineering, and relative peace. In the expansion of the European empires, this seems in practice to have meant that any indigenous inhabitants merely had to be understood as warlike for the usurpation of their land to be a good thing. For an overview of the Marian Reforms, see Bert Lott’s “Gaius Marius: The Reforms and The Man.” For a summary of the role of Rome in the development of British Culture after the Glorious Revolution, see Philip Ayres’ *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth Century England*.

Literary fiction representing settler British Columbians as white patriarchs and dependents living on farming (or would-be farming) homesteads emphasizes the violence done to the land, to earlier residents and racialized fellow immigrants, and to women. In such works, this violence originates in the culture that privileges adult white men who understand their strength to be in their ability to claim, hold, and exploit the land and to direct the community, the same culture that allows them to understand the expansion of an empire as a good for all affected. Both Jack Hodgins's *Broken Ground* and Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning* start from a consideration that establishing a farm may be an act of war between nations, whether or not the homesteader realizes it is, and they make the fathers in their narratives returned soldiers who have taken up land through resettlement programs, and who find continuity with the battlefield in their labour. Gail Anderson-Dargatz in particular seems to "anthropomorphize the nation" and to attempt to explore its changes from an expansionist colony to a contemporary multicultural democracy through characters who farm (Coleman 38).

Jack Hodgins's *Broken Ground* explicitly examines a late believer in empire, Matthew Pearson, who is attempting to be a colonial farmer. As Waldemar Zacharsiewicz points out, Hodgins clearly presents the "persistence and dedication of the pioneers" as virtues in this work (141). This army officer, who is also the voice of the empire to its last generation of subjects in that he is the town schoolteacher, eventually finds himself unable to either believe in the good of the empire he has served, or to find meaning through rejecting it. Instead, he and his fellow town residents are left inevitably in place and together, with only a confusion of incompatible practices through which to relate. As

Linda Morra concludes in “Jack Hodgins’s ‘Discovery of Strangers,’ “ the community does coalesce, but is held together by the stories the community has come to tell about itself, and not by “their intimate knowledge of each other” or “a shared ethnicity or culture” (Morra 250; Zacharsiewicz 152).<sup>98</sup> The jagged old-growth stumps that block the farmers’ view and make cultivation nearly impossible could well be the last remains of the dragon’s teeth: the nature of the community and its people’s position in their relationships as a colonial legacy persists.<sup>99</sup>

Through the character of Matthew Pearson, Hodgins looks at the last incarnation of the Roman nexus of soldier, farmer, and citizen, and perhaps the last generation that could understand this man as an ideal. Pearson is an Anglo-Canadian from Ontario; in this, he is parallel to a Roman citizen from a conquered territory granted land in another conquered territory. He wants to farm, but land is no longer freely available in his home province of Ontario. He fights in the war as a colonist for Britain, and he is awarded property on a second, unrecognized front in the same expanding empire, the unceded land of eastern Vancouver Island.

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<sup>98</sup> Morra’s essay title is an allusion to Rudy Wiebe’s 1994 novel of Dene (T’atsaot’ine) contact with the British leaders and Canadian labourers of the first Franklin expedition, *A Discovery of Strangers*.

<sup>99</sup> In his review, Zacharsiewicz sees the events of the novel as culminating in a once alienated community becoming one that can communicate fully. He therefore sees the novel as both ultimately restorative and, as such, reinforcing of “the ‘master narrative’ of Western civilization” (143). Like Morra, I find this a strained reading. As Morra points out, the content and structure of the book, which slowly reveals that every set of multiple voices forming the source material for the “history” has a single curator or author who may be creating a community where the historical subjects felt none, may suggest that “the notion of community is merely a fantasy” (250).

Portuguese Creek (modelled on Merville) is a returned soldiers' settlement in the middle of a logged-off area with poor soil, subject to fire and flood. The dream of settlement is so pervasive that the children prefer to play homesteading instead of any game the adults attempt to import at the Dominion Day picnic and at school (69-70). The men of Portuguese Creek (later called Waterville), as returned soldiers, are on land sold to them as a reward for their service. Pearson has moved from a long-established farm in Ontario and gives up the effort at farming almost as soon as he makes it, in part because his main interest is teaching, and in part because he does not accept the work that would have to be done to make the land produce crops (17, 18).

Pearson recognizes what the story of settlement expects: that is, that the Dominion of Canada is homogenous and its people will find continuity of enterprise and community throughout. Pearson also realizes that this expectation is based on a falsehood convenient to the governmental structures that sent them to clear the land and farm, but not to the would-be farmers themselves (18, 326). The land cannot be farmed with the time, skills, and resources available to the men. What Pearson never quite articulates is that the farmers' use to the nation is instead specifically in clearing and claiming the land, thereby permanently displacing the local First Nations. Whether they individually succeed or go bankrupt, or even live, is irrelevant to the nation. The land has become the property of private citizens and not directly the crown, and certainly not the former inhabitants.

As Pearson's failure to reproduce his father's farm suggests, the continuity for the men in *Broken Ground* is with the battlefield, not with their pre-war lives across the allied countries and the British Empire. Their attempts to remove the stumps are as laborious and as irregularly successful as undermining and sapping was in the trenches,

and the ground is broken, torn, and slashed, but it grows nothing. Moreover, the promise of land to the soldiers as a reward for service specifically links military service to land ownership and citizenship (as soldiers from throughout the British Empire could be settled in the Dominion of Canada),<sup>100</sup> giving the state the power to create imperial citizens from soldiers, rather than the other way around. Hodgins underlines the link between his farmers' actions and their resulting disillusionment by drawing on a poem about the retirement of a warrior under the first monarch to claim Canada (Elizabeth I) as colony. The poem is George Peele's "Polyhymnia" (also called "His Golden Locks Time Hath to Silver Turned"), the source of the phrase "A Farewell to Arms," and of Hodgins's section title "A Helmet for Bees." As Ewan Fernie explains, Henry Lee, the subject of the poem, was Elizabeth's champion and "chief architect of her myth." Lee's celebrated military accomplishments were jousts, pointless except as spectacle and glorifications of the monarch. As the colonial soldiers in Europe found during the Great War, the champion takes his meaning from his service, but there is no clear moral point at stake. The champion's comfort in his retirement remains his blind and conventional dedication to his monarch's virtues:

And when he saddest sits in homely cell,  
 He'll teach his swains this carol for a song:  
 "Blest be the hearts that wish my sovereign well,  
 Curst be the souls that think her any wrong." (13-16)

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<sup>100</sup>The creation of citizens and farmers *from* soldiers by granting them agricultural lands in conquered territories was likewise the key innovation of the Marian reforms.

“Polyhymnia” imagines no heterodox thoughts for Lee, but Hodgins’s readers have access to Matthew Pearson’s post-war diary, and it is clear he has no comfort in a parallel fealty. In the novel, Pearson shifts from being part of the community of the empire, to absolute rejection of it, to a permanent sort of homelessness, returning to the community of Empire but now in art only. These shifts are shown primarily in his cycles of fidelity to and neglect, even betrayal, of his farm, his marriage, and his son, and secondarily in the material he teaches his students. Notably, before the war, he teaches and loves to quote the works of Chaucer, Browning, and Kipling (54). When he takes over the school at Waterville, he shifts to teaching Eliot’s *The Wasteland*, only to return to the comforts of “Chaucer and Tennyson and ‘all those other old fellows’” (327-328). At the end of the novel, readers learn that Pearson’s year-long sojourn to post-war France, along with his love for and then the loss of his French daughter (in the forest fire), blights his relationship with his son, Tanner. The damage to the father-son relationship somewhat falsifies the redemptive thrust of the concluding chapters. Tanner, Pearson’s stake in the future of the farm and of the settlement, is unable to find comfort in the community as his home, and he eventually leaves (345). As unhappy as Pearson’s fate is, he still fares better than his peers, as his teaching post means he is never forced into the deadly work of logging.

Pearson’s final role in the community, as its teacher, is symbolically significant. The Ontarian Pearson, as the educator, is the strongest link the community has to the cultural traditions of the British Empire and the older parts of Canada. In abandoning his

farm, he mimics the centre of the country and the empire of which it is a part.<sup>101</sup> In his attempt to find a way to live with himself and with his role in the deaths of his pre-war students, his brother-in-law's lover, and his own daughter, he neglects both his dependent family and the boy, Charlie Mackinaw, who has adopted him as a hero and substitute father, and who represents the young and likewise half-orphaned community. The parent culture's post-war reparations are symbolically misdirected, and so is the infant community's attachment. Charlie, like the Waterville that never notices Mary Reimer, fails to rejoice that he has a second progenitor still present, and does not notice the effect on her of his struggle to mean something to Pearson. (Pearson likewise does not think of his youngest child, Will.)<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> In this, Pearson's sharpest contrast in Canadian literature is Margaret Atwood's reimagined Susanna Moodie, who aggressively claims the land that has claimed her drowned son, anchoring herself with his burial and declaring "I planted him in this country like a flag" ("Death of a Young Son by Drowning" [33]). The event, at the mid point in Atwood's text, and after it, Moodie increasingly identifies herself as a voice from the land rather than the ever-increasing immigrant population. Moodie is no happier than Pearson, but she is so settled she believes she has seeped into the soil.

<sup>102</sup> I seem to be unusual in considering that the novel may ultimately reject Pearson as any kind of unifying figure, and may reject his vision of unification through a shared story as necessary and good. Morra offers the audience's reaction to the film based on the town history as evidence that the stories are indeed shared and agreed upon (so community is not merely a fantasy), but she does not consider the culminating event in the showing, which is that Pearson's brother-in-law, Donald, tears off his prosthetic mask and seems to rage incomprehensibly at the screen. Donald, whose face has been shot away, is the embodiment of the damage of war and intolerance, and was the great love of a soldier whose execution for desertion Pearson oversaw. By the time he reacts to the film, the residents of Portuguese Creek have spent 7 decades assuming he unable to comprehend anything around him. When he finally rejects both his mask and the film, he reveals both that the legacy of the soldiers' destructive (if persistent and dedicated) struggles is ever-present, and that his failure to enter the community has been wilful. My reading of the place of Pearson as representative of the parental and unredeemable colonial nation seems largely compatible with that of Neta Gordon, published after this chapter was developed (57-72). Gordon also sees Donald's response to the film as central to the

The central puzzles of the novel are when, if ever, the settlers come to be at home, and whether their “home” (the interdependent community they eventually establish in place) is dependent on their failure to recognize that they serve a bad cause: they grow closer, but their best efforts bring destruction and death, with no regeneration following.<sup>103</sup> Pearson, Charlie, and the other townspeople and their descendants remain “local” because they have the story of establishing the farms together, however many failed. As in *Distance*, Hodgins’s theme is not the same as the preoccupation of any of his characters, however aware they are of living out their lives as stories. They do not recognize their presence in Waterville as military occupation, but Hodgins keeps the war present, even in small details such as the relationship of the rest of the town with Mary Reimer and her husband, Carl.

Mary is local and indigenous and has been displaced by colonial activity, but she and her husband are still in place before the soldiers arrive. The effects of the war come to the Reimers when the soldiers are “settled” in town. Only Reimer makes money in this town, as he takes the wood the others log off and sells it back to them as badly milled timber. War and even fire are good for the finances of Reimer, who is identified as Swiss. Reimer is both the only man who is not a soldier and the only man revealed to be comfortable with violence. The other people know the house is a violent one, but they do nothing to help (26-27, 227). Carl Reimer can serve as a metaphor for multinational corporations around the world in unequal partnerships with indigenous communities if

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novel’s theme, though she seems willing to accept that Charlie knows the source of Donald’s rage.

<sup>103</sup>The story’s deviation from traditional comic endings makes this clear. If the departing Wyatt Taylor and Johanna Seyerstad marry, their union brings no life to the community – in which children die but none are born.

the resettled imperial soldiers parallel the expanding Canadian state, its ultimately destructive ideals, and its wilful blindness to the vulnerability of the dispossessed First Nations people. Appropriately, Reimer takes no part in any of the communal activities, but Mary is in the middle of all of them. Mary's weakness is also only in her position: it has nothing to do with courage, character, or insight. She directly challenges Pearson's articulation of the community's assumption about the land, but nothing comes of it:

“Well, at least we didn't steal this place from anyone, Mary. If we'd taken it from someone we'd be thinking now that we'd been punished for it.

“You think you didn't take it from nobody?” she said. There was a dangerous edge to her voice. (249)

Pearson's obtuseness about his own involvement in, dependency on, and furthering of the work of empire is the crooked timber from which all of Waterville, all of Merville, and all of the twentieth-century province of British Columbia are built. Like Pearson, the characters in *Broken Ground* clearly, if erroneously, believe their story to be a failed Edenic story, one of peaceable people rejecting the violent world. They also think of themselves as rugged individualists, celebrating the departed “Wyatt” in a yearly ritual as if he were every western hero who ever rode a horse, but his availability for adoption as a mythic figure rests only on his general appearance and his romantic entrance (first riding into town in a smouldering hat and coat), not on any particular of his character or action. In fact, he is as destructive to the town as was the war because he carries the fire down from the mountains on the logging train. Wyatt, the man in the hat on a horse — bearing the name of a famous American gunslinger — symbolizes a new and distinctly North American ethos in counterpoint to his friend Pearson, the old empire (as his

centrality to the town's new rituals on Dominion Day suggests), but his legacy is no less troubling a mix.<sup>104</sup> He is the town's new hero, even perhaps Charlie's (who divides his armour — the rapidly disintegrating hat and coat — with Matthew's son, Tanner Pearson), but only because they need a story in common. He also leaves, after having tended Pearson's farm in the latter's period of atonement and rebuilding in Europe. Pearson returns to Waterville, and the "dominion" of this part of Canada returns to control with him, even if Wyatt permanently holds the imaginative centre. At the novel's conclusion, the confused identity of the town, with its necessary but necessarily ironic stories in common, is irresolvable. The people are unable to have a consensus why Waterville is home other than that they all recognize the players. Pearson says to Charlie, the fatherless boy:

Your Father brought you to live amongst people strong enough... to make something out of what was only a bunch of strangers that had been badly misled. You could have done worse. (351)

Hodgins's use of the farm and a would-be farming community is, as is everything in Hodgins, complicated and less than certain in its results. Hodgins's *Broken Ground* is at once clearly about the transformation of forest into farm as a creation of home in a realist novel, and a deliberate examination of story applied to life through the figures of Matthew Pearson, Wyatt Taylor, and Charlie MacIntosh, the boy who idolizes both men and carries their stories to the 1998 reader. Hodgins's various settler narrators, but

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<sup>104</sup> Wyatt Taylor's name also connects him both to champion Henry Lee's uncle Thomas Wyatt, the English diplomat, poet, and famously spurned lover of a queen (Taylor comes to town to woo Nora Macken and is rejected), and to Lee's cousin, rebel leader Henry Wyatt the Younger.

especially Charlie MacIntosh, recount a good deal of Vancouver Island settlement history, enough to make both the story of the Canadian homestead as the root of the nation and the largely spurious nature of this homesteading story (as history) in British Columbia very apparent. The logging is ever-present, as are the stumps of previous logging. The townspeople have so little in common that they do not know how to bury their dead. On the last page of the story, they still cannot move the stumps even with dynamite, but they understand themselves as “hard-to-scare-off settlers” (351). Through it all, the story the settlers apply most to themselves is that they are farmers. This story is inaccurate, inappropriate to their activity, and still completely irreplaceable.

At the end of the 1920s section of *Broken Ground*, the settlers in Waterville, the fictional version of Hodgins’s hometown of Merville, are left triumphant in spirit and pursuing success on individual homesteads. The books that chronicle the later life in the town, *The Macken Charm* and *Distance*, make it clear that the settlement rapidly returns to bush, with little extensive agriculture, and with the later generations, like the first, employed in logging and other industries. In spite of the farms’ failures, the work of the empire (here the Dominion of Canada) has succeeded in that the land remains privately owned and part of the larger social structure. The soldiers of Waterville have managed to create a home for the state, a narrative of the place that continues to allow Canada to grant the land to whomever proves the best stewards of it, but the inhabitants have not necessarily made a home for themselves. The descendants of the farmers, now mostly loggers, have little popular national support for their claim to home by the mid-nineties, when they square off against environmental activists in *Distance* (326-329). Moreover, Mary Reimer’s son Tom, who was a boy on the town site before the soldiers arrived,

remains powerful and angry at the end of the last novel. The final settler protagonist, Sonny (Dennis) Aalto, knows Reimer will not forgive him and is awaiting a reckoning of some sort (371). Aalto has plans to live on his father's "farm" so he can re-join the Portuguese Creek community, which he left as a young man, but he does not speak to Reimer (375, 381).

Hodgins's continuing, explicit exploration of the provisional nature of home, especially non-indigenous home, is rare, however. The now-elderly town chronicler of *Broken Ground*, the bachelor Charlie MacIntosh, takes farming as definitive of Merville's early settlement, and he emphasizes the self-sufficiency of the settlers. By showing readers what is hidden from Charlie, Hodgins makes them aware that Charlie's view is limited and somewhat sterile, and that his early tragic losses and poorly chosen idols may have imprisoned the man in the boy. Nevertheless, Charlie's poignant effort to preserve the heroic and virtuous status of the workers of the empire reappears throughout the province. Often, this preservation can only be achieved by ascribing contemporary values and motivations to historical figures, and most particularly by replacing their clear efforts to survive through mastery of the capitalist state with imagined efforts attempts to distance themselves from both capitalism and the state. Applied to ranching, this re-imagining might explain how the Chilcotin beef barons of the gold rush days might become ancestors to St. Pierre's reclusive Smith, who has been so popular that he became a CBC show, but, as the next chapter explores, the same process of re-imagining settlers as people attempting to escape the social structure they extend and entrench appears in stories of full communities. The process of estranging contemporary settler farming from the values supporting the expansive homesteading that secured the land as (settler)

property also makes the moral arc of Gail Anderson–Dargatz’s *The Cure For Death by Lightning*.

*The Cure for Death by Lightning* deals with many of the themes of Hodgins’s *Broken Ground*, including the destructiveness of the imperial legacy on the land, on the local First Nations, and on the settlers themselves. In Hodgins’s novel, Pearson and the other settlers fail to recognize themselves as soldiers in a colonial war that is waged through their efforts to make their fairly meagre living, and Pearson’s short exchange with Mary Reimer opens a dialogue with the contemporary settler reader. In this, Hodgins’s novel might destabilize a contemporary construction of settler innocence. *The Cure for Death*, on the other hand, which contrasts the stewardship of a farm under two generations, sets up an inter-gender, inter-generational contest for home within the story, and presents the younger settler-farmer and the cultural shift she represents as an improvement over her father and the centralized empire he fought for, thereby symbolically addressing and apparently resolving the colonial legacy within the text. *The Cure for Death*’s patriarch, John Weeks represents whiteness, maleness, colonialism, and the possessive individualism of the liberalism that McKay explains as defining Canada in its period of expansion — incidentally, much the way Daniel Coleman explains early Canadian authors like Ralph Connor do — although *The Cure* does not participate in any of the myths Coleman identifies, and her final community seems to expel the “Britishness” that Coleman associates with myths of “White civility.” At the end of the story, the farm is productive, a long-standing dispute with a neighbour is resolved through a redress payment and a contract, strong social, civic, and cultural ties are built with both indigenous and settler communities, and Beth Weeks, the younger farmer,

seems set to form a partnership with a Billy, half-Okanagan, half-German man raised in a First Nations cultural tradition. The community is inclusive enough in its new form that it also enfold the father, who must be cared for but remains powerless. The implication is that the daughter, a victim of her father's privilege, rather than inheriting from her father, is a part of a revolution that has produced a just and egalitarian culture, itself a hybrid of the strengths of her heritage and Billy's.

*The Cure for Death* clearly creates a narrative of a "good" settler home, and does it through the defeat of a colonial citizen-soldier's worldview. However, in making its antagonist, John Weeks, symbolic of all forms of predation, and its protagonist, Beth Weeks, symbolic of all forms of victimization, *The Cure for Death* collapses the colonial state, patriarchal power, environmental exploitation, and male sexual desire into a single conscious evil (identified with both Satan and Coyote), and local community, contemporary egalitarian ideals, environmental regeneration, and the desires of all marginalized people (including the dispossessed First Nations people) into a representative bisexual young woman. This is the structure of allegory, and the invitation is to identify Beth with goodness because she opposes clear evil. When contemporary settler readers understand Beth as good, however, they create their own innocence: the values Beth embodies are the dominant contemporary Canadian settler ones and re-inscribe contemporary settlers as having progressed beyond their forefathers, much as Eva Mackey explores in "Becoming Indigenous;" that is, Beth embodies tolerance, and recognition of a responsibility to heal the land — and she has learnt these values from once disregarded First Nations teachers. The trouble is that Beth's "goodness" consists mostly of surviving the evil that pursues her, including in the form of her father, and the

evil John embodies is not as much a historical one as it is particularly negative contemporary judgment against the practices and effects of colonialism in the settlement period. This means that Beth's "innocence" — and that of readers who understand her to be representative of good settlement — is constructed through a false contrast. The novel's realistic details, which evoke habits of thrift on wartime farms across Canada, combined with its interplay with widely-read Canadian works (mostly in a tradition of realism), help disguise that neither of the main characters can be fruitfully read as representative of any historical figures.

In the novel, John Weeks is a returned soldier from the First World War who married in England and brought his bride to 1920s Turtle Valley, as he is there by summer of 1921 (82). Turtle Valley seems to be a semi-fictional community perhaps between Kamloops and Salmon Arm, as both towns are mentioned in the text (7, 48). (There is a "Turtle Valley" in the area, near Chase which has been a forestry-dependent town since it was established in 1907 [*Destination BC* "Chase"], but no town of Promise, no Turtle Creek, no Blood Road, and no Turtle Valley Reserve.<sup>105</sup>) The first chapter opens in the spring of 1942, "in the midst of the Second World War," when only the older men, the women, and the infirm are left to manage the farms (2). From the homey and eccentric recipes in the scrapbook that frames the novel (the scrapbook recipes are indexed on the last page [297]), to the details of a trade economy, harvest practices, and

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<sup>105</sup>The Chase Chamber of Commerce explains that the area of Turtle Valley was long "known primarily for its logging, sawmills, and ranches." It was "settled" in the late 1900s ("Around the District – Turtle Valley"). Anderson-Dargatz mentions that the Weeks pasture their sheep on "Adam's Plateau, Hunter's Range, and Queest [a mountain] (7). These areas are all around Shuswap Lake, as is Turtle Valley, but are up to 100 km apart.

prohibitions on purchasing luxuries, the narrative's emphasis is on the local production of everything possible. If this local trade is a virtue, however, it is at once enforced and corrupted by the community's understanding of it as their contribution to the violent conflict in Europe — a war ethos Beth's mother resists just enough that she hoards flour so as to be able to welcome everyone to the house with fresh baking (55).

Anderson-Dargatz's community might evoke a specific time, but it should not be understood as drawing on a specific place the way Lane's, Hodgins's, or even Wilson's works do. Her Turtle Valley is an exclusively agricultural community at a time and in a place where such a community would be surprising. All the people in the town of Promise seem to be farmers and (possibly) ranchers, except the doctor, the storeowner, and the motel owner. Certainly all of the people in Turtle Valley are farmers, and none mentions timber sales in spite of the heavily forested interior setting and the long history of logging in the area. In this, the full community economics are unlikely to have a real world counterpart, especially given that the Weeks seem to be relatively poor in the farming economy but deliver cream "by train to Palm Dairies in Kamloops" (48), and produce mutton, wool, alfalfa, fruit, corn, and flax (60). The survival since 1906 of the nearby Aveley sheep ranch suggests a few farms managed (Aveley "Our Story"), but Turtle Valley, including the town of Promise, seems to be a fairly substantial community (52-60). Even so, no one sells logs, except as Christmas trees (250), drives a rig, mines, or works in a mill — all activities that increased throughout the province during the war period (Lutz 152-153). The community's farmers are also a little unusual: when the Swede burns the Weeks's flax field, he does not seem to worry that a wildfire on the farm

next to his at the end of harvest in a valley bottom might endanger him, much less the whole area (215).

In addition to the depiction of economic stability as based entirely in agricultural industry, the novel's depiction of the First Nations people creates a space for an indigenous matriarch, Bertha Moses, to introduce and tell stories about Coyote and to contrast settler and First Nations cultures, and make clear whatever local knowledge settlers have failed to acquire (15, 72, 108-9, 117-120, 168-173, 211). Part of what they misunderstand about the area is that they do not know the local god and his power: Bertha explains that her family's physical and neurological oddities (mismatched eyes, webbed fingers, extra digits, and whatever causes Billy's swearing and seizures) come about because they are Coyote's children (189). This emphasis on Bertha as the authority on the inexplicable events (and on Bertha herself as somewhat magic, as her shadow can throttle a man [114]) is not accompanied by the same sort of meticulous historical realism that establishes the mid-war moment in the town of Promise. Bertha and her family show no knowledge of Secwepemctsin (Shuswap), although it was still widely spoken and Bertha did not attend residential school, as her comments on its effects on her daughter show (190). There are no adult First Nations men of any age alive in the book. The Weeks trade butter and cream for Bertha's wild huckleberry jam (73, 117, 135). However, Bertha's family would have been as likely as the people in the rest of the valley to grow their own produce and keep cows, if they were reflective of participants in the

indigenous subsistence economy, as John Lutz's research suggests (Lutz 161, 262).<sup>106</sup> The western/ indigenous food trade seems included mostly to emphasize that women are happy to make cultural bridges, rather than battles, and that the settler and First Nations women's traditions give them different resources. Most importantly, Bertha's shows her mastery of the surrounding bush and what it contains. Even the hardships the First Nations people face, though severe, are not the most obvious historical ones. Most of Bertha's family suffers disfigurement, and many of the dozen or so deaths (which involve being ravaged by either wild beasts or a predatory spirit) are those of children from the reserve (131, 162, 172). At the same time, the book gives no hint of very real epidemic that Mary-ellen Kelm explains filled the Coqualeetza sanatorium at Sardis with exclusively First Nations residents in the 1940s (*Colonizing Bodies* 123-125).<sup>107</sup> In all, it seems that the First Nations characters, like John and Beth Weeks, are primarily allegorical, and are symbols of a sort of true knowledge of and faith in the local gods, and perhaps of a certain martyrdom to this faith the hands of the settlers. In keeping with this focus on the spiritual and cultural conflict between races as more pressing than questions of who has access to what resources, Bertha and her family's criticisms of "Whites" are of their Christian stories and violence used to spread them (notably the residential school system), and do not mention land use (121).

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<sup>106</sup> Lutz's most detailed explanation of the wartime economy for a First Nations group is about the Tsilhqot'in, who raised dairy and beef cattle, sold fur, and grew hay and oats (150-153).

<sup>107</sup> Kelm elsewhere explains that, in 1940, 43.7% of all B.C. First Nations deaths were from TB, and, of those, 80% of the victims were under thirty ("A Scandalous Procession" 57). Kelm also notes that the sanatorium in the Kamloops area (Tranquille) would not take First Nations patients (*Colonizing Bodies* 12).

The symbolism in the book is not unduly subtle, but the book's reception suggests that the narrative is most appreciated for its seemingly historical features — its ability to represent culture as it was. This trend in appreciation is problematic, because it is the apparent contrast between John and Beth as stewards of the land that lets the book participate in what Mackey identifies as the national myth of settler benevolence and national *progress* to a just and egalitarian state: for someone like Beth today to have as great a claim to home as someone like Billy, and a greater claim than someone like John, the Weeks would have to represent actual historical change in ideology and land practice by the generations of settlers they represent, not just two ways of being farmers or settlers. In a book praised for its realism, however, this representation of contrasting ideologies and practices – the core of an argument about good and evil — is not realistic.

Both literary and popular reviewers' comments suggest that all Anderson–Dargatz's inclusions and omissions about life in wartime rural British Columbia produce a profile of culture and a place with a believable physical counterpart. Of Anderson–Dargatz's ability to create a sense of the time and place in this book, one reviewer says, “I flipped to the publication data expecting to confirm my suspicions that the author was born sometime around the Great Depression” (McGowan 29). The novel was reviewed in *Macleans*, *Broken Pencil*, *The Times Literary Supplement*, and many newspapers and other journals. Almost all of the reviews make some reference to the realism of the book's physical and historical details, frequently remarking on its authenticity. Realism is of course a technique, one used to great effect in science fiction, but the reviewers seem to take the book as also “true-to-life,” in that it appears to reflect real conditions in the British Columbian interior in the mid-twentieth century. Lynne Van Luven of *The*

*Edmonton Journal* goes so far as to say Anderson–Dargatz’s book reminds her of her own childhood on a “farm in a remote section of Canada” (F.5). If the story were set in downtown Toronto, or in a Newfoundland outpost, it would have been immediately recognized as fantastical because people would have some idea what was being overwritten.

When the reviewers above, celebratory or slightly less so, recognize Anderson–Dargatz’s ability to evoke a sense of a wartime farm, however, they are recognizing not good local historical recreation, but good conformance to Canadian and wartime fictional tropes, especially ones about farms and the people who live on them (and probably conformance to an expectation that First Nations/ settler tensions between neighbours would be almost exclusively cultural, rather than economic). In failing to recognize the fantastical nature of the “realistic” setting, readers slip into misreading the allegory as representative of historical Shuswap residents (settler, Metis and Secwepemc) and as representative of these people’s understandings of their cultural roles.

The cutting, hauling, blasting, digging, and road building that dominated the interior wartime economy has so little place in the popular and literary national imagination that their absence is unnoticed.<sup>108</sup> *The Cure for Death By Lightning* is a rich and compelling book, but compelling rather for the breadth and subtly of its use of

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<sup>108</sup>John Lutz looks at this expansion through the lens of First Nations employment in the “new industry” (to the immediate area but also to much of the newly-accessible interior) of “logging and sawmilling” – which drew even the Tsilhqot’in “among the most isolated Aboriginal Peoples in the country” in to wage work (151-153). See also McGillivray *Canada* (316-317).

convention and allusion than for its originality.<sup>109</sup> Most relevant for this project, however, is that the pervasiveness of the imaginary Canadian farm was so absolute in 1996, as was the farm's importance as a norm modelling regeneration through the elimination of the source of death and sterility (the land-hungry father), that the Weeks's farm was universally recognized as familiar, in both literary and popular reviews, but its precise

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<sup>109</sup>The allusions are particularly to other 20thC Canadian works, many from the 1990s. For example, the scrapbook frame allows a child to investigate her mother's life through traces left in domestic objects, a technique Carol Shields had just used to great effect in *The Stone Diaries*. The deranged patriarch, equally possessive of his daughter's sexuality and his land, including his flax field, and equally transgressive in attempting to preserve both, are found in Martha Ostenso's *The Wild Geese*, as is John's attempt to rob his neighbour of property. Mrs. Bentley's reaction to Phillip's infidelity in Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House* models Beth's mother's reaction to John's pursuit and rape of Beth, as both women focus their compassion on their husbands rather than on the girls. As in *The Cure for Death by Lightning*, "half-breed" farmhands are the only unpropertied males in Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook*. In Watson's book, Kip, like Filthy Billy, is a vehicle for a malevolent manifestation of Coyote, and Anderson-Dargatz's Coyote is only malevolent, so much so that the "Indian" woman, Bertha, explains that he possesses people the way biblical demons do (72). Anderson-Dargatz's Coyote is therefore entirely comparable to the Coyote that Kip sees in *The Double Hook*, "shoving the brand between a man's teeth right into his belly's pit," without the double nature shared by most characters in Watson (Watson 50). Nora follows young First Nations women in Hubert Evans's *Mist on the River* and Margaret Craven's *I Heard the Owl Call my Name* in leaving for the city and, if Billy's prophecy is correct, finding only trouble and being unable to return (Anderson-Dargatz 284). Even Beth's ability to see a child or the ghost of a child locked in an attic (59), one that only a restricted and religious young girl like Beth notices, appears in a Hodgins short story in *Spit Delaney's Island*, "Three Women of the Country" (Hodgins 24-69). The vulnerable turtles wandering across the landscape seem to be a bump to both Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and possibly Gary Snyder's use of the Iroquois conception of North America/ the world as "Turtle Island" (Van Andruss has also used a Turtle Island logo on *Lived Experiences* since 2000). The creation of Turtle Island by First Woman is a creation story in Thomas King's 1993 novel, *Green Grass, Running Water*. The shell-shocked father's "worshipful respect" for the turtles crossing the road, when he has little feeling for the people around them (47), echoes Robert Ross's attempt to save the horses in Timothy Findley's *The Wars* (itself recalling Robert Graves's compassion for the field mice in his memoir *Goodbye to All That*).

influences were never reviewed as clearly literary rather than historical.<sup>110</sup> This confusion supports a possible story of settler home — if only there were good enough settlers.

The shift from John Weeks's stewardship of the farm to Beth's is an argument that it is not settlement itself, with its displacement of First Nations people from their homes and alteration to their lands, that is hard to maintain as a story of virtue, but settlement by bad people. The narratives of types of farmer in *The Cure for Death By Lightning*, the exploitative John Weeks and his nurturing daughter, Beth, are an allegory of contrasts in novel form that mirrors a shift (historical and ongoing) in norms that contain different stories of what a good farmer is, a contrast shown even in the difference in how they milk cows. John is literally too grasping, and Beth observes that "he yanked on the cows' teats as if they were ropes," but she and her mother milk "to the rhythm of [their] own heartbeats" (39). John, who ends up in the mental hospital, is an exaggeration into madness of the virtues of the farmer as the ideal citizen of a good empire, whereas Beth represents the modern virtues of the farmer as a caretaker of everything that lives.

By 1996, when Anderson–Dargatz's novel appeared, the idea that a soldier should be granted land to farm and would bring prosperity to his new home *because* of his military virtues was absurd. The popular understanding of both what soldiers did and why, and what men did to land and why, had shifted to understand men (specifically) as being driven by a psychological need to conquer and control. John Weeks is not a representative patriarch of an early to mid-century Kamloops-area farm; instead, he is an allegory for a late-twentieth-century theory of patriarchy. In *The Cure for Death by*

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<sup>110</sup>I do not mean to suggest that as narrative with greater adherence to an area's historical data would be more factual, just that this story is largely *counterfactual* and sometimes read and reviewed as if it were carefully following history in place.

*Lightning*, John Weeks's elaborate and destructive projects to move the line of his fence by a foot show the damage done to him by the war to be in part an internalization of the war and a habit of seeing the world around him as continuous with the battlefields he left. His project to eradicate his neighbour's living fence and replace it with barbed wire is also clearly a manifestation of his insanity, which has its root in his head injury, which in turn allows him to be possessed by the demonic Coyote. Even Coyote's aim is solely to conquer and destroy, with the generative trickster of both Thomas King and the local Secwepemc storyteller Harry Robinson entirely unconsidered. As Bertha says while explaining John's exclusively predatory and destructive appetites, this novel's local god is a part of a Judeo-Christian cosmogony:

Once he's born into this world, he slips off and goes walking until he finds somebody to have fun with, eh? He takes that somebody over, see? Possesses him, like them demons in the Bible. Coyote has an awful thirst. Can't satisfy him nohow, that's what makes him so bad. (72)

Like her use of Canadian small family farm tropes, Anderson-Dargatz's collapsing of rape, the consequences of colonialism, and the existence and legacy of war into the figure of an insane and resolutely Christian patriarch (in communion with an equally predatory and irrational god) who must be purged from the land is a twentieth-century theoretical and literary commonplace, perhaps most familiar to students of Canadian literature through Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*. This project's consideration of the all-controlling patriarch, however, is limited to uncovering an assumption it requires about the construction and maintenance of a norm that links individual, local community, and state behaviours. The amalgamation (into the figure of

an old white man) of all human violence and injustice, from the micro level of a single rape, to the middle level of property dispute, to the macro level of thousands of years of war, suggests a metaphorical extension of the historical sanction for right-of-conquest in warfare to all interactions.

It is not clear, however, from long boom era settler narrative — public, popular, or literary — that residents identify themselves as conquerors, even benevolent ones. The only “good” patriarch I have found who civilizes through violence is John Crease in Wilson’s *Once You Break a Knuckle*, discussed in the second chapter, and Wilson shows Crease’s town to be dystopian and corruptive — and steadily worsening. In contrast, John Weeks is a representative of a soldier-farmer as what the state once supported as the ideal citizen, even though he is exaggerated to show the destructiveness of extending military virtues to interactions with both land and community. John Weeks is at once representative man, rapist, and symbol of a bloodthirsty and land hungry empire.<sup>111</sup> It is the representative man part that is problematic: any understanding of John Weeks as not only realistic but typical of a settler benefiting from the state confuses settlers’ limited knowledge and their expectations of homesteading with the destructive effects of their settlement on both the First Nations’ people and on the environment. This suggests a level of awareness, in actual farmers, of their role in colonialism that is not supported in the novel or elsewhere.

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<sup>111</sup> This reduction of violent colonialism to male sexuality is rooted in theory born of critics such as Carol P. Christ, a Yale-educated specialist in goddess religions, who claims that in the patriarchal “ethos of war,” “men dominate women through the control of female sexuality, with the intent of passing property to male heirs,” and “are told to kill men, and are permitted to rape women, to seize land and treasures, to exploit resources, and to own or otherwise dominate conquered people” (Christ ).

Gail Anderson-Dargatz's book might seem to show, through John, the inadequacy of the narratives that underlie the good empire as a story through which a settler community can claim home. It does not, but *Beth's* stewardship of the farm does, as does the book's construction of Beth's "goodness" through her care for, employment of, and inspiration of devotion in subservient, monolingually English, and charity-dependent First Nations characters — themselves people who seem to be exiled from a larger group that retains status and does not seem to trade with local farmers (even though the people they represent were as likely to *be* local farmers as were their settler neighbours). Beth, not John, flourishes as a benevolent matriarch on lands available to her because the potential First Nations' claimants are so well provided for with traditional resources they somehow do not need the land of the Weeks' farm to provide anything but variety. The problem is that the two ideologies that the figures of John and Beth Weeks embody are actually the same ideology, the classical liberalism that undergirds the hierarchies and dispossessions of colonialism — it is just that John is self-aware and deliberately evil in a way that has nothing to do with any hegemonic or potentially hegemonic ideology. Thus John, by being written as inherently morally inferior, becomes a scapegoat for the *effects* of colonialism. Beth and what she represents become innocent because she is morally superior, and she gets to keep the land. Beth Weeks does not represent or even point to the need for a post-colonial British Columbia.

The voice of the post-colonial future (whatever that may be and if it comes at all) comes to Matthew Pearson from Mary Reimer, who has never found straight timber nor stones and mortar necessary for home. Mary Reimer does not need development or cultivation, but land and local knowledge. When Pearson admits that he "can't get

worked up to believe” in his “Ontario house” of stone and has abandoned his construction, just as he will soon abandon farming (248), she tells him she still carries the house in his mind, saying, “It’s a disease you brought with you from that other place, eh.” Considering the loss of his vision, a loss his peevishness with her suggests he resents, she says: “Maybe it is a good thing you stopped it. All it showed is you don’t think much of this place the way God made it” (248).

Pearson’s vision has no afterlife in the community, even though he becomes a more official shaper of culture through his job as a teacher. Reimer’s suggestion that a farmer and homesteader should consider a divine order, perceptible in the land itself and found by acting in harmony with it, is common to both the story homesteaders as exemplars of isolated, self-reliant family farmers, seeking retreat from a wasteful world) and the story of spiritual connectedness to the land (articulated in accounts of being selected by the land as a resident). Like the largely eroded story of farming homesteaders as businessmen extending the good empire, these stories and the values residents associate with them circulate in public narratives of resource towns and in British Columbian fiction to support settler claims to home in contested space.

## Chapter 4: Farms in Eden: Stories of Home as Part of an Eternal Balance

When Mary Reimer, the only indigenous character in Jack Hodgins's novel *Broken Ground*, chides Matthew Pearson for thinking that he can only make himself at home by building a stone house like his father's, she suggests that Matthew's sense of alienation from the land is partly his own fault. Matthew is trying to make both the land and society conform to his preconceptions, preconceptions born in the tradition represented by his Ontario home and the rolling productive farmland that surrounded it. This attempt is doomed to fail, and not only because the soil that Matthew has exposed under the rainforest will never yield a substantial income, much less be a part of a booming agricultural centre; it will also fail because, as Mary Reimer suggests, Matthew is unable to see "this place the way God made it" (248). Mary's criticism suggests that Matthew and the other settlers could be good people for their place if they could see what the land is really like rather than imposing their own notions of home on it. By extension, they might likewise have a society appropriate to place if they could see each other clearly, rather than thinking that the cultural expectations they have inherited through their religions, ethnicities, and social positions should be met in their new home. The values in this short exchange between Reimer and Pearson are the seeds of an alternative story through which settlers can support their claim to be at home: Pearson and his peers can have a home if they work with the needs of the land, if they can recognize that wealth in this place is found in the steady and nurtured growth of living things rather than in financial success, and if they can work with Mary and her family as equals, listening to

them as experts in how to live well locally. Pearson resists Mary's point to her face, saying that she "brought Reimer onto this place" before the soldiers' community was formed, and that, by implication, she wanted settlers to "make something new out of this place"(249). He also privately accepts the rightness of her opposition to him, however, recognizing that "[he] was saying unkind things to people he liked, people he respected and had never wished any harm, but saying them anyway because it seemed as though these things just had to be said" (249). In his grief and anger at his daughter's death, he partially recognizes that his cultural vision, that source of the "things that just had to be said," is itself destructive and that he already does have more egalitarian and responsive relationships with his neighbours. His antisocial moments reveal that he has developed something of an alternative story of what could make Portuguese Creek his home.

Like the home claimed through a story of the expansion of a good empire, this second settler home is also a claim made through an understanding of property based in settlers' direct and exclusive interaction with the land through work. It shares with accounts of the good colonists' homestead the values of industry, thrift, and something like entrepreneurship (though here it is self-sufficiency), but it replaces the emphasis on cultural or direct settler ancestry with an amalgamated community of elective family (reflecting contemporary values of an accepting society), and it replaces the emphasis on commercial success with success made apparent through the rewarding fertility of the land settlers occupy. These changes — of ignoring the temporal linearity of both progress and ancestry and emphasizing biological rather than financial growth — make the story of the settler farm a type of Edenic narrative, outside time and measured (within its own

narrative) in its claim of home by a natural or divine authority (the land) rather than by any secular or social body.

This chapter takes up Mary Reimer's suggestion that, however they come to shelter and provide for themselves, settlers have to step out of the story of settlement, change, and progress or they can never be at home. Here, I consider stories that present protagonists who set themselves apart from the larger society in order to attempt to live sustainably by cultivating the land and trading in a local network, particularly with local First Nations people. These stories construct settlers as minimally invasive, benign, or even regenerative of the land — an understanding of settler land use that might be possible only in a province that was not settled primarily through farming and where farming is not a dominant economic activity. The implication of this construction of minimal impact is that it tends to suggest agrarian settlers themselves are somehow timeless, an effect frequently amplified by also presenting these small societies as having very contemporary ideals of equality and acceptance of diversity. The overall effect of constructing settlement as benign when it is restricted to family or subsistence farming is to separate the represented settlers from the narrative of settlement and to remove their accountability for the environmental and social effects of colonialism. The rough general narrative pattern is that settlers who would prefer to retreat as far as possible from the centres of government, commerce, and consumption find their way to arable land, provide for themselves successfully and indefinitely in an elective community or family, and trade with representatives of the largely parallel culture of the local First Nations. This story pattern is repeated in the focus of current (2012-2015) activities offered by the Huble Homestead-Giscome Portage Society (partially complemented by projects of the

Lheidli T'enneh [Carrier] people); it is likewise reflected in a general fictional trend of placing the most sympathetic small-town characters on farms or giving them farming ambitions, a trend that can be traced in most of the novels already discussed in this project, in works Allan Pritchard and George Bowering identify as part of a robust Edenic strain in B.C. writing, and as a theme treated with sympathy and some irony in novels such as Susan Juby's *The Woefield Poultry Collective*, Bowering's *Caprice*, and Hodgins's *Distance*. The same story pattern is expanded to a vision of a good society in the fictional community of Bright's Crossing, the setting of several of Anne Cameron's novels and short stories, notably *Bright's Crossing*, *Women, Kids, and Huckleberry Wine*, *Stubby Amberchuck and the Holy Grail*, *Family Resemblances*, and *Those Lancasters*. Because Cameron imagines a town that is large enough that it has a considerable geographic footprint (its real world counterpart would have a substantial local cultural and environmental impact), and because the plots of her stories are often driven by the need to identify and exile inappropriate inhabitants, I use Cameron's town to contemplate the implications of presenting settlers as sortable into (easily recognizable) bad settlers and good ones, particularly the implications of this firm division for the land claim of settler home.

The Huble Homestead/ Giscome Portage Historical Society maintains a heritage park about 60 kilometers from Prince George, where it enacts early 20<sup>th</sup> century settler activities, and its members also travel to area schools to teach skills such as butter churning and wool carding. The historical homestead is not the site of a planned town or a lumber camp, but it was a busy store during both the gold rush and the early settlement period (financed, as was settlement discussed in the last chapter, by resource extraction),

and it draws school groups and visitors from around the region. The storeowners, Albert Huble and Edward Seebach, developed the site as a transportation, shipping, outfitting, and storage hub from about 1905 to 1919 (Huble Homestead “General Store”). In spite of the site’s history as a way station, however, the Huble Homestead Society now uses both its summer on-site activities and especially its educational outreach kits for schools to provide local migrants to resource industry work in the central interior with another story in common. This story suggests the homesteaders like the Hubles worked or at least aimed to work with local First Nations people without disrupting or displacing them, while providing for themselves using local materials, thereby minimizing their settlement’s environmental impact. This secondary story is one that narrates “difference as unity,” as Mackey puts it — here the difference between the values of contemporary settlers interested in alternatives to contemporary consumption and production, and the values of the focused entrepreneur who preempted the portage, described on the Society’s website as “always a businessman” (Mackey 151; Huble Homestead “Albert Huble”). This story is created through associating very general early 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic farming conditions with the business site, and through directing visitors to a Lheidli T’enneh fish camp that now shares the Homestead’s site.

Through its visitor programs and particularly its on and off site programs for school children, The Huble Homestead/ Gisqueam Portage Heritage Society’s reenactments and interpretations of “local history and early 1900’s lifestyle” repeat the pattern Mackey identifies in Douglas Cardinal’s narrative for the Canadian Museum of Civilization and Canada 125 corporation’s play “Spirit of A Nation”: they use the land (here, of the homestead) as “the key . . . to creating a narrative that can link the past,

present, and future” (Huble Homestead “Education Kits”; Mackey 154-155). Unlike the narratives Mackey identifies, and equally unlike the oppositional First Nations/ settler identity formed through the “frontier cultural complex” Elizabeth Furniss delineates as the structure underlying the culture of 1990s Williams Lake, the narrative of homestead life as it is enacted (though not in the complete body of information the Society provides) seems to recuse the participants (visitors and represented historical figures) from involvement in any story of settlement as progress.

The Society’s educational program emphasizes the eight years the full Huble family was on site, drawing attention to the large garden the family kept, and introducing tasks of caring for livestock the Hubles do not seem to have kept. I argued in the last chapter that family homesteads are used by public narrators, like the Huble Homestead/ Giscome Portage Heritage Society, as a way of inculcating community ideals of the thrift, industry and self-sufficiency necessary to pioneering (and by extension, entrepreneurial) success, and that some public narrators might add an emphasis on families so as to provide lineage of “good” settlers as the seeds of what became the contemporary province, including its resource industry workers. These elements of farm and the family in the colonial story, however, are also part of the originary story of the Judaic monotheisms, where they are not a story of progress but of a recovery of a lost harmony with god, the non-human world, and other people. Where the stories of a colonial couple and of Adam and Eve converge, a homesteader’s presumed minimalist lifestyle is indistinguishable from an ideal human one, has no unsustainable environmental practices, and could be a powerful comfort to a primarily Euro-Canadian settler community that imagined its values reflected in the story. In contemporary Canada, this ideal harmony

can also only be envisioned as egalitarian, as free from strict gender roles as it is from racial ones. The programs at the Huble homestead partake at least as much in this story of voluntary retreat from a corrupt and corrupting world as they do in the “nineteenth-century paradigm” of the liberal project of Canada, which foresaw the extension of “some version of ‘Peace, Order, and good Government’” as a justification for settlement and the inequities and environmental changes it brought (McKay “Liberal Order” 645).

Though the Society’s textual representation of the homestead allows a reader to easily piece together the chronology of the dominance of commercial activities at the site and their durations, many of their on-site activities and their work with local schools emphasize instead a marriage of a “Canadian” past practice of farming and a contemporary (or future) ideology of an egalitarian society based on voluntary minimal consumption. In the summers, the Society trucks sheep, rabbits, and chickens to the site where Huble and his partner once housed the dogs and horses that worked in their packing business (“Visiting Us,” “Educational Kits”). Several of the educational kits the Society offers are structured around women’s and children’s roles in settlement in general, with the remainder focussing on orienteering skills and local plant, rock, and wildlife identification. While the educational programs teach activities such as wool carding (which Annie Huble, purveyor of cloth and clothing, would not need to do even if she had sheep [“General Store”]) and prompt critical thinking about past practices and

understandings of the world, they also inculcate contemporary ideals of full emancipation and informed ecological stewardship (“Educational Kits”).<sup>112</sup>

The re-inscription of women’s activities as work equivalent to men’s is matched by an effort to draw attention to the historical parallel economy of the area’s First Nations people. The Society makes some room for a settler narrative that includes a nation-to-nation relationship with the local people, and the use of the site by the two cultural education groups – one settler, one Lheidli T’enneh, strongly suggests complementary and parallel presence on the land. The Society’s website directs visitors to some information about a Lheidli T’enneh fish camp that existed near the Huble-Seebach pre-emption, and explains that the Lheidli T’enneh have constructed a model camp and staff it as an educational centre. The Huble heritage society both provides its own description of the camp and links viewers to the Lheidli T’enneh’s online resource centre. The historical displacement of the pre-contact culture seems to be at least partially reversed, both rhetorically and physically, and without apparent conflict.

The fish camp that shares the site can be understood as a presence that reclaims land through the technology by which First Nations used to thrive; when it is incorporated into a settler story, however, it also suggests that the settlers’ use and resulting stewardship of the land of the site was never exclusive or even dominant. This latter reading supports Mackey’s assertion that the national narrative of tolerance and

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<sup>112</sup>In 2015, the society has a particularly strong emphasis on the gathering and use of wool, and Ryan Kessler of CKPG TV states that they will be teaching visitors about “sheep, wool, and natural fibres.” The Society explains its “hands-on” activities for schools include wool carding and spinning, and do so as part of a national, rather than local narrative, taught in order “to follow the development of Canadian Communities” (“Educational Kits”).

good relations with the First Nations people is core to contemporary Canadian settler identity (Mackey 162), and it likewise “creates settler innocence” — though not, as in her study, through the “narrative of national progress” (152), but through ignoring the role the formerly dominant narrative of progress (which made the land purchasable) had in ensuring the camp and the shipping business could not have been co-present.

In a similar vein, re-enacting survivalist rather than shipping activity at the Huble Homestead decouples the narrative of the historical settlers’ daily activities from the expanding commercial empire and how they participated in the changes it brought. Throughout the full write up on the Society homepage (as in the exhibit at the Virtual Museum of Canada) there is little suggestion that settler presence either dispossessed or enriched earlier residents. Instead, the accounts of both the establishment of the portage and the prominence of fish camp emphasize settlers’ trading relations with the area First Nations, and not care of them or conflict with them (“Giscome Portage,” “First Nations Fish Camp”). The focus of the educational programs on the contributions of the often-marginalized groups of First Nations people and settler women and children to early contact culture obscures Huble and Seebach’s clear treatment of the site as primarily a business, rather than as a permanent home. The partners’ enterprise is replaced by a vision of a family farm, and this replacement erases the narrative of settlement as an individual capitalist enterprise that transforms “unused” resources for a world market. The story instead becomes one of a sustainable, interdependent society in miniature — surprisingly similar to the narrative provided in *The Cure for Death by Lightning*, that of Weeks’s farm’s projected future under the stewardship of Beth and Billy and the parallel culture of Bertha Moses and her family as trading partners.

“Homesteading” is a slippery word, combining many uses of the land by non-indigenous people, and mixing road and rail building, resource extraction, and settlement with small-scale farming, as homesteads tend to have kitchen gardens. Farming is different from all of these practices, however, because farms can be incorporated into a narrative of sustainability and self-sufficiency in a way no other land development practices can. This process of giving family farming a prominence in settler story (including a story of ancestry) exactly where the presence of resource workers has been most numerous and most cataclysmic is a way of removing “progress” from the story of British Columbian settlement. The story of local farms in B.C. works to “create settler innocence” (in Mackey’s words) *because* farming itself has always been a marginal and undisruptive part of provincial economic activity (compared with the impact of resource extraction and urban growth, and with the impact of settler-farmers elsewhere). The farming of the prairies, in contrast, cannot be imaginatively separated from the environmental and human loss caused by the disappearance of the bison, the harsh and then violated treaty conditions determining who could occupy what land, the widespread famine among the displaced people, and the later dustbowl conditions on cultivated land. In British Columbia, grafting the family farm onto the shopkeeper and shipper’s homestead can create a story that is an alternative to that of the good empire, offering a unchanged set of values, such as care for the land’s fertility and tolerance for cultural and sexual diversity, that can seem to legitimize contemporary settler presence through earlier settlers, even though increasingly intense resource extraction and associated transportation and shipping continue to destroy much habitat and culture.

Removed from accountability for conquest, the British Columbian farmer is also a figure in an ideology that differs from Ian McKay's classical liberalism, which supported both free enterprise and class, culture, race, and gender-based inequalities.<sup>113</sup> These stories of undisruptive family farms make the claims to home of any *contemporary* settlers who use them to represent their community values immediately compatible with contemporary national settler myths. As Eva Mackey explores in "Becoming Indigenous," a narrative of good land stewardship and sustainable practices form a part of the contemporary Canadian settler identity. In fact, the contemporary cultural narrative of the sort of farming done or imagined to be done on "homesteads" (typified in the Society's educational kits) is so inextricable from care for the soil, and through it, the earth, that it overwhelmingly aligns any contemporary analogous practice with environmental activism, strong, place-based local community, and a rejection of the global market.<sup>114</sup> In contemporary British Columbian literature, representations of small-scale and family farms are likewise a vehicle for a settler claim that good communities can grow from bad beginnings, even the bad beginnings of land theft and environmental destruction, but only with a rupture from this ancestry. For the claim to hold and match the national narratives Mackey outlines, the farm has to be separated from any narrative that emphasizes it as an extension or continuation of an empire built on the control and spread of trade, and become explained instead as a retreat from a too canny world. The farmers must also be shown to understand themselves as subject to the demands of what

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<sup>113</sup>For book-length application of McKay's framework to a study of British Columbian post-war farm community planning, see James Murton's *Creating a Modern Countryside*.

<sup>114</sup>Incidentally, this move eliminates the second world position of the "settler-colonist" as Daniel Coleman describes it, as the settler in the bush is no longer the civilizer (15-16).

they raise rather than the demands of their buyers. Finally, farmers' success in maintaining the fertility of their plots, rather than an accumulation of wealth, must become the sign of their virtue: flourishing on the local land, and not profit in a distant market or the provincial, national, and global state structures it supports, will mark which residents belong in place.

In contemporary British Columbian literature, farmers and settlers seem to represent different values, even when the farmers are also the settlers, and the malleability of farmer-settlers shows the limits of narratives identifying all settlers as a single group engaged in the national contest for home in opposition to First Nations' claims to home. This limit can be overcome by dividing settlers by their ideology rather than their activities. In Edenic narratives, identifying settlers as farmers is a way of declaring them to be not settlers — saying that they lack the liberal order framework that is part of the project of the nation, in McKay's language. Because they are outside progress and reject a hierarchy of "civilizations," they are outside historical responsibility. What Mackey calls "The Mountie myth" and what Elizabeth Furniss describes as the part of the "frontier cultural complex" (both of which rely on an understanding that Canada's conquest of the First Nations people was somehow benevolent) are manifestations of a Western, post-enlightenment narrative of intellectual, technological, social, *and moral* progress that constructs the indigenous people colonized by Western empires as benefiting from contact.<sup>115</sup> In Canada, this story of progress,

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<sup>115</sup>The intellectual and social project that is a part of sociological study is itself a test of moral progress: Mackey traces how the contemporary celebration of Canadian "hybridity," including its claim of parentage in First Nations' culture, repeats the narrative of progress (emphasizing "how far *Canada has come*") in order to expose that

which Mackey identifies as a “buried epistemology” (Willems-Braun, in Mackey 152) justifies *all* non-indigenous claims to home as a group, because it underlies the imperial land claims that created the colonies and the nation. “Progress,” with its entire enlightenment legacy in whatever form, however, is not and has never been the only hegemonic Western narrative. Stories that criticize development as destruction and the apparent advances of “civilization” — from increased trade, to the accretion of material comforts, to city life — as inseparable from moral corruption appear in the Judaic traditions as early as Genesis, and in the classical tradition as early as Hesiod’s *Works and Days*. In these traditions, retreat from the commercial centres to a pastoral or agrarian life, with its accompanying hard work, both pleases the god or gods and makes the man happier.

In making the suggestion that popular promotions of non-urban British Columbia are dominated by images of settlers living in harmonious balance with both a sustaining natural world and parallel but independent local First Nations communities, I am inserting myself into a longstanding discussion of the provincial literature as characterized by a strong Edenic narrative strain. Several works of criticism collecting or identifying themes in British Columbian settler literature note an Edenic strain that contrasts with the themes identified in Canadian literature in Frye’s “Conclusion” and Atwood’s *Survival* (which assume a hostile natural world that must be survived), but they do not directly link Edenic or Arcadian representations of the land with any land practice

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this celebration is a tool to hide the continuing lack of “genuine justice and equality for Aboriginal people” (170). It would be reasonable to think Mackey assumes that this exposure might prompt change, and that the rightness of equality is self-evident to her readers.

that can make the place a continuing home.<sup>116</sup> George Woodcock (in a review of Gary Geddes's *Skookum Wawa*) notes that "genteel raptures over the landscape" were "a very characteristic genre on the west coast" until the 1970s (79), and goes on to criticize Geddes for an over-emphasis on landscape, and on "how writers in British Columbia ... react to their setting and the past it contains" (82). Allan Pritchard's pair of essays, "West of the Great Divide" focuses on historical narratives of successful home-building in the province (notably Eric Collier's *Three Against the Wilderness*) and accounts of wilderness living by early conservationists who drew part of their income from their writing (Roderick Haig Brown and, in Pritchard's treatment, remittance man Malcolm Lowry), and on books that transport city dwellers to healing green spaces, notably M. Wylie Blanchet's *Curve of Time* and several works by Ethel Wilson. In a passage of "Home Away," his essay exploring a theme of "some" British Columbian works, George Bowering likewise notes a tendency in the works he presents to make the related impulse to preserve trees the measure of characters' goodness. (Bowering's comment, which

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<sup>116</sup>In his 2005 Essay, "Writing Here," (discussed for other reasons in the introduction) William New identifies the search for a lost wholeness instead with social issues, and he works to form a critical lens to read works that "variously sought absent fathers, unknown mothers, and a disappeared past, or reclaimed history and tradition, or reinvoked memories of place, protested status quo, and argued how-to-be, how to write a calligraphy of being here and in-between." He specifically links these "searching" works to publishing since the late 1990s, which he suggests came to "listen more carefully than before to the powerful voices of ethnic presence and street experience, linguistic recasting and cross-cultural sensibilities" (11-12), but most of his observations can be applied to all Edenic narratives, as his next observation suggests: "sometimes, for some writers, however attractive, compelling, or pleasant the place where they live might be, it somehow persists in feeling alien; in *their* writing, "here" is marked by a sense of longing for "heart," for apparent solidarity with a place that is past or at least parental" (12). New's paired observations emphasize the role of narrative as a medium for change: Edenic narratives might be elegiac for the writer who feels lost, but they are also often utopian, in that they call for social change that will help recreate the virtues of the past.

makes native trees that must be preserved against encroaching logging and suburban development a part of “Eden,” reminds readers of the conundrum that any local imitation of the traditional flora of Eden also requires some deforestation.) The stories I examine, however, are not primarily those Pritchard or Bowering considered in “West of the Great Divide” and “Home Away,” largely because my interest is idealized towns — communities perhaps anchored by a single family but larger, and less able to seem continuous with the wilderness than is an isolated cabin. They are not stories of paradise, but rather of attempts to preserve the parts of paradise that remain, and to regain the rest of it. These narratives show the small scale, even intimate struggles of groups of families (often formed through adoption) to assert a golden age and so to stop time in a way. This aspirational local stasis is the main advantage of an Edenic story as a part of the narrative of home for a community dependent on an international resource market.

As I noted in the previous chapter, when protagonists in non-urban British Columbian novels are the anchors for non-indigenous communities, they often at least *want* to make a living farming or ranching, no matter when the stories are set. They do not necessarily succeed in cultivating crops or raising livestock, but they do build and nurture communities from marginalized, lost, or fragile people. In works as diverse as Susan Juby’s *The Woefield Poultry Collective*, Bowering’s *Caprice*, and Hodgins’s *Distance*, the desire to raise cattle, plant an orchard, or establish a nursery comes to stand for both a need to nurture and give — often by setting (colonial) injustice right — and a general idealism encompassing concentrated learning, especially in a focus on artistic or spiritual concerns. This culture of cultivation, rooted in the land that the character sees and cares for, contrasts with the possessive individualism associated with the materialism

of liberal capitalism, best seen in the land hungry patriarchs of John Weeks and his predecessors in works such as Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese*. Because characters are united by what Bowering calls "the desire to be good," an Edenic community can simultaneously present several ways of living and surviving while resisting the progressive development of the surrounding world (*Caprice* 189).<sup>117</sup> Characters model ways of being minimally invasive, including earning their livings caring for vulnerable people, working in the arts, and, of course, raising food. In this sense, protagonists and the communities they join can be similar across very different works.

This pattern of examining settlers eking out a sustainable existence is the foundation of Susan Juby's *The Woefield Poultry Collective*, which is set roughly in the hamlet of Cedar on Vancouver Island (246).<sup>118</sup> The novel is written from the perspective of four characters who are not only outsiders, but fairly stereotypical outsiders: New Yorker Prudence is a failed writer who ignores any locals who tell her that the Woefield

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<sup>117</sup> In a limited way, Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* (in no way set on a farm, but still presenting a living made through natural resources but without extraction) participates in the community-in-Eden portion of this pattern, as the final community at the fishing lodge consists of the divorcee Maggie, a 18 year old Chinese Canadian man, Angus Quon, and the lodge's former owner's young son, Alan (155-156). The book also presents Maggie's life at the lodge as in some sense outside time. In "Time in Ethel Wilson" R.D. Macdonald analyzes Wilson's exploration of time and finds a community drawn together in Eden, where the Edenic world is an escape from time into cycle. He presents Wilson as both creating this world as closure for the story and undercutting it, arguing that Wilson shows Maggie's vision of the Quon family's harmony to be a "bogus perception." He shows that Wilson emphasizes the limits of Maggie's understanding and ability, including her ability to "harmonize [herself] with time."

<sup>118</sup> A setting of a group trying to create Edenic harmony just south of Nanaimo is a flag to students of B.C. history in this book, as it is in Hodgins's *The Invention of the World* and Anne Cameron's *Stubby Amberchuck*. Cedar is the nearest community to De Courcy Island, home to Brother XII's colony. Prudence's monomaniacal vision might echo his, but she is the gentlest possible reincarnation of him, if no more able to grow vegetables on rock than were his followers.

farm cannot be made productive (93), Earl is an elderly drop-out musician turned jack-of-no-trades, Seth is a young agoraphobic, alcoholic blogger who was sexually abused by a teacher, and Sara is an anxious, serious child whose attempts to raise show poultry in city co-op housing inadvertently contributes to her disgraced father's perpetual rage. The three adults must make money on a farm that will grow nothing, or Woefield will be sold and likely razed for a suburban development, the child will be uncared for, and the chickens will die. Prudence's ambitions drive the action, and her vision is that the land can be valuable as something other than real estate. This desire to keep the land life-sustaining is a part of the national myth of Canadians as people who have learned to "give to the land" that supports them (Mackey 163). In Juby's novel, the myth that good people are ones who give to the land seems to make something like society with the soil more important than the general social contract of good civic behaviour, and this stewardship of the land overrides obligations to the state. Prudence misleads people about her plans and her qualifications to pursue her goals, creating a situation wherein she must avoid her bank manager (105), her love interest (172), and the neighbours who want her to lead their writing group (105). Prudence is not only a liar — she also steals building supplies from Home Depot (75-77). The moral good of Prudence's vision, however, combined with her focus on the community's best interests (she imagines every farm project as something "we" [Prudence, Earl, and Seth] will do [20,39,46]), makes her dubious behaviour forgivable, if not permissible, within the logic of the narrative. Her expedient deceptions are comic convention, of course, but readers accept that they should not have consequences because they are carried out to good ends.

Prudence's planned good stewardship of the farm salvages her, and her all-encompassing idealism makes the land into a place of healing for Earl, Seth, and Sara. As the *Booklist* reviewer puts it, the meat of the story is in "the characters' emotional pain and efforts to help one another heal," (Juby "Woefield Farm"). At the beginning, Earl has spent five decades hiding from his family (167, 279), and Seth only appears in public when he is so drunk that he falls over – sometimes after stripping, and sometimes after declaring his love for a stranger (189, 76). Prudence forces both men into steady work and sociability, with the result that they both eventually commit themselves to the group's interest. In the end, Prudence raises money by hosting a folk music concert, and Earl invests the inheritance his estranged brother had held for him in Woefield (304), Seth remains sober at the crowded festival (300), and Sara's parents, who are divorcing, agree to let her live on the farm until they can take better care of her (305). Prudence learns to work with the land, rather than trying to grow crops the soil cannot support, and follows the advice of a local farmer/ mortgage advisor to invest in "intensive grass farming" – growing the "hay and pasture for cows" that flourishes on the site (92, 304).

Juby's novel is partly a satire on works of small-scale ecotopian ambitions, as she makes the point that a local sustainable community would still have to financially compete with anyone else who wanted the land: within a month of arriving in Woefield, Prudence is driven to reflect that the agricultural memoirists she hopes to emulate never write about "meeting with bankers or creating fake businesses in order to defer tax and mortgage payments" (115).<sup>119</sup> In spite of its satirical edge, however, Juby's book presents

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<sup>119</sup> Prudence seems to have read Sue Hubbell's *A Book of Bees*, "about woman... who moved to the Ozarks and became a renowned beekeeper and writer" and Sonia Jones's *It*

a family-like community of several generations who choose to live together and are able to maintain their home through the hard work Prudence models and expects (she tends to wake the house at 6:30 a.m. [32]), even if the actual income is from the arts rather than from produce. Even the pattern of an egalitarian relationship with local First Nations people holds: Seth is helped home by “Jimmy Samuels, from over at the reserve,” who then stops at Woefield to talk to Earl. Earl and Jimmy seem to be friends, and Jimmy knows the town gossip about Seth’s breakdown five years previously, even though Earl does not (37-38). Samuels appears briefly, but his neighbourly action marks the First Nations’ and settlers’ communities as socially continuous and establishes the site of Woefield as free of pressing conflict over possession of the land.

In a more serious and contemplative vein, George Bowering uses the same general pattern of an ideal community as one formed outside the ideology of progress and development to associate goodness with an appreciation for the land in his parody western, *Caprice*. As William Garrett-Petts argues, Bowering seems to have a serious project of teaching readers an appropriate way of seeing or reading fiction, and through fiction, land and culture. Garrett-Petts explains that “the question of how we read our world marks a significant area of overlap between postcolonialism and postmodernism” (I would add ecocriticism), because these “discourses challenge the dominant order,” and

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*All Began With Daisy*, about a woman who “moved to the east coast, bought a cow, and started making world-famous yogurt” (115), and she roots her desire “to have a harmonious balance of animals and vegetable crops” in her understanding of the environmental and ethical problems in all large-scale food production that form the subject of Michael Pollan’s *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* – a book that does not address how someone could afford to *start* a sustainable mixed farm (116). She also mentions Joel Salatin, himself an author and a farmer featured in Pollan’s book (July 92; Pollan 111-262).

Bowering's works teach seeing ("Novelist as Radical Pedagogue" 556). In *Caprice*, an ability to perceive beauty, the formation of an egalitarian and tolerant community from outsiders, and a desire for the "hard freedom" of survival through work separates good "exiles from Eden" (i.e. settlers) from bad ones, who search instead for a place in a "dream of empire" (Bowering 109-110). *Caprice* is a story about a small local community formed by mutually suspicious new settlers, under the stewardship of a couple of local "Indians," and against the malevolence of two predatory gunslingers. The people who are befriended by the semi-divine Indians overseeing the action of the novel (and who therefore belong in the Okanagan) have a reverence for the land itself, as does the hero, Caprice, whose idealized vision of life with her lover includes keeping an apple orchard in the valley (32):

The entire sweep of the Interior Plateau is fearsome in its beauty. ...A human being with the desire to be good will recognize the immense beauty all at once, and see a path into the middle of it, a way to walk or ride into her own best hope for herself. (Bowering 198)

As in other works in this chapter, the good people in *Caprice* are not exactly "settlers," but a group that sees the world without the ideology and narrative of progress and settlement. In Bowering, it seems that they are somehow the same people who have lived there for thousands of years, "the ones who have been here since the ice drew back, or the ones who came alone or in very small groups," and are people "different in kind" from the "newcomers without ideals" who arrive with the resource industries and the

railroad (13).<sup>120</sup> These two kinds of people seem to be idealists and materialists, roughly equivalent to those seeking “hard freedom” and those seeking “empire.” Bowering explains that “even the dullest wits” recognize beauty, but “a drunk or a materialist” does not (13). The people remaining in Kamloops at the end of the story are all able to recognize beauty — in a story, an orchard, a horse, a photograph, a game of baseball, and especially in Caprice and the landscape — and they do not work extracting valuable commodities from the slopes. What farmers, some cowboys, and even some town wives have in common with indigenous people in this text is a supposedly anti-materialist outlook and an instinctive appreciation for beauty. Changes in ownership of the land, and the type of life that land supports, are ignored through emphasizing continuity of respect for the land, its beauty, and the sustenance – both material and spiritual – that it provides. Bowering does not suggest that people who are the same “in kind” could never end up in conflict over scarce food or water, even without any empire dreamers around, but survival in famine is not the kind of conflict he is addressing.

Bowering’s construction of a “good” community creates a void that allows him space to elaborate on those who must be excluded – exiled – from the Edenic settlement. These exclusions are of two types of evil, embodied in the murderous and uncommunicative Frank Spencer, and the unthinkingly prejudiced and dogmatic Loop

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<sup>120</sup> If Bowering’s story is itself a beauty the reader encounters and can approach with a parallel desire to be good, the act of reading and finding a relationship with the text would also be a moral one: meeting the challenge of the text lets the reader approach an ideal self. This might make the *reader* continuous with the group as well, and make the act of reading explicitly about its inevitable continuity with the world outside the text. For a further exploration of reading Bowering as a form of communal action with the text and author, and with the surrounding world, see Garrett-Petts.

Groulx, also called “Lionel Groulx” (27) and “Strange Loop” (26). Spencer seems to have little internal life, avoids almost all contact with people, and rarely speaks except to tell others people to stop speaking. He is not self-aggrandizing, but he is unflinchingly malicious. Groulx is introduced as sexually predatory, proud, and offended by reading, respect of the law, and indifference to his presence (21–22). Groulx’s name makes him a commentary on the sterility of convention and a conventional narrative of self, especially when taken as a model for real action. Aside from suggesting cannibalism (as a werewolf — *loup garou* in French), his name marks him as a representative of two sorts of would-be exclusionary structures: the historian Lionel Groulx’s vision of an unchangeably nationalist, Catholic Quebec, and strange loops themselves. Groulx falls in love with a photograph of himself as an outlaw, and this confirmation of a vision so closed that it has become entirely self-referential (like an ouroboros nearly done swallowing its tail) marks him and his desire to star in an unmalleable plot as both evil and stupid. Such characters, of course, have no place in the Edenic communities that mark texts focused on creating or reinforcing the British Columbian narrative of sustainable community populated by damaged, vulnerable and lost settlers who are redeemable through their connection to and care of the land and each other. “Redeemable” and “redeemed” are not the same, of course. Bowering’s Eden remains a way of seeing — a good practice, not perfectible even by the semi-divine Indians — and is specifically outside history. In making Eden a practice, his story makes a claim that the group of idealists strive to be good people for the land, and not a claim that they achieve it. “Materialists,” however, are definitively excluded from even potential home, and their values cannot support a claim to land as the most ideal occupants.

Jack Hodgins's Sonny Aalto, protagonist of *Distance*, is a character who develops a better way of seeing land and community, and his development suggests Hodgins has a more material vision of what makes home than the one Bowering presents in *Caprice*, although it is also one that emphasizes a continual practice of home-making. While Sonny makes his first fortune creating and tending a nursery, he does so by exploiting the fertility of his father's land to help him escape Portuguese Creek and all the weight of community and family expectations. When he finally develops a desire for closeness, however, his dreams are very like those of Prudence and Caprice. He imagines taking a surrogate son — either the balky half- “Coast Salish” Rohan, his lover's son (358), or the gay sometime prostitute and thief he met in Australia, Lachlan Hall — to the Aalto farm to “decide what ought to be done about it, if anything” (381). Sonny imagines explaining that they will have to work the soil in order to make the land “belong to [them] again” (381). Sonny is also certain that this future he sees will be full of his newly formed community, and that community will “make sure he never becomes the grouch” an acquaintance predicted he would at the opening of the novel's action (381). Sonny's new “family” seems also to exclude both his son and his daughter, although not in any act of rejection. Like those in the other novels, his is an intentional community, centred on a family farm (the farm is only a dream in *Caprice*). His potential to have a home, then, comes from his desire to create — create both sustaining soil and a functioning family.

It is through this constructed family — which, as these stories demonstrate, happens most ideally by living lightly and sustainably on the land — that the family farm demonstrates its significance in British Columbian literature. However, these farms are only viable in the literature when viewed through Edenic approaches to the land,

including seeing the work on it as work of perpetual cultivation, rather than as a triumph of singularly transformative sod-busting. The most durable and portable elements of the Edenic (and Arcadian) visions are the comfort of perpetual harmony with the natural world, usually popularly envisioned without beginning, end, or change.<sup>121</sup> In colonial culture, however, where the linear narrative of the settlement and displacement of discontinuous groups defines the culture, the greatest advantage of the Edenic story to the displacing colonists is that the sustained agrarian comfort of the golden age is unfixed in place and time. In contemporary narrative, both public and popular, family farms seem to make settlement a non-issue: sustainable living removes historicity in that it makes the care of the earth (through good practice on it) the arbiter of who has a home; that is, who has right to be in place to the exclusion of other claimants to the same space. Stories that divorce farming and farming ambitions from land expropriation under the expansion of empire remove the subjection of both land and first residents. These narratives also do not create home through appropriation of First Nations identity: in the logic of the narrative, neither settler ancestry in place nor First Nations ancestry is necessary because the farm is part of both an eternal cycle of balance and/or (really “or,” as settler culture remains dependent on the mythology of the western monotheisms) the only possible site for the exercise of the greatest possible earthly virtue.<sup>122</sup> The ideology governing these stories,

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<sup>121</sup>Panofsky’s “Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition” traces how even “the idea of death” (the original speaker of the Latin phrase on the tomb in the painting “Et in Arcadia Ego”) is eventually (over the two and a half centuries between his writing and Poussin’s composition) “entirely eliminated” from popular contemplation of Arcadia, to be replaced by an assertion of bliss remembered and enjoyed in memory.

<sup>122</sup>This emphasis on balance is incidentally but comfortingly compatible with the non-western primacy of “equality and balance” (rather than redemption from original sin) in what Thomas King describes as a First Nations worldview (*The Truth About Stories* 23-

unlike that of citizen soldier's estate in the good empire, is religious rather than secular, and the god, not the state, is the authority who grants land to the best people. In popular British Columbian novels, farms repeatedly appear as meritocracies, in which success sorts the good people from the bad and, therefore, the people who have a home from those who do not. As demonstrated by the works reviewed above, these communities are usually voluntary communities, in a strong contrast with family farms in the western genre and the Canadian prairie gothic tradition, and the families formed in such communities are often determined by choice rather than blood. As exemplars of voluntary and composite cultures where people have equal opportunity to earn their home (an equality stylistically emphasized in *Broken Ground*, *Woefield*, and *Caprice*, which are all told from multiple points of view), therefore, these works fit both the tradition of literary utopia and the contemporary liberal order framework that is the national ideology as Ian McKay describes it.

Sustainable settlements with trade networks, adopted families, and the role of working with soil as a route to healing or redemption are examined and extended in the enclave of family farms in Anne Cameron's community of Bright's Crossing. Explored here in some depth, Bright's Crossing is a community in which full emancipation has allowed complete freedom of association, and the main action in many of the stories is that a character finds other people who share her values and invites them to move in with her. While Cameron is most often read as two things – as an appropriator and promoter of

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24). I call the farms "Edenic" to emphasis that the story is a settler one, and that this compatibility is a convenience to the settler but a danger to the First Nations. Even within the Western Tradition, "Edenic" is still a misnomer: what would be more accurate is a shorthand term for the place outside Eden Adam and Eve supposedly got down to work.

a set of roughly Nuu-chah-nulth matriarchal stories found in her *Daughters of Copperwoman* and as a writer of lesbian fiction critiquing middle-class urbanity – her works also provides a consistent and nuanced vision of community. Her novels articulate the public narrative of resource towns environs in British Columbia as ideal places, and show that this story can be made compatible with the contemporary national narratives of Canada as at once a tolerant and environmentally responsible collective, and a nation committed to liberal democracy. In Cameron’s fiction, however, this “Canadian” narrative of tolerance and environmental care is told in stories that reject the nation as a governing structure: instead, Cameron often portrays her community working in parallel and sometimes in fusion with a First Nations economy, itself based on trade and local knowledge, and her most ideal residents strive to achieve complete detachment from state and corporate control, both of which are at least inefficient, if not exploitative, violent, and corrupt. Like Juby, Bowering, and Hodgins, Cameron distances her good characters from the narrative of progress and the material consequences of settler usurpation of land through displacing settlement to other, bad settlers, emphasizing the cyclical generation of agricultural and human growth, making the community of ideal settlers continuous with that of the local First Nations, and suggesting that a focus on nurturing will necessarily result in a sustainable culture. Moreover, although she embeds a partially realized Eden in a deteriorating world, Cameron’s community – with its flat hierarchy, its emphasis on stasis, and its intense, local social and environmental healing, is an imaginative project of ideological resistance to specific consequences of contemporary Canadian liberalism, particularly the “unremitting process of rapid change and its social consequences” that Ian McKay identifies as both the condition of modernity and a

necessary consequence of capitalism — which he explains as “a system of economic and social life centred on wage labour” (*The Challenge of Modernity* x). This resistance is strikingly underlined by Cameron’s presentation of six or seven decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (from about the 1930s to the early 2000s) as almost changeless. *Bright’s Crossing* is almost unmoored in time: women are shown from when they are children to when they have grandchildren, but there are few if any details that would anchor any portion of the story in a specific decade, much less a year. Characters rarely mention world events, new technologies, public figures, or even prices, perhaps because they are a part of a world it is better to ignore as far as possible.

If Cameron creates her ideal world in part by exaggerating the continuity of experience and stability of landscape across generations, she makes this world appealing and recognizable as the ideal through making the values of the outside world uniformly antisocial. In spite of her vague time frames, Cameron’s overall realism and the sheer size of her ideal and dysfunctional communities throw into relief the limitations of Edenic fellowships as representatives of — or even models for — good settler communities, and therefore highlights the limitations of the Edenic story’s usefulness in supporting settler claims of land and home in the province.

Cameron’s Edenic enclave is contained within a realist (sometimes magic realist) narrative that emphasizes the injustices of contemporary British Columbian culture, and the enclave is imagined as large enough to house at least a few dozen families. The community is big enough that it supports both farmers or gardeners and other good, hard-working people who live with the farmers. These other people prove their compatible values through equally hard work, often as artists, writers, musicians, or athletes — and

this means that good values, and not actual work giving directly to the land, can be the basis for a claim to be at home. Cameron's model for British Columbian community is an expression of a type of liberalism, as it has good settlers make home through working the land to make it into property, or by make home by making property in some other, non-extractive means and buying land to preserve it from development. Claiming home is not just a liberal process, however: the settlers also voluntarily retreat to an informally-structured but intentional society that uses material goods minimally and does not destroy the land. In the Bright's Crossing stories, therefore, the largely physical problem of contesting claims to home in the real province, which is that there are potentially multiple, mutually exclusive claimants to the same land (caused by the incorporation of everything as property and as therefore individually ownable and possible to gain or lose — a problem inherent in liberalism) is recast as an exclusively moral one, and the moral problem is solved by dividing the claimants into people whose way of being individual is to nurture each other and the land (good people) and people whose way of being individual is to take all they can get, with no agreement to restrain their appetites. Cameron solves the problem of scale – that there simply could not be thirty to fifty acres of farmland per family to support the population of her outside world, even at subsistence levels, and especially not without considerable habitat destruction – by making most people bad. These, then, are the two limitations of suggesting that settlers make home through retaining liberal ideology, while at the same time making “good people” (akin to the “true individuals” in the top of the classical liberal hierarchy) only those people who place care for the earth and each other above self interest: first, as no relative success in the social order sorts the good from the bad, success in not changing the land is all that is

left as an external sign of people's values, and, second, if all people who direct their work to minimizing their impact on the environment and meeting the needs of their families and immediate community can potentially use an Edenic narrative as a claim of home, there may just be too many good people for the story to represent any group to the exclusion of others, as these are dominant values.

In the preface to *Women, Kids, and Huckleberry Wine*, a story collection set in Bright's Crossing, Cameron describes the place as "Eden," and as somewhere "only the stout of heart and stalwart" are able to reach, as it offers sanctuary only to those who can "pass the severe tests the coast imposes" (i). She further explains that the people who make it "adapt their political outlooks and reactions" and become "more and more what the coast has insisted [they] will be" (i). Bright's Crossing is the explicit setting of the novel *Stubby Amberchuk and the Holy Grail* and the short story collections *Bright's Crossing* and *Women, Kids, and Huckleberry Wine*. If it were real, it would be one of a collection of unincorporated communities on the six-kilometer long Haslam Creek (*Women* 8), south of Nanaimo, not far from the Nanaimo Lakes Road (*Women* 234) or Timberland Road (*Bright's* 44), and near a reserve (*Bright's* 117).<sup>123</sup> It is near a pulp mill

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<sup>123</sup> This puts it within a few kilometres of Cedar, the scene of Juby's Woefield. Cameron's *Aftermath* also mentions a "Lakes Road," that suggests Nanaimo Lakes road, especially as the book also describes repurposed army barracks (21). What is now Vancouver Island University used old barracks on its site as early classrooms, as the land was Camp Nanaimo in WWII. This area is north of the Halsam Creek communities, as the lake road is quite long. *Aftermath*, a book specifically about a multigenerational legacy of trauma, perpetrated in its most extreme form by a traumatized and murderous vet and connected specifically to a national culture of war in the preface, does not have the healing green space of the creek or the family farms of the Bright's Crossing books, though the women who are struggling to nurture children still dig gardens (53). For a

(*Bright's* 95), a sawmill (*Bright's* 15), a poultry plant (*Women* 103) and old mine workings (*Women* 251). There is also a small store (*Bright's* 15), a pub and an inn beside the highway (*Bright's* 77), and a farmers' co-op (*Women* 176). It seems to neighbour South Wellington (*Bright's* 123). Its townsite also has old mining company row houses (*Stubby* 41). As her prefatory essay indicates, Cameron intends to present a model of how to be the right people for this portion of Vancouver Island, it is reasonable to assume several other works are set in the same imaginary town, or very near to it. Both the basic layout of her setting and her protagonists' social status, family background, and values they embody remain consistent across several other, darker books that do not name the town or its environs as specifically. These latter novels include the darkly comic *Those Lancasters* — set on a family's 200 acre property, honeycombed with coal shafts — and *Family Resemblances* (set in a neighbourhood of houses, dairies, and pig farms somewhere near Extension, a good fishing and swimming stream [43-47], and a pulp mill [275]), and the bleak *Wedding Cakes, Rats, and Rodeo Queens* and its sequel, *Hardscratch Row*, which follow six abused siblings through a slow recovery from the damage of their early lives, in a town with old farmhouses, pulp and sawmills (*Wedding Cakes* 39). Cameron's theme of creating a refuge is so consistent in her works that Tanis Macdonald identifies even the world of *Hardscratch* (which features sibling rape, a five year old rescued from prostitution, and a cast of nearly two dozen adults and kids unused to any stable relationship) as a "matriarchal paradise" in which "no crime is so heinous that it cannot be wiped out of memory by familial acceptance," whether one is a victim or

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brief history of the VIU site, see Vancouver Island University, "A History of VIU: 1936-2011."

a perpetrator (“Hardheaded Women”). This upbeat assessment is echoed by reviewers Kerry Riley and Melissa Brown (“Scratching Hard,” “Family”). All of these novels with strongly overlapping settings can be read as a parts of a single vision of place and society — in spite of their differences in tone — especially as the basic narrative, characters, and values embodied are the same in all the books.

Bright’s *Crossing* has good people, redeemable people, and bad people, each with specific associated geographies, cultural preferences, and forms of employment. Good people’s homes sit on two to two hundred acres of land, with at least two acres in cultivation for both produce and flowers, and the owners work hard to produce reliable food to preserve (*Stubby* 34; *Bright’s Crossing* 78; *Women*, 177; *Family Resemblances* 65; *Wedding Cakes* 6; *Lancasters* 106).

Reciprocal trade, learning from, and continuity with the good female settlers and the roughly equally exploited First Nations community appear in most books (*Stubby* 78; *Bright’s* 127; *Women* 113; *Lancasters* 93, 109-110, 230). In *Lancasters*, *Wedding Cakes*, and *Hardscratch*, First Nations and settlers are spouses, and the First Nations wife takes care of the settler – Lucy has her family help Singeon Lancaster fix the Lancaster house and land, and Christie both takes care of Kitty after Kitty has been crushed by a horse (*Wedding Cakes* 225-230), and recognizes and explains the local spirit that guides Kitty and her brother, Jimmy (246-27).<sup>124</sup> The cultural continuity between the subsistence farmers and the First Nations people is made through comparable exploitation and poverty, underlined by a shared practice of poaching by pit-lamping “government

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<sup>124</sup> I will not go into the role of this spirit in the narrative here, as it forms part of the next chapter.

mutton” or “moonlight mowitch” (deer), a practice described as “how most people, brown or white, [feed] their families” (*Women* 191; see also *Lancasters* 23, 41 & *Family Resemblances* 25). In *Family Resemblances*, the continuity is more tense: Cedar Campbell has older half siblings on the reserve and First Nations step-cousins, her grandfather forced Gus (Cedar’s father) to marry her mother rather than either of these “girls” because the First Nations families did not want the settlers involved (12), and the same grandfather only accepted her Uncle Ewan’s marriage to her Aunt Patience (and her children from her earlier relationship) once he saw his “half –breed” granddaughter (40). Gus Campbell remains racist, but he is the villain of the family. Everyone else in the family is content with the relationship (39). Trade networks are shown as natural to the community and continuous with a grey economy (*Bright’s* 101), and the goods traded include fish, firewood, building supplies, logs, coal, produce, dairy, eggs, and dowsing skills (*Lancasters* 47, 49, 89; *Family Resemblances* 46-47; *Women* 181).

Nurture is central to the values of the good people, and care for the soil, animals, and other people combine as so thoroughly a single form of nurture that they are almost indistinguishable in Cameron’s works. Protagonists (all female) are marked out early as children who are drawn to care for animals, especially abused or abandoned ones (*Stubby* 30; *Family Resemblances* 43; *Wedding Cakes* 8; *Women* 193; *Lancasters* 90), they all garden, and most books describe the process of working manure into soil (*Stubby* 34; *Family Resemblances* 60; *Wedding Cakes* 6; *Women* 193; *Lancasters* 197). These women grow up to care for all children who need care – usually nieces, nephews, grandchildren, step-children, and foundlings or foster children, in addition to any kids the women give birth to. These amalgamated matriarchal families are so much the pattern of Cameron’s

narratives that it is easier to note that Stubby, although herself raised by a non-relative, is the only major protagonist who does have any children. Even in this exception, Stubby and her partner, Megan, “two old tarts,” still appear to give some parental care to the law school-bound orphan Doreen, who takes over their gardening and housekeeping in exchange for a place to live (*Bright’s Crossing* 129).<sup>125</sup>

A habit of nurture is rewarded by more than good crops and domestic peace. These women are also able to see and are sometimes sought out by magical creatures who are closely associated with the natural world and are experiencing pain as a result of damage to the environment. These creatures include a fairy and an invisible spirit in *Bright’s* (43, 112), a giant frog and a “goolieguy” [much like a brownie] in *Women* (5, 254); and a dragon and an archangel in *Stubby* (171-172, 274). In *Stubby*, these creatures are specifically the matriarchal guardians of the natural earth and have graced Stubby because, as a child, she rescued a stray dog and a blind woman (278-279), and Cameron’s characters sometimes comment on the creatures as allegories or parables for the burdens and rewards of caring (*Women* 15, 258; *Stubby* 277).

As the presence of these rewarding spirits suggests, the business of caring both directs and partially replaces the labour central to the creation of property in classical liberalism. Like the labour that could allow a person to achieve “true self-possession,” caring sets apart a category of people who are fully human, analogous to “the abstract entity” only White, male, Protestant landholders could reasonably aspire to become (McKay “Liberal Order” 625). Also like this labour directed to possessive individualism,

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<sup>125</sup> Megan loses her arm in an earthquake at the end of *Stubby*, and the missing arm is a cue for readers to link the books (281).

the rewards of caring are imagined to be incremental, with the most energetic efforts of the most skilled nurturers bringing the greatest rewards: except when interrupted by catastrophe, Cameron's most ideal characters are having discussions that teach each people that they must take care of each other and how they must do it, or they are working, usually at physical labour caring for plants or animals. What greater caring brings, however, is greater stability, not development. Instead of being rewarded primarily by increased social mobility, material wealth, and the ability to direct civil society through political involvement, good people are rewarded with loving households, responsive soil, and an ability to stave off developers and the intrusions of state structure — which protect only developers' interests.

Attached to these good people are the visitors and lodgers at the farms, most of the children, the men in the families, and other people dependent on the culture of nurture. These secondary characters are usually able to recognize the tolerance, hard work, and sustainable land practice, forming nurture as the proper set of values, but they are not as productive of care themselves. These secondary characters form a group that might be analogous to contemporary resource town residents: the women work in the service industry and the relatively few men who are stable parts of the community log, work as contractors, or work at the mill. Sometimes these characters are prone to believe either that life can be less work and less responsibility away from the farm, and that wealth will be as sustaining as the rewards of cultivation, and they leave. One such mobile figure is Al Lancaster, a career criminal who returns from prison to the family home where his sister Colleen has been raising his children, a responsibility she has undertaken because his alcoholic wife has wandered off with a man from town. Al has

returned to fulfil a plan he shares with his logger brothers of running a grow-op beneath their family home. He slowly becomes an interested and dedicated father to his teenagers, and he decides to shut the business down. When blasts the tunnels closed (272), the land has a cataclysmic but favourable response: a chain of unanticipated explosions destroys the industrial expansion of the airport (282), reroutes the regular flooding on the property they bought from an unfriendly neighbour, making its land arable (198), and forces up a stream and a new lake on their main property (286).

Like Al, the people who are dependent on the farmers and gardeners can slide between the sustained fertility of the Bright's Crossing farms and the corrupted and corrupting world of the larger community surrounding it, including everything from the adjoining Bright's Crossing "townsite," across Haslam Creek (*Stubby* 41), to international music stardom (*Women* 203-204), to early death from logging accidents, overdoses, and cancer. Dave Amberchuck, for example, a reasonably good farmboy but irresponsible with his sperm and (as a result) Stubby's father, manages to die of all of the worst effects of working life in the larger society: his leg is crushed in an accident, and he dies at about 30-35 of cancer, caused by some combination of alcohol, painkillers, and the stabilizing splints in his bones (*Stubby* 18, 70, 87).

Some of these redeemable characters are not redeemed, of course, notably Gus Cameron, Norm Lancaster and Glenn (one of the siblings in *Wedding Cakes* and *Hardscratch*). In most of Cameron's works, the undercurrent of the effects of doing wage work and being less caring (as in unwilling to do enough of the hard work of nurturing people and soil) is that people become brutalized: like these three unredeemed members of Edenic families, wage workers in general come to understand themselves as "here for a

good time, not a long time,” and are, like Dave Amberchuck, subject to addictions (*Stubby* 42). Men in particular also reproduce the hierarchy of the outside world in their houses, especially by beating wives and children, and their belief in their right to do so is often parsed as a form of materialism that they have adopted: they both understand the dependents as property and see them as “things.” As no law in Cameron’s world protects working people in the first place, when the more powerful of these exploited people do not restrain themselves, nothing else can.

Like Bowering, Cameron differentiates between kinds of evil. The bad people are constructed in two oppositions to the good, and their exclusion takes two appropriately different forms. The first group, the easiest to deal with, are the predatory – as in Patrick Lane’s *Red Dog Red Dog* and D.W. Wilson’s *Once You Break a Knuckle*, these are child rapists and people who “find genuine humour in the suffering of others” (Wilson 63). These characters are a sort of spontaneous evil engendered within the intimate space of the good people, and their behaviour is not explained either through third person omniscience or through the other characters’ insights. Cameron’s good characters are given to quietly murdering these predators, albeit with heavy hearts, but the predators also die in accidents and murder-suicides: car accidents are the usual device, but one is knocked off a bridge by his brother (*Women’s* 187), one is fed destroying angel mushrooms (*Bright’s* 133), and a few kill themselves, along with their wives and whatever kids are not hiding (*Wedding Cakes* 110).

It is the second group of bad people, who maintain and benefit from the liberal democratic and capitalist order, however, that shows the full shape of Cameron’s model of good settlers as members of an alternative and better society, equally at home as the

First Nations people and integrated with them, because it shows that everyone committed to the functioning of a large and complex society has no right of home. In Cameron's stories, a good community has no room for government workers, "nosepickers" (*Aftermath* 315); "as much help as a wet toilet seat" (*DeeJay & Betty*, 149), professionals, who are "assholes, of course" (*Lancasters* 19), corporate managers, that "bunch of peckerheads" (*Family Resemblances* 291), schoolteachers, perhaps epitomized in Stubby's stepfather, Earl Blades, who is "for chrissakes, a vice principal" (43), or what can roughly be called the middle class. Police, the "Queen's cowboys" (*Lancasters* 32), are at best ineffective (*Aftermath* 72), and are always in the service of the wealthy and powerful. Where Cameron's good families do not thrive in apartments or "houses... sitting on... almost no yard at all" with "balconies and bits of patio with barbeques built of brick and ... so like each other a person could be forgiven for thinking them first cousin to mushrooms" (*Selkie* 152), the bad people prefer housing developments with lawns and professional landscaping and follow trends blindly. They also tend to be self-regarding to the point of sociopathy, valuing even family bonds only as far as they are markers of status. "Did Ya Ever Hear of a Goolieguy," for example, presents a rebel member of a family — profiteers from a coal mining empire like that of the Dunsmuirs — that insists on sending children to European private schools, but that also kills family members fairly regularly, seemingly for preferring the arts to finance (*Women* 249). Cameron's bad people are also uniformly White, and uniformly racist. Just as care for other people, animals, and the soil were inseparable for her good people, company paycheques, abuse and exploitation, cruelty to animals, racism, homophobia, and environmental destruction tend go together. For example, "out-of-towners working on the airport" wound Stubby's

dog with a hatchet (*Stubby* 43), and Dave is able to threaten a doctor into helping the dog because the doctor, retained by the construction company, has an interest in covering up the attack (44).

Through excluding most public employees, professionals, members of corporate hierarchies, and anyone who would think of themselves as middle-class (as does Brew, a grocery clerk in *Lancasters* [100]), Cameron shows contemporary Canadian culture itself to be the main source of evil: her bad people are as much stand-ins for a whole culture as is Gail Anderson-Dargatz's John Weeks, although in here it is contemporary Canadian culture.<sup>126</sup> Cameron introduces the attack on *Stubby*'s dog by glossing it as an effect of the dehumanizing order of a complex, labour-driven culture that takes people out of tight, self-regulating local communities:

It's well known that out-of-towners don't have any responsibility to anybody; it isn't their home, it isn't their nest they're shitting in and any veneer of civilization strips off with a speed directly proportional to the amount of time a guy's been away from home. (43)

Cameron here suggests that there is no such thing as the general responsibility to everyone that is part of the social contract of the liberal state, and that men (at least) are not just indifferent but actively malicious when not bound by the responsibilities of "their nest." The end of the episode suggests both that local moral virtues must be asserted and that these representatives of the larger, anonymous society are best exiled: Dave

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<sup>126</sup> In Cameron, as in Juby, the Edenic story therefore supports settler claims of home against other settler narratives, and not directly against First Nations' claims, assuming instead a compatibility with these (this compatibility is not articulated in the Bright's Crossing books).

confronts the man who threw the hatchet and berates him, declaring that “there’s no cure” for the out-of-towner’s moral “crippling,” intimidating the man so thoroughly that he quits and returns to the mainland – right out of Cameron’s demanding “Eden.” The remaining out-of-towners have no further interaction with the Bright’s Crossing residents (45-46).

In constructing the dominant culture as bad, Cameron denies the nation any position as an authority from which the right of home flows. Because evil arises in this dominant culture in confirmation, rather than violation, of what Cameron presents as the norms and values of contemporary liberal capitalism, the way that representative settlers use the space surrounding the Bright’s Crossing farms can be understood as continuous with her understanding of land use by the nation as a collective. Likewise, everyone who enjoys relative power, privilege, or comfort as a government or corporate employee can be understood to be represented by these figures in her works. In the stories, such people are hated and dismissed in conversation, rarely appear in person, and are not fleshed out as characters even when they are spouses. Given that Cameron is making an ideological argument about the use of actual space of south eastern Vancouver island through her works, it matters how and where her representation of corporate and state projects and actions in the area differ from the historical records of the same area.

If the tight nexus of Bright’s Crossing, with its farms, old company family housing, bordering creek, pub, inn, and market at the highway represents a single

community, it could well be the unincorporated hamlet of Cassidy.<sup>127</sup> What could be identified as Cassidy from the highway in the summer of 2014 evoked the two worlds Cameron suggests her characters are caught between: to the west was a small market sharing a building with a feed store, and to the east was a large, closed roadhouse and pub. Like the intersection, a satellite view of the townsite makes the geographic division Cameron associates with her moral division clear: the straight streets and roads of the old mining town remain visible, and they now host a trailer park and RV site. Around, particularly to the north of Haslam Creek, are swaths of trees broken by large farm-like parcels of land and the more winding roads that lead to them. A few open gravel pits or

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<sup>127</sup> Claiming a specific site an author has never given for a fictional town takes considerable certainty. The cumulative context of the books shows that post-1945 Cassidy and the area around it correspond closely with the maps and the main calendar for Bright's Crossing. Appearing in the stories are Cassidy's Haslam Creek and swimming holes, with the farm properties across the creek from the company housing row (*Stubby* 42), its coalmine tunnels (*Stubby* 213; *Lancasters*), its post-depression survival as home to loggers, truckers, and gravel pit operators, and its old farms. The Cassidy speedway track and the airport also briefly appear as plans in *Those Lancasters* (242, 282). The nearby De Courcy Island main settlement of the Brother XII Aquarian Foundation colony becomes the base for "Royal Divine's" cult, and it is just far enough away that its escapees take a day or two to find the Bright's Crossing, as they do in *Stubby* (201-210). Even the appealing name "Bright" in "Bright's Crossing" may be from the main shaft of one of the last Granby workings, which the Ministry of Energy record shows to have been operating from 1950 to 1953 ("Minfile 092GSW050"). Nanaimo Airport appears as "Cassidy Airport" in the last story in *Bright's Crossing*, but neither Nanaimo nor Cassidy itself is mentioned in the story, which lists towns from Duncan to Lytton to Spuzzum (170-183). The airport construction or expansion appears in both *Stubby* (43) and *Lancasters* (282).

The Harmac pulp mill, built in 1950 (Doug Christie), is a few kilometres to the north in Cedar, and its construction matches roughly when the mill starts to hire people and spoil the air in a few of Cameron's books (in *Aftermath*, also set in the area, the mill opens just after the Korean War is staffed by "out-of-towners"[156]). (I date events in Cameron's novels by working backwards from the ages of the last generation in any given book, assuming that they are not projected more than a few years into the future). For a quick history of Brother XII, see Stephen Ruttan's article in the Greater Victoria Public Library's "Tales from the Vault" series.

mines and small tailings ponds appear on the northwest outskirts, notably along Nanaimo River Road (*Google Earth*).

If Cassidy is the model for Bright's Crossing, however, then Cameron's decision to place the social dysfunction in the town's industrial origin underlines her identification of possessive individualism itself, rather than an internalization of violence after deprivation or exploitation by an upper class, as the root of social dysfunction. Cassidy was built by the Granby mining company in 1918 to house coal miners and their families (Thomas Paterson 27). It was prebuilt, and it was designed to offer labourers the comforts of the middle class – in fact, to incorporate them into the liberal framework and away from the “rival social formations” of the labour solidarity and communist movements (McKay “Canadian Passive Revolution” 363).

As Thomas Paterson explains in *Ghost Town Trails of Vancouver Island*, Cassidy was presenting a model of the future, and of future relations between employers and industry workers and their families (27), based in workers' material comfort. The company attracted and held its employees with the greatest and most modern town design and amenities it could offer, including pre-built mixed housing for families and a bunkhouse for single employees, full power and water services (25), paved, sidewalk-lined streets with boulevards and plantings, a company-built theatre, and a department store (27).<sup>128</sup> Cassidy opened in 1918, when loggers on nearby Lake Cowichan slept in

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<sup>128</sup> The Granby mining company was supported by a strong world demand for copper and the post-war boom, and might have been seeking to avoid embroilment in the class mobilization and threatened violence of the worldwide communist movement. Whatever its motivations, Granby Consolidated seems to have been striving to create not the dangerous and ill-paid work that had characterized the Dunsmuir family's earlier coal

lousy bunks so tightly packed that they could climb in only from the foot of the bed (Bergen *Tough Timber* 23-24), and the soldiers had not yet arrived to break or be broken by logging and farming in Merville. Cassidy could not have been heaven, but there were nearer approximations of hell nearby.

The Granby operations were at their height during a general labour shortage in the 1920s, when unions across the province still negotiated race-based hiring, notably in anti-Asian movements. Granby mines, however, seem to have at least partially retained a mixed race workforce.<sup>129</sup> Skilled operators were in demand, they came from all over the world, and they moved from mine to mine rather than job to job in a single area (Sherlock and Domville). The workers of Cassidy do not seem to have ended up impoverished and trapped for generations in the remains of an oppressive work camp with slum-like shanties pegged onto mud slopes. Instead, most moved when the jobs ended, and the town was partially dismantled only after they left in the 1930s (Paterson 27).<sup>130</sup>

This is significantly different from how Cameron represents the use of the land and the development of the local population and its culture. In Cameron, people living on the townsite are “jobless miners stranded in rowhouses they [do] not own,” and they squat in them for the cost of electricity while “everyone in officialdom [ignores] their existence”(Stubby 41). The townsite is notable for “untidy yards, peeling paint and

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empire (BC Labour Heritage Centre “Lest They Forget”), nor even the merely tolerable conditions of other Granby operations, described by Ross Sherlock and Julie Domville in their history of mining at Anyox, but a stable and comparatively liveable community.

<sup>129</sup>Loggers in the area were from similarly diverse backgrounds, and local First Nations people took part in all local industries, including running family farms (Lutz 31, 171-73, 228-29).

<sup>130</sup>The well-built houses were solid enough to sell and ship, and were auctioned off (Paterson 27).

broken windows, noisy or missing mufflers on old pickups and cars and the frequent arrival of the police” (41). Significantly, Cameron has these residents develop a tolerance for squalor, a disregard for cultivation, and heavy drinking habits *because* they tell themselves they do not own the land they live on:

Gardens and hens and roses were for those who lived on the other side of Haslam Creek, those who owned their houses and the land they sat on. Nobody who lived on the Row ever bothered with that. The Row wasn't permanent. (*Stubby* 41-42)

Their contrast is their neighbour, the crippled Dave Amberchuck, who maintains his house and yard, and has roses, a garden, and hens. The suggestion is that the squatters misunderstand why the farms are permanent: nurture makes land home.<sup>131</sup> The chaos and neglect described in *Stubby Amberchuck and the Holy Grail* is the most caring version of the resource industry townscape and the larger provincial culture that Cameron ever presents. In the other novels, the protagonists' trajectory is much the same, but life off the farm is worse: in *Those Lancasters*, Brew kills himself and his daughter because the daughter has severe fetal alcohol effects (374); in *Wedding Cakes*, bar-bound parents nail the five siblings into the house without food or fuel, with the aim of keeping them from going to their grandmother's farm (3-4); and in *Aftermath*, also set in the area, a sawmill worker and ex-sniper living in part of repurposed army barracks beats his family and kills a policeman (66), not long after telling his stepdaughter that she should be careful what

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<sup>131</sup> This suggestion is borne out by the denouement, where Stubby, now a very wealthy, retired poker player, pays her neighbours to rebuild her house after the Row has been flattened in a magical earthquake. The neighbours, transformed by the event (which brings love back into the world), use their generous wages to rebuild their homes, and the Row becomes permanent (281).

she learns to do because she will end up doing it for a living — a prophecy that comes true in her attempt to live differently, as she spends her childhood hiding her younger siblings from him and her adulthood earning a living as a foster parent (17).

Cameron makes it clear that she thinks it is the *ideology* that brought towns like Cassidy into being that is wrong for the place, not the specific type of work or even the unsustainable resource use of coal mining and logging. Taken together, the Bright's Crossing stories show that Cameron accepts that property is made through work, and that land can be enclosed and used for individual purposes: trees can be cut, and even some coal mined, as the Lancasters share these products with their First Nations in-laws (109, 180, 287). In giving the Bright's Crossing townsite the dark origin she does, therefore, Cameron is not condemning enterprise so much as she is condemning a economic and political order that support oppressions through wage slavery, war, and environmental devastation.<sup>132</sup> Cameron's alterations to Granby's company town planning and site management have been made to ensure the townspeople's lives fit an understanding of liberal capitalism as necessarily patriarchal and oppressive, and its structures can only be used morally if good people, like the Lancasters, are subverting the state's power (power always identified with corporate control). Living sustainably on the land, particularly by

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<sup>132</sup> Mill and mine owners in Cameron are never present and are never law-abiding, much less ethical. This thread of the exploitative overseer is persistent enough throughout her work that, in one of her few historical novels, connects this specific town with slave owners: In *Escape to Beulah*, Thomas Cassidy metamorphizes into a sadistic plantation owner in the American south, one who pursues his escaped female slave all the way to Vancouver Island, only to finally be killed by Matty (the slave), her lover, Molly, and the women with whom she has formed a community on a site much like that of the future Bright's Crossing. By the time Cassidy finds them, the women have built a rudimentary farm and a trading network with the local First Nations. He immediately attempts to destroy their community.

growing crops and raising livestock, and trading with a local community are parts of this subversion and the whole culture is an imagined replacement for the state. Within the narrative, this shift to an intimate, self-regulating community proves its superiority because the protagonists succeed, and because the virtues of tolerance, good relations with equally autonomous First Nations, sustainable land practice centred on small scale farming, and care for dependents collected as a general nurture seem plausibly continuous. In the world of the story, the social capital of strong networks has replaced the accumulated financial capital that set apart the potentially “ideal individuals” in the nineteenth century form of the “liberal order framework” that characterized Canada’s colonial expansion (McKay “Liberal Order” 624-625). Cameron’s vision is therefore a form of liberalism, based on inherent self-possession, but one in which the larger state proves unnecessary, as the good people are able to recognize each other and are always successful in exiling bad people – with or without the help of magical beings and convenient illnesses or accidents. The state is also unnecessary because the good people can sustain themselves and their dependents without depleting natural resources.

When Cameron’s protagonists are read as representing British Columbian settlers who are or could be at home in places like Cassidy, however, the polarities of the values of the good and bad settlers collapse. They fail partly because, as in Lane’s *Red Dog Red Dog* and Wilson’s *Once You Break a Knuckle*, the resource worker’s dystopia of predatory, brutalized, and drug addled men and is an exaggeration, but they fail even more because her Edenic values of hard work (which takes the form of nurture), acceptance of diversity, and (especially) good relations with the First Nations people and giving back to the earth are what Eva Mackey traces as the national myths that form

contemporary Canadian liberalism (154). Government workers, professionals, managers, and the investors and owners of large corporations have probably not largely been rendered sociopathic by participation in liberal capitalism, nor are they necessarily racist, homophobic, or unconcerned about the environmental effects of their lives. Likewise, most people probably do not torture animals when they leave home, and renters can be both house proud and sober. The only stable difference between her protagonists and everyone she excludes becomes that her protagonists farm or garden. As her good people can represent no one or almost everyone, resource workers who garden are either at home already and free of culpability for the damage their work entails, and are therefore settlers free of responsibility for the effects of colonialism on First Nations people, or they can have home only if they own their own land but otherwise detach themselves as far as possible from the national culture and its state and corporate bodies.

Cameron's association of bad people with a failure to give to the earth directly by working the soil anticipates the limit of the usefulness of the Edenic story as a way of creating settler innocence, even as that story appears in Juby, Bowering, and Hodgins. First, unlike the story of home secured by entrepreneurial success of the homestead, where the permanent change made home (as a part of an improving or civilizing process), a story that has home on a farm be marked by grateful land producing abundant crops suggests that settler home has to be re-proven every year and that it is best proven when little or nothing has physically changed (this also elides environmental change from farming).<sup>133</sup> British Columbian settlers in resource towns have a nearly insuperable

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<sup>133</sup> *Family Resemblances* underlines that this recognition of Eden and an accompanying pledge to preserve it marks good settlers from bad, even when their actions are the same.

challenge if the stories of home can only support settlers who dedicate their efforts to preserving the land as they find it, even when they only occupy previously cleared land, as they must somehow dissociate themselves from the continuing change resource work brings.

Second, as the Huble Homestead's transport industry impetus for development and Houston's early reliance on tie-cutting suggest, and as Juby's novel comically develops, the family farm is hard to claim as the seed of any resource –area town in British Columbia without a bit of fudging. Eden is not a good enough story for British Columbian home in every part of the province, even if the alteration of local ecosystems is understood as non-destructive, because the local land might not provide after all. I am not sure that any agricultural settlement here has *ever* managed to be an isolated, self-sustaining economy. Some successful ones were certainly able to compete in the world grain market (including the Doukhobors, whose communal structure meant that they harvested and sold wheat from their prairie fields and fruit from their British Columbian orchards [Victoria Hayward and Edith Watson]) and were crushed by the Great Depression. The more imaginatively compelling communes, however, the ones that attempted to partially shut themselves off from the outside world like Sointula and

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Cedar, the protagonist, inherits a farm from a neighbour. She in turn grants a young boy, Campbell, a home has because he was able to recognise the farm as the centre and source of growth from the moment he first saw it, and he offered to help with the pigs if she would let him stay (23). The contrast is with the owner's son, Ted, whom Cedar and Campbell replace as the parent and child generation on the farm. He was born on it, and worked it with his father before joining the air force, but he proves that it has never been his home by looking to sell the land to a developer.

Brother XII's Cedar-by-the-Sea, took considerable start-up capital and left at least some of the residents destitute.<sup>134</sup>

At the same time, the narrative that self-sustaining agricultural colonies in the province *could have* worked remained so strong long into the twentieth century that George Woodcock said, in a summary of the conditions that lead to the failure of Sointula, that colonists in general managed to starve to death in lands of plenty through poor leadership (75-76). Cameron hints at the same incompetence as the root of all failure in *Stubby Amberchuck*. When the demonic Royal Divine (likely based on Brother XII) absconds with a colony's funds, the remaining colonists, now thinking for themselves, might be able to run the place as a profitable chicken farm (210). Woodcock and Cameron both seem to suggest that the failed farmers, or any people living on the land but not attempting to farm, either have the wrong values or are more unable than usual to live up to those values. Neither author seems willing to accept that the land may not be able to produce enough food of enough variety for the farmers, no matter the method of farming, the scale of operations, or the spiritual and aesthetic aims of the farmers.

The literary profusion of small family farms also contributes to the failure of the *Edenic* farm in particular as a sufficient community narrative for supporting community identity formation in small resource towns. British Columbian literary farms do not seem to often be celebratory portraits of dense economic and state infrastructure flourishing in previously uncultivated area. George Bowering even presents the Cornwall ranch in *Caprice* in order to demonstrate its alien nature, and he calls its owners British and Irish

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<sup>134</sup> For surveys of B.C intentional community experiments, see Justine Brown's *All Possible Worlds: Utopian Experiments in British Columbia* and Andrew Scott's *The Promise of Paradise: Utopian Communities in BC*.

rather than Canadian (79). As far as I can determine, only the Edenic farm, the retreat from the world and residence of a self-sufficient nuclear family, appears as a home in contemporary literature (“civilizing” farms appear as failed homes, as are Matthew Pearson’s unbuilt stone house and John Weeks’s milkless dairy operation). Because the values of the resource industries that initiate the development of planned towns (whatever the values of the actual residents) are those of the densely linked “empire” of the global commodities market, in which the particulars of origin are irrelevant, the towns inevitably stand as part of what the farm opposes. The story is able to do no more than describe the values of good settlers, best shown through work, tolerance, and some effort taken to care for the land.

Unfortunately, one of the problems of assuming that all people are inherently equal and must be granted or denied home through differences in their observable virtues is that people seem to be more equal in their virtues than is convenient, even in fiction. The farming myth can help make land property (in fiction and perhaps in fact), but it cannot make it property in particular. For the land to land to be impossible to detach from the identity of the settler inhabitant, the land and settler must somehow be understood to be interdependent, and the settler no more replaceable by another settler than the land is by a different geography. The stories of the next chapter are stories that trace a norm that, in its strongest form, understands residents with a right to home to have been selected by land, made manifest through a supernatural encounter.

## Chapter 5: The Spirits of Place: Stories of Land Choosing Its People

Throughout the previous chapters, I have argued that, while narrative is central to the creation of a claim to “be at home” in British Columbia, stories of prospecting, logging, homesteading, and continuous, sustainable farming are all somewhat inadequate means for small resource town settlers to create the sense of being the best people for the land, at least as a cohesive group with clear inclusions and exclusions that members would recognize. In these stories, loggers and prospectors are represented as nomadic loner figures associated with temporary booms rather than with the values of family, material comfort, and security that are core to community cohesion and permanence, an association that can be seen where early resource workers in mining and forestry are reduced to semi-comic figures in public and popular works, vaguely ancestral only because their historical presence preceded the family-based farming economy that is associated with families and permanence. Consistent with this interpretation of past workers’ values as essentially antisocial, contemporary literary narratives of mining or mill towns condemn both the methods of resource extraction and the workers who do it, associating both with opportunism and ecological insensitivity as well as with violence, race- or gender- based oppression, and social chaos. In contrast, positive stories about building community in the interior of British Columbia tend to overwrite the real histories of resource extraction by asserting ranching or farming origins for towns that were historically based on commercial trading, mining, or lumber; these popular and public stories of multi-generational connection to place are unable to secure a sense of home for settler communities, however, because they have trouble acknowledging and accounting for the continuing presence of First Nations on the land. In the more positive stories, First

Nations characters sometimes appear, where they seem to be representative of parallel cultures and are given values of community solidarity and inclusion that can provide a model for farming communities represented as Edenic. These narratives of self-sufficient farms run by individuals in retreat from urban culture also tend to demonize resource extraction and the workers who do it. Moreover, by representing inclusive relationships with First Nations individuals and families these more utopian texts also suggest that the problem of colonialism can be solved individually, by being nice to the neighbours, who will, as a matter of course, recognize and welcome all good people. Each of the narratives covered so far represents a claim to home that might create a legitimate, positive and multi-generational relationship to place, but that falters on the twin problems of the clear, prior aboriginal title and the unambiguously destructive activity of resource extraction – on which the dense settler population depends. At best, each story can suggest a resource-dependent settler is no worse an inhabitant for the land than anyone else who works in any way, but that leaves no reason that land would be attached to that individual over any other.

In this chapter, I consider a different sort of narrative of being at home, one that attempts to overcome the problems (for settlers who are attempting to narrate themselves into place) posed by the primacy of First Nations and the characterization of land as a commodity by asserting a direct spiritual or supernatural connection between settler individuals and specific landscapes in British Columbia. The narrators of these stories avoid trying to claim “home” through ancestry or mastery of the land, even the mastery of being a good steward of what it produces. Instead, these narratives reverse the relationship between land and settler, suggesting that people gain home through

submitting themselves to the will of the land itself – an outcome that suggests settlement as potentially healing of the land. It is, however, also a potentially appropriative story, as it also tends to avoid the primacy of First Nations through suggesting that First Nations spirituality, and in some cases supernatural figures, are available to anyone of any culture or ethnicity who chooses them (or, more commonly, is chosen by them). I should note that stories that suggest obedience to the land are by definition ecologically responsible, and are narratively grounded partly through assertions of and descriptions of specific landscapes and the ecological and human histories in place. As these features suggest, these stories are related to the claim, made separately by both W. H. New and Laurie Ricou, for a kind of cultural sense of home, characterized by a British Columbian way of being, a habit of listening, learning and trying to know that would characterize the ideal, but stories drawing on the supernatural make a slightly different and more problematic claim. Their speakers do not gain a sense of home through trying to know everything they can about the land and culture; instead, they assert that they are “at home,” an assertion, “proven” through knowledge of a divine truth – knowledge possibly only revealed to artists and writers.

I think that it is possible that stories of direct communication with a spirit of place could serve the needs of the inhabitants of resource towns by providing a sense of permanent attachment to place that transcends mere economic exigency. Through identifying with artists and writers who claim a direct supernatural knowledge of the land, the inhabitants of landscapes ravaged by resource extraction, depopulated by mill closures, and subject to competing ownership claims from multinational corporations and First Nations, might justify their continued commitment to their communities. These

stories would then be a (likely unanticipated) part of the “cultural capital” that town planners imagined would make their towns outlast the vagaries of the commodities markets and provide an anchor for the workers’ ties of family and love of place, part of the common story that inhabitants of towns could share. Finally, the works inspired by these encounters – whether visual art, books, blogs or poems – might serve to represent through images the unique “spirit of place” that can be commodified for sale in the familiar form of the “unique cultural experience” that draws tourists with money to spend. To put it more concretely, I am arguing that there might be some meaning larger than marketing behind the town of Elkford’s “Wild at Heart” motto, though probably not behind its 2016 promotion -- featuring a man waking to find a companionate moose in his bed.

This chapter focuses on narratives that suggest what a settler might learn by listening to a place — learning granted by what appears in the narratives as an amorphous and ill-defined spiritual or supernatural presence, a divine authority that is constructed as capable of bestowing absolute knowledge and absolute belonging. In Jack Hodgins’s *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, this authority appears as a kind of narrative logic that suggests divine providence; for Harold Rhenisch, the authority is more directly a sense that the land itself has made an active choice in rewarding his sustainable farming activity and his study of the local landscape with a sense of an ideal existence in place, if not a sense of ownership.<sup>135</sup> In *The Curve of Time*, by M. Wylie Blanchet, as in Anne

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<sup>135</sup> Harold Rhenisch is not as well-known outside B.C. literary circles as most of the other writers in this study are. He is a prolific and relatively well-recognized poet and essayist, has been nominated for and won awards for non-fiction and poetry over the past three

Cameron's *Wedding Cakes, Rats and Rodeo Queens*, the authorities are actual figures: spirits of place that select and communicate with settlers to provide inspiration as well as a sense of being at home. These stories all define "home" as a way of seeing or knowing the land that somehow comes from the land itself. In essence, in these settler narratives, even the brief gestures at narrative in of mottos identifying the "body" of the land with the "body" of the settler resident or the community, the land is being reimagined as a character, and one with McKay's liberal order framework determining its understanding of property.

Before I analyse the process I think I see at work, I will explain the idiosyncratic collection of works I have amassed. At first glance, they seem to have little to do with small resource industry communities. Only Hodgins' novel is set directly in a small resource dependent town (the fictional Port Annie, based on the instant town of Port Alice on Vancouver Island). Harold Rhenisch writes his poetry, autobiographical essays, his creative non-fiction, and his blog posts primarily about the Okanagan and Similkameen valleys, and his work focuses on the phenomena of individual experience in the landscape rather than on the building of community (although community as an abstract is a pervasive theme in his work); similarly, *The Curve of Time* represents an individual's exploration of a landscape marked everywhere by histories and practices of resource extraction (coal mining on Vancouver Island, logging on the Gulf Islands and in

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decades. He is the author of fifteen books and editor of several more, and serves regularly on literary award committees throughout the province (Rhenisch "C.V."). His best-known books of prose are *Tom Thomson's Shack* (2001) and the George Ryga prize winning *The Wolves at Evelyn* (2007). His biography is available at the University of Toronto's *Canadian Poetry Online* project ("Harold Rhenisch"). The online project I address in this chapter has been partly developed through his position as an Electronic Writer in Residence (Niagara Branch of the Canadian Authors Association).

the mainland inlets) but which she also claims is isolated, wild, and empty. But this act of looking away from the industrial activity around them and naming as “home” everything else (imagined as wild, alive, or natural in a way industry is not) is part of what demonstrates that these writers are “at home.” Rhenisch and Blanchet both avert their gaze from the intense resource activity around them in the vast swaths of land they assert is their home (Rhenisch includes the full province), but this ability to perceive the essential land beyond the activity on it, and the huge range of their homes, confirms them as settlers who are at home: a spirit of the land has made itself known to them, and their “homes” are unified by what the spirit inhabits, rather than the smaller topography a person can know.<sup>136</sup>

What these all of literary works have in common with the stories of resource towns is that, like them, these stories are attempts to construct a right to be in place for the people represented in them, in the face of multiple and competing claims. Similar to the stories of labouring settlers as allegories of settler communities, they form an attempt to find (personal) identity through the extension of the values of liberalism – individualism, personal and intellectual freedom, national sovereignty, and private property – within the landscapes of British Columbia. And like the previous narratives examined in this dissertation, they problematize the relationship between settler culture and indigenous sovereignties by either completely eliding indigenous presence or by

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<sup>136</sup> Even more interestingly, both of these authors insist that their supernatural experiences are *not* metaphor or convention (though such an assertion too can be a generic convention). Each therefore makes a truth claim about an external agency that grants them absolute knowledge about place.

representing settler characters who are the deserving inheritors of, or partners in, indigenous spiritual and material practices.

Nearly every book I have examined so far has a ghost or spirit, and all the ghostly works participate somewhat in the pattern I wish to outline. The presence and function of spirits in the books already discussed in this project support Allen Pritchard's observation that characters in British Columbian literature recognize that "no real possession is to be bought with money or conferred by legal ownership;" furthermore, the spirits in these books support an argument that possession cannot be "bought" with work either, even in the form of care for the soil ("West of the Great Divide: A View" 101). Instead, home is made when the land turns the people into its property – the land has spirits that put work into the settlers. A semi-omniscient ghost narrates Patrick Lane's *Red Dog, Red Dog*, while George Bowering's *Caprice*, Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death By Lightning*, and Jack Hodgins's *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne* have local gods (largely unrecognized as such) interacting with the townspeople. Anne Cameron's protagonists often have supernatural guidance. Hodgins's *Broken Ground* and D.W. Wilson's *Once You Break a Knuckle* lack supernatural elements, and in *Broken Ground* Pearson is berated for imagining he can understand a divine message in the painful events of his life. But Pearson and Wilson's characters also do not feel at home: the role of a spiritual connection that could link the settler to land in a meaningful way is as clear in its absence in these two works as it is in its presence in all of the others.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> When Matthew believes he knows why his daughter is dead, Maude Pearson confronts him with the insight that no analytical scheme for parsing the meaning of events can or even should make experience transparent:

The construction of narrative authority in these works is key, whether they are fiction or autobiography, and the overall story must confirm the subject of the divine encounter as experiencing a revelation of a truth, rather than a delusion. Narrative development that confirms a settler's possession by a spirit constructs the settler as an ideal resident and, because the assertion is made against other claims of special relationship with the same geographical area, also claims legitimacy as a settler in place — *if* the community accepts that these experiences access some sort of truth external to the individual viewer or reader. Unlike stories of pioneers and farmers, however, detailed and dense accounts of supernatural encounters are not prominent in public narratives; this chapter is therefore an analysis of how a settler's land claim of "home" is supported by asserting an immaterial "spiritual, but not religious" bond between the place and the person, rather than an demonstration of how literary narratives and public ones overlap.

In Harold Rhenisch's descriptions of his thought and how it developed, in Blanchet's *The Curve of Time*, in Hodgins's *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, and in Anne Cameron's *Wedding Cakes, Rats, and Rodeo Queens*, supernatural experiences are

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She lost patience with him. "Do you think that God would destroy an innocent child in order to show His anger with *you*?" (242)

Punishing Matthew is exactly what *does* make sense narratively: her death has to be about Matthew's growth, or it makes no sense at all. But Hodgins clearly rejects the idea that a great enough payment of loss and sacrifice could make a settler identifiable with place, since Pearson is still rearranging stones for a house he never builds a year later (397). The implication of this passage for the reader is unsettling. Elizabeth's death is uncanny: she rides a wagon straight into a wall of fire but unblemished, asphyxiated, though the horses live (176-177). Narrative convention is that miracles, good or bad, have meaning, and narrative logic here takes the authority of the divine to "teach" Matthew — but the lesson is that he (and the reader) should stop trying to take a lesson from even uncanny events.

linked to a search for or imagined apprehension of an external and universal truth, and are linked to resolutions in both the senses of a feeling of wholeness or completion, and of narrative closure. Supernatural experiences are not, however, strongly linked to explorations of (or symbolic representations of) spectral haunting by the past or its absence, social or cultural upheaval, and psychological trauma. In this, these presentations of supernatural experience diverge from those Cynthia Sugars discusses in her recent book, *Canadian Gothic: Literature, History, and the Spectre of Self-Invention* (8). In her fourth chapter, “Local Familiars” Sugars covers somewhat the same territory, as she examines how authors use the machinery of the gothic (most particularly its spectral figures) as a means to represent trauma, pain, alienation, and guilt. As she explains, “ghosts [are] courted as a source of inscription, placing a Canadian settler populace firmly within a cultured history that imagined integral links between ghosts and geography” (247-248). Sugars explains that gothic forms are called on because settlers use them to recover from an “unsettling” caused by “the rupture of colonization and migration” (248). However, the works discussed in this chapter represents ghosts *without* requiring that they confront the characters with their own fears and ignorance. Instead, the characters in these stories who encounter spirits, or find that they have come to know something without learning it, are easy with their supernatural experiences, and these encounters bring peace and settled understanding, usually to people who are fairly at ease in the first place.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Sugars does delineate a cheerful state of “Gothic homeliness,” exemplified by “a community ... defined... by an intangible suffusion of wholeness begotten by the sensation of the supernatural” that resembles the representative settlers’ *easiness* with supernatural encounter, itself represented by Bowering’s two Indians in *Caprice* and

As Sugars notes, however, many B.C. settler novels do use gothic conventions and strategies, and to ends strongly similar to those of what she traces as a Canadian tradition. The supernatural elements of Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death By Lightning* and Patrick Lane's *Red Dog Red Dog* place settler ghosts into the land in much the manner she explores in her fourth chapter — though these particular ghosts arguably poison what they “secure” as settler inheritance in a way that is not true of the supernatural presences that ordain Harold Rhenisch, M. Wylie Blanchet, and the character of Jimmy in Cameron's *Wedding Cakes, Rats and Rodeo Queens* (*Canadian Gothic* 109-111). In contrast, the stories of inexplicable experience discussed here are settling, rather than unsettling. The subjects of the experience discover through it that they, among all settlers, already have a home — and they do so in a way that changes them without a traumatic rupture. Spiritual experiences give these privileged settlers supernatural knowledge, knowledge that they then test and confirm, often by reading books and essays about local First Nations cultures.<sup>139</sup> The narratives do not invoke ghosts so as to represent the cultural trauma of alienation from the land or explore the legacies of colonialism, and the encounters are not hauntings by a personal or settler-colonial past (Sugars *Canadian Gothic* 244-248). Instead, they are stories of persistent spirits who choose their settler subjects to be some of their (presumably many) agents, so

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Cameron's many spirits, but this “security” is inevitably “interrupted by a conventionally terrifying Gothic effect” where she finds it, which is not the case in Cameron or Bowering (123-124).

<sup>139</sup> This in itself is obviously a very problematic way of learning about anything other than a colonial gaze, which underlines my point: these are settler stories that confirm an internal hierarchy of worthy and less worthy settlers. Except in *The Curve of Time*, they seem to be a way of securing the spot of runner-up in the contest of home, right behind the contemporary First Nations in the area.

as to communicate with larger groups of settlers. In this, the stories mark the subjects of the spiritual invasion as the ideal people for place and support the claim to be at home of any settlers who recognize the story of this sort of experience as a demonstration of shared values.

These stories of spiritual or supernatural identification between settlers and a supernatural spirit of place suggest that through these experiences people can “become indigenous” and so equivalent to any First Nations’ people in their claim to be “at home.” The normative plot of these stories, which usually involves an unsought invasion by a spirit of the land,<sup>140</sup> is determined by the settler narrator’s need to establish this equivalency, as much as by an awareness of the conventions of divine revelation in the Western tradition. Stories of spiritual experience give their subjects authority to speak on behalf of the land, and so secure a direct moral authority to the claim to be at home in a specific geographic location. Stories narrated by settlers represent these experiences as ones that the resident passively receives rather than actively seeks. These stories of experiential possession or phenomenological encounter, if even tacitly accepted as reflecting some sort of truth external to the subject who claims to have experienced them (even by having the stories told and retold without debate or contradiction), have the effect of recasting the right of home in colonial space as something the land determines through its choice of resident.

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<sup>140</sup> This would make them by definition a species of what novelist Hilary Scharper, in an interview with Jessica Lewis, calls the “ecogothic,” even though half of them are autobiographical accounts. I would tend to class such testimonies as a form of religious writing and assume they were a part of an all-encompassing worldview (Scharper).

Harold Rhenisch, a poet, novelist, and essayist originally from the Similkameen, also keeps a series of meditative on-line projects that combine writing and photography as an exercise in seeing and communicating place, and he asserts himself strongly as a settler voice of place *because* he is a poet, specifically one who attempts to represent the objects in the land around him – in his case, most particularly the natural flora and fauna of the Similkameen and Okanagan Valleys and the cultivated land of his farm and orchard. His description of how he came to have an appropriate way of seeing the province, combined with his explanation of the role of poets as agents of the divine show the general features of narratives that create settler innocence through putting the agency into the land and recasting selected settlers as the land’s property: there is some magical event in which the settlers are set apart from their immediate community, and they respond by creating works of art.

Rhenisch’s autobiographical statements and his explanations of how he understands his own development as a poet and a person represent him as taking direction from the land, almost as if he is possessed by the *genus loci*. In a statement of philosophy entitled “The Shamanic Journey,” he explains that people construct themselves from the process of observing how their representations of objects “collide” and “interact” in a poem (“Philosophy: The Shamanic Journey”).<sup>141</sup> He similarly argues that *any* art that does not arise from local experience alienates people from their home, asserting, “art

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<sup>141</sup> Rhenisch’s specific delineation of a poet’s possession by a divine presence draws in a Western legacy of prophetic teleology, associated with both Biblical traditions and Romanticism. His emphasis is very much on his work as a discovery of the nature of the real, as this description shows: he is describing a poem as a device akin to a cloud chamber.

must come out of our coffee breaks and our fear of the mountains from which we can't part, or it is our signature on our notice of eviction" ("Essays: First Words"). For Rhenisch, however, the "representations" in art are not those in ordinary language; rather, poetry makes an external real world, the "power of the earth," manifest:

Poetry is magic. What it speaks of is true, and it gives us visions of time present, past, and eternal, and poems are doorways into those times. In other words, in my poems as in my life consciousness lives within *images*, which are points of transferal between the power of the earth and human speech, and within things. I am the field of their correspondence. This is not an allegory. It is an attempt to say, as honestly as possible, that as soon as I accepted my poems... there has been no going back to the level of language where words and images are not shamanic and incantatory. ("Essays: Poetry and Magic"; original emphasis)

Rhenisch's biography suggests that the "power of the earth" chooses as its field of correspondence someone who has prepared equally in literary study and in study of the local natural world, but that the literature does not have to be local.

In an interview for poet Rob McLennan's blog series, *12 or 20 Questions*, Rhenisch answers questions on his abiding themes of home, authenticity, and land, and he explains how he developed his perspectives. Rhenisch explained why he would wait until harvest to eat pears rather than eat them from commercial storage, saying:

I came of age reading Virgil underneath a pear tree while a huge bullsnake rustled through the grass just feet away, hunting in the rising starlight as nighthawks hunted overhead. ("12 or 20 questions: with Harold Rhenisch")

Rhenisch's description of his coming of age, made the experience of a moment in this image, has such concrete and local detail that it displays his intimacy with the small area of cultivated British Columbian desert in a single sentence. Part of its strength is in its apparent testimony, its exotic intimacy with a minute place. Only in grassland artificially irrigated by the lakes and rivers draining the Western Cordillera could pears, bull snakes [gopher snakes], and nighthawks combine. And only a very practiced ear can distinguish the bull from the rattlesnake, which is equally local and also nocturnal, especially as the bullsnake protects itself by sounding like the rattlesnake (BC Ministry of the Environment *Habitat Atlas for Species at Risk* "Gopher Snake," "Western Rattlesnake").

In this description of his coming of age, Rhenisch's gestures are much like those Sugars identifies as placing settler ancestry in the Canadian landscape, drawing on non-indigenous literary, religious, and family tradition – but as familiar studies, not as uncanny spectral presences. All the farms of western history lie with Rhenisch in his orchard, with its fruit and snakes and its verse from the father of both Georgic and pastoral poetry. This is a Romantic *and* Edenic scene (even the snake is benign), undergirded by both Rousseau and Keats, as Rhenisch presents himself as an autodidact and he has an epiphany, his coming of age, while reading a classic, echoing Keats' encounter with Chapman's Homer. He also explains that his family's home in British Columbia is continuous with his ancestors' farms on the floodplains of the Muhr, tributary of the Rhine:<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup>The Muhr is named as the Rhenisch family's ancestral home in Harold Rhenisch's semi-biographical novel, *Carnival*.

I write out of place. Like the Secwepemc and Similkameen people themselves, I really am a child of the grassland. I have 4,000 years of grasslands culture behind me. (“12 Or 20”)

He goes on to say, “BC history is the result of a marriage between these two cultures.” In this statement, he asserts that the “place” of his home is a hybrid of First Nations and European settler communities.

Here and throughout his extensive online projects, particularly the essay collection and blog, *Okanagan Okanagon*, Rhenisch emphasizes that he has worked hard to learn all he can about everything in his home, and he strives to make careful judgements about what is beneficial to his land and the culture it supports. Even with such a balance of indigenous and settler virtues constructing his place, Rhenisch provides other proofs of his claim that the Similkameen and, by extension, the rest of the province, is his home:

Somehow, from deep knowledge of a small space I’ve found myself a citizen of the earth in the largest sense, across space as well as time. . . . When I left the Similkameen Valley in 1992, . . .I knew every story for every stone and tree, and was living in a landscape much like the sacred ones of prehistory. (“12 Or 20”)

This is similar to the project William New and Laurie Ricou pursue: it is a British Columbian settler way of being that is an attempt to witness all the possible worlds of the province. Even if he does not know *every* story for each landform, his claim shows that such knowledge would make him the ideal, universal citizen of the earth. Rhenisch has an answer for the unnamed Gitksan elder’s question that J.E Chamberlain uses as the title of his 2004 book of essays on home on contested lands, *If This Is Your Land, Where Are*

*Your Stories?* (Chamberlain 1). Rhenisch's answer seems to be "I know *every* story, so it is my land."

When asked whether race has had any influence on his work, however, Rhenisch's description of the process of his learning leaves both scholarship and community interaction:

If race has made an impact on my work, it's because when I started school, half the kids in class were from the reserve south of town. 1 of them graduated from high school 12 years later. In my late teens, I made the transference from European to Native conceptions of land and space. It was not deliberate. It happened. BC history is the result of a marriage between these two cultures. ("12 or 20")

These sentences, juxtaposed, are startling: Rhenisch gained a "Native" conception of land and space not through acculturation in close friendships with people of any of the Okanagan Nations, or through scholarship, but through an involuntary infusion of what would seem to be the product of a culture he did not know. Of all the things that Rhenisch marks as formative of him in this interview, including his later choices to return to farming rather than do a graduate degree and to stop farming in order raise his children, the *only* event in which he does not emphasize his choice and agency is this change in how he sees "land and space." He presents himself as a passive, if open, recipient. Rhenisch describes a logically impossible event (rather than using a metaphor for a slow evolution of ideas in response to study and experience) that is congruent with his assertion that he is a "field of correspondence" for the power of the earth and for the images that communicate the earth's truth.

Rhenisch repeatedly asks his readers to accept him (in the form of his poetry) as a voice from the local land, not as a purely human creation. He defines voice as “the sound that pours through the mouth from its non-human source” and “the sound of the ancestors speaking through the living present” (“Green Earth”). Nothing in his philosophy leaves room for any of the Similkameen people to be more at home than Rhenisch, as his description of “Indigenous Culture” underlines:

We are all indigenous, whether we are native to a place or part of a colonial legacy. For some of us, this indigenous identity is tightly bound with the earth. For others, it is tightly bound to language, which at its roots is tightly bound to the earth. There is much common ground there, through our ancestors, who still speak through us, in the words we have inherited from them. (“Philosophy: Indigenous Culture”)

Rhenisch’s explanation of himself as “at home” denies even the possibility that home might be a contest over occupation of land, because land, language, and identity are both inseparable and communal: ancestors and languages, like landscapes, are interchangeable. Indeed, Rhenisch seems to understand colonialism as primarily way of thinking that has a negative effect on settlers, rather than as an ideological framework and set of practices that dispossess and oppress First Nations people: he addresses what he calls the “Colonial Legacy” in this manner:

I used to live in a house called Harold. The view out the front windows was very beautiful: the mountains and orchards of the Okanagan Valley, sweeping white clouds, blue sky. One day I couldn’t stand the distance any longer, opened the door and walked out into that view. (“Philosophy: Colonial Legacy”).

In this image, a colonial way of seeing alienates the settler from the land, and he leaves himself to become the land. There is no suggestion that the colonial legacy might have a material component, nor is it clear how his escape would change his material practices in a way that undid the larger effects of colonialism in the Valley.

Stories like Rhenisch's, that represent his passive acquisition of local indigenous knowledge as, paradoxically, a decisive action by the land in claiming him as its ideal inhabitant, allow non-indigenous residents to represent themselves as inherently belonging in particular landscapes. Such stories elide, evade or even claim to rise above such issues as the persistence of aboriginal title and the illegal appropriation of land and resources by the settler community. Rather than establishing the right to home through work, these stories are bids to have right to home measured by different criteria: they have proof that the land has chosen their subjects. This proof can be a new (real or supposed) similarity to a First Nations' culture, but it does not have to be.<sup>143</sup> In addition, just as a claim to share the values of self-sustaining and tolerant farmers supports the home of people who do not farm, accepting the story that the land communicates its will through settler mediums supports the claims to home of not only people who do not claim access to supernatural knowledge, but also of (potentially) full communities of atheists (if, for example, they understand the story as an account of an overwhelming love of

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<sup>143</sup>In Anne Cameron's *Stubby Amberchuck and the Holy Grail*, for example, one form the supernatural takes is the appearance of an all-knowing dragon that sometimes manifests as a small dog, reminiscent of Mephistopheles accompanying Faust as a poodle (*Stubby* 252).

place). The story of being chosen people is, if possible, even *more* plastic than is the story of wanting to farm — but it is not as tied to the ground any person rests on.<sup>144</sup>

These stories are differentiated from those discussed in the previous two chapters by the sense that the community is linked to place by ties that are spiritual, not material. In stories of homesteaders as colonial citizens, the people are unified and sorted into a hierarchy by the secular social order. In stories of family farmers as people creating the cyclical and sustainable harmony of Eden, they are unified by a set of values that lead to some natural reward for good action, particularly for nurture centred on good stewardship of the land. In both cases, the geographical component of “place” is largely passive and the cultural component, “community,” is active. When place is understood in either homesteading stories or Edenic stories, the land under the town is neither good nor bad, and it does not vary much of its own accord. Communities can act on the land in ways that cultivate it or render it sterile, but the land itself plays no part in helping to differentiate who, among all possible inhabitants, is at home on it. Stories of revelation sidestep this chain by suggesting that home is unmediated gift from a non-human actor. Boom era resource industry town residents, as the newest settlers, have no obvious way of demonstrating that they are more identified with the land of their place than anyone else, and resource town residents are more obviously actively destroying it than anyone else is. Even farmers and ranchers must justify their presence in place in the context of the colonial dispossession of First Nations. The solution in the narratives in this chapter is to make the identification an immaterial one, and superior to other residents’ attachments

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<sup>144</sup>These stories loosely resemble the Judaic story of a divinely chosen people. “Land” as a divine arbiter likewise functions as a god with no other gods before it.

because it is not psychological, as in a personal love of place, but *spiritual*, and claims a community with non-material (but local) essences external to the self.

These immaterial consciousnesses are also often somehow identifiably indigenous. These stories also tend to frame First Nations actors, if not as supernatural themselves, then at least as having easy interactions with the supernatural. This tendency of making “Indians” spiritual symbols of land has a wide currency, as recounted Thomas King’s *The Truth About Stories*, Daniel Francis’s *The Imaginary Indian*, and Margery Fee’s essay “Romantic Nationalism and the Image of Native People in Contemporary English–Canadian Literature.” Like the texts discussed in these sources, the stories discussed below use Indigenous people as vessels of irrational knowledge, and identify the local people so strongly with the land of the province that the people are almost a synecdoche for land.

Jack Hodgins’s 1978 novel, *The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne*, is replete with demigods (false, true, and absent) and their intermediaries. Among these are Annie herself, the founder of Port Annie, who is a European version of a transformer. Her arrival as a beached blue whale that becomes human is a joke on the name of Alice Whalen, the founder of the real town of Port Alice (the first town incorporated as an instant town) that provides the real counterpart for the fictional Port Annie. Her story, told by the only identified First Nations character, recognizes how new human families appear in coastal First Nations’ stories, even though as an invasive and hybrid god who caused the local indigenous people to flee, Annie may also be an abomination (89).

Another supernatural figure is Damon West, the demon of Westernization in the form of mass commodification, who arrives accompanied by rain from a clear sky and a smell he

explains as “the odour of wealth” (192). On stage at community event, the “Fat Annie Festival” West tempts the Port Annie residents with the promise of riches if they join him in his “song of faith in enterprise, energy, and exploitation” and agree to transform their town into a luxury resort (304). He is ignored, and is hurried off the stage in favour of Mrs. Barnstone, who chronicles the residents’ exploits for them.

Joseph Bourne is also semi-divine, although (as with West) no one realizes it. Bourne, who says of Port Annie shortly before his death, “It’s not more my home than any place else, it isn’t worth the trouble” (28), functions to underline that the towns’ mortal residents seem able to learn idealism only through the material world, including both human action and miracles, and not through the medium of language. Once resurrected, he tries to explain through the local reporter that that “life” is “sturdier” than the earth, which can “buck you off,” but the townspeople assume he cannot mean what he has said (128). He then instead helps fix houses, renovate storefronts, teach children, and generally knit the community together, “as if he intended to learn how to be everywhere at once, how to touch everyone’s life at once like the rain” (196). Bourne has a message of love and charity that he delivers by helping people – and it can be delivered *only* through action and not testimony. No one imitates Bourne, however, until after he has left and the town has been destroyed exactly as he said it could be.

Fat Annie dies and both West and the resurrected Joseph Bourne leave before the cataclysm that confirms the community interdependence (313, 324). But the land itself has a determining role in choosing the people who will live upon it: at the climax of the plot, the land itself sheds the town of Port Annie in a mudslide that washes the town away and also buries Slim Potts, a foreman at the local pulp mill, with his collection of heavy

machinery. This event echoes an earlier burial of Dieter Fartenberg,<sup>145</sup> logger husband to the god who Bourne has succeeded, the now-shrivelled, hidden Fat Annie.<sup>146</sup> The novel concludes with the homeless residents sheltering on “Squatter’s Flats” and with Potts’s wife, Jenny, performing a life-affirming strip tease. Potts, a fertile, well-loved, and hardworking but inoffensive man, may be buried alive as a new god in the land, or he may be buried in a condemnation of the same destructive bulldozing that makes angered gods superfluous causes for steep-slope mudslides. The ambiguities of Hodgins’s ending affirm only that art, love, and mutual dependence are good and that reducing land and community to mere market commodity is evil. The slide is the final “Port Annie miracle” (title page), and the land itself is the final supernatural authority that determines its inhabitants.

The passivity of the settler encountering divine presences seems common in British Columbian fiction. In *The Resurrection*, the supernatural land tends to make invisible and unfathomable things happen to chosen but unsuspecting residents. In this story, as in Rhenisch’s autobiographical comments and in the brief public declarations that residents’ hearts have become part of the surrounding environment, the land’s power is felt psychically, and the resident is changed. In Hodgins’s novels, from *The Invention of the World* to *Distance*, the characters who look for gods never find them, but gods do seem to select unassuming people in order to help them out, particularly in earlier works,

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<sup>145</sup>David L. Jeffrey points out that “Fartenberg” could mean a farting mountain. Port Annie would therefore arise from the marriage of gods who provoke tsunami (the beached Annie) and earthquake (Jeffrey).

<sup>146</sup>Alice Whalen is acknowledged as Port Alice’s namesake on GeoBC, the provincial government’s place name information website. (British Columbia. GeoBC, “Port Alice”).

as Horseman does Wade in *The Invention of the World*. Two semi-divine “Indians” comment on and occasionally nudge the action of Bowering’s historical novels *Burning Water*, *Shoot!* and *Caprice*. Tay John walks out of and into the ground for Howard O’Hagan. Coyote places his paw on Watson’s earth in *The Double Hook* (although no settler meets Coyote in Watson) and pursues Beth in *The Cure for Death by Lightning*. Elderly First Nations helpers with supernatural knowledge, local spirits, and supernatural creatures such as Selkies (*Selkie*), a giant frog, (*Women, Kids, and Huckleberry Wine*), and a dragon (*Stubby*) appear in Anne Cameron’s works. These revelations almost always come through encounters with local and seemingly First Nations’ spirits.

Encounters with local ghosts can work the same way as Rhenisch’s “transference,” creating a spiritual authority and supernatural source for knowledge that can reasonably only be gained through study and practice. These ghosts appear frequently in fiction, but also in memoir. M. Wylie Blanchet spent summers from the late 1920s to the early 1940s sailing along the British Columbian coast, stopping in at some of the most active industry sites in the province — notably in the Knight and Kingcome inlets that Howard White calls “the centre of the float camp universe, complete with floating villages” (*Raincoast Eleven Up* 249), and the Queen Charlotte Strait, then the site of booming Ocean Falls and several smaller mill and cannery towns. In her foreword to her book about these travels, *The Curve of Time*, Blanchet states that it is “neither a story nor a log [i]” This could mean that it is not fiction, and it is not comprehensive, or it could mean that it is not only a story but also a partial log. Parts of it are clearly not just story, and her biographer, Cathy Converse, asserts that people who attempt to follow her wanderings remark on the accuracy of her chart readings and descriptions of navigating

difficult passages (Converse 9). Like Rhenisch's, her technical expertise and scholarship, and her realist technique of including material details such as the sleeping arrangements aboard ship and descriptions of landscape, flora and fauna increase her overall credibility. Some of the material of her book, written up fifteen to thirty years after the events, could be drawn from logs. However, Blanchet also shows a knack for prophecy, and she carefully structures the book so as to have it culminate in the confirmation of a fairly comical prophecy, but with the overall effect of confirming, in retrospect, the "truth" of her conversations with ghosts in First Nations' homes and graves she was invading.

As in much memoir, determining how much of *The Curve of Time* is true and how much Blanchet intends to claim as true is difficult. Whatever its status, the book has participated in British Columbian coastal cultural since the 1960s as a repository of truth, in part because Blanchet draws attention to her omissions, admitting that she has culled the happiest and most exciting moments to present, which may well be why she mentions only one visit to a cannery town and one logging village (57, 81). The work thereby recognizes itself as nostalgia. Blanchet, whose boat was the *Caprice*, went by the nickname "Capi," (Converse 11) and she hops about from year to year in her narrative, her children getting older and younger and disappearing and reappearing. The physical world is animated and mischievous: cliffs reel in, waves chase, and streams call out. The Blanchets choose their routes on whim and return to their house on Curteis Point only when they finally long for home. Blanchet, it would seem, takes "caprice" as the spirit of the book and the spirit of a conscious land.

To explain why she allows herself this play within memoir, and to support her right to exclude unpleasantness, Blanchet says, in an introduction to what she explains are

the ideas of J.W. Dunne and Maurice Maeterlinck, that the linearity of time is an illusion, as it is a dimension just like space (Blanchet 1). All events occur simultaneously on a curve, and all are visible from all points. So, not only can a person standing at one point of the curve remember the events stretching out “behind” her, but she can also remember the future, particularly in her dreams (1). The narrative is not chronological, but it is linear: it begins in early summer and ends in late fall, and begins with survival by luck and ends with survival by a demonstration of great skill, suggesting both maturation and learning. It also moves from material mastery of physical skills needed in to operate the boat and read the weather to mastery of to supernatural ones needed to talk to ghosts and, eventually, to accurately imagine the Skookumchuck Narrows before she sees them (153-156). The specific order of the sections of this book all show her increasing authority in several roles, roles ordered from the most to the least directly verifiable, and from the physical to the intellectual to the spiritual. Her claims of impossible knowledge are present throughout the book, but she starts out with alternate explanations for them and with uncanny intuitions, as when she runs to protect her children from a bear she has not yet seen (3), moves through visitations from First Nations’ ghosts and gods — visitations that she fails to insist are imaginary (52-55), and ends with knowledge of Sechelt inlet, a place she had not yet been (141), including predicting a goat will be trapped alone on one of its small islands (153).

As Rhenisch does in his short catalogue of his familiarity with local fauna, his reading habits, and his ancestry, Blanchet wins her readers’ trust with precise details of her environment, her actions in it. Blanchet starts out under the guidance of Captain George Vancouver’s logs and George Davidson’s *The Coast Pilot* (6, 35). Within the first

few pages, she shows herself able to one-up Vancouver, as she finds Princess Louisa Inlet, which Vancouver missed (8). She later uses a cove Davidson does not know or mark (71). She retimes the boat's engine, coaxes a last bit of life out of a dry battery, and navigates several difficult passages, sometimes against all warnings (63-64, 106-109).

Blanchet follows her mastery of physical and technical demands with a long demonstration of her knowledge of the non-material parts of place. She and her children research the local First Nations cultures in the winters, reading, along with whatever they can find locally, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entries from 1885 (23, 48-50). They then travel to the villages in the Broughton Archipelago, knowing that some of them are empty only because the residents are in their traditional harvesting grounds (33, 79),<sup>147</sup> and dig around in the sand, the buildings, and the graves (47-52, 66-68, 74-76). At one site, Blanchet takes a bracelet that has fallen as a burial box from one of the burial trees has disintegrated with time:

There was a shuffling and scuffing up among the boxes of bones in the trees. Low voices were calling and muttering.

“Tch... tch... tch!” It was repeated in all the trees. ...

perhaps they couldn't believe that we had taken the bracelets — none of their own people would have....

Impossible to explain that I was trying to save their Past for them. (53-54)

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<sup>147</sup> The Blanchets do not realize that some of the residents are likely doing seasonal wage work, as John Lutz explains was common (Lutz 227-230, table 228). This oversight is notable because they see First Nations women working at the Glendale cannery (Blanchet 81-82).

In this passage, Blanchet argues with the spirits that she is taking the artefact only to preserve it. She makes it clear that she knows the First Nations people are still around, but considers them unable to look after their own affairs. She suggests that she is able to tell the age of some of the burial sites and that this same knowledge has been forgotten by the residents (75).

*The Curve of Time* is ordered to show the author's progression as a pilot, an explorer, and someone who can speak for the local land and sea, and it ends with both a partially anthropomorphised account of the geological upheaval producing the land that "Life," "Heart," and "Destiny" set aside for Blanchet's house (161) and a fantasy of the thoughts of the grateful muskrat and frogs that have colonised her man-made pond – in fantasy overseen by Pan (167-169). The narrative has a pair of climaxes that work to confirm the authority of the narrator as someone who can speak for the land. In the first, Blanchet and her two sons have become the source of local knowledge and they have guided some friends to Princess Louisa Inlet (132-133). While exploring the inlet, one of her sons, David, falls and breaks his collarbone, and Blanchet instinctively does exactly what is needed (138). The second climax involves the sudden insertion of Blanchet's children's tale, "The Whale called Henry." Blanchet claims to have written this story the winter prior to the accident, basing it on an account of a whale she had heard of that became stuck in the Sechelt inlet after being carried through the Skookumchuck narrows (139). Blanchet knew the shape of the narrows from maps, but she had never been there. In her story, the whale, lost, swims repeatedly around an island, passing an enisled goat that watches him until the local birds draw his attention to his mistake and he escapes (141-148). In the last journey she recounts, she takes her three youngest to the Sechelt

inlet, and they pass through the rapids at slack. Her youngest asks her if the goat will be there, she says it will, and it is. The goat is so insistent that it belongs with them that it gets in the dingy and will not get out, and Blanchet compares her experience to a saint experiencing a miracle (153).

When Blanchet claims the truth of this vision of the whale (twinning it with a similarly instinctive knowledge of emergency medical care), she completes the journey she starts on the first page, where she is enough of a stranger to the coast that she thinks the bears she sees are clergymen and the ones she smells are foxes (3). By the end of the book she has privileged knowledge of the geography of the coast, access to all its variety, and freedom of movement within it; such knowledge, access, and freedom support her claim of indigeneity in a world defined spatially, just as similar claims can be made on the basis of history and tenancy in a temporal world. Blanchet uses her re-ordering and compression of time, glossed with the names Dunne and Maeterlinck, to make a claim that all time that has ever passed on the coast is her home, as all times are co-incident and she has demonstrated her ability to stand aside from “the curve of time” through her precognition. Initially, she masters the elements and becomes local in her ability to survive and navigate the geography. Feeling threatened by orcas, she speculates that she may have had a previous life in which she was a member of a “tribe” that were the orcas’ enemies (46). Later, she becomes indigenized, suggesting that the local ghosts and spirits speak to her and that one (in the form of a dog) even accepts food from her (54-55). Finally, the land itself seems to grant her privileged knowledge and conforms itself to her imagination, producing the goat, which climbs into their boat (153).

Blanchet travelled in the 1930s and 40s, and she wrote her memoirs in the late 1960s. Even though she worked to learn what she could about the cultures of the coast from the sources she recognized as authoritative (including the local settlers she recognizes as less numerous than the First Nations people [78-80, 85]), Blanchet does not record learning anything about the local people from conversations with them. The consideration that she might not be an appropriate judge of her status as a member of an indigenous community never seems to occur to her, but neither does the consideration that she was not visiting archaeological sites but living places, and that she would learn more from the communities that were at home in them than she would from the library. In spite of her misdirected learning, however, and her misrecognition of the seat of local cultural authority, she emphasises that she learns what she can because she has been spurred to do so by the evocations of the spirits of the land she explores.

Both Blanchet and Rhenisch recast their need of a home as a revelation of the land's need of them. They make the land an external but ultimate authority on who has a right to inhabit it, and the effect is that the recipient of the land's revealed grace is always at home. The land's chosen people should be, like Rhenisch, "humbled" by their spiritual experience and respond with respect ("12 Or 20"). Similarly, Anne Cameron makes an implicit but detailed argument that asserts that artistic production might be a display of respect for or even subservience to the land through Jimmy and his spiritual guide, the "Jimmy Spook," in the novel *Wedding Cakes, Rats, and Rodeo Queens*, discussed below. In Cameron's novels, artists are conduits for revelations from the land, and a supernaturally inspired artist has a role in developing a sense of home for settlers in a

contemporary small community, even if they are also largely alienated from the society around them.

These stories of a spiritual identification with place by Rhenisch, Blanchet, and Cameron feature inexplicable and usually individual experience, and for this reason they may not seem to lend themselves easily to public narrative in a secular society. Public narrators, as far as they venture into a comparable practice, tend to simply make the physical site and the people metaphorically into a single animal body, as in town mottos describing Tahsis as “The heart of Nootka sound” and Elkford as “wild at heart” (Village of Tahsis, District of Elkford). In the absence of a common religious vocabulary, stories of the spiritual experience of place, or of the intervention of supernatural powers in the lives of communities are represented by Rhenisch, Blanchet and Cameron as inarticulate, or inarticulable, and the knowledge granted as in some way personal, individual or even unconscious. However, in each of these examples this spiritual knowledge of place is granted not merely to an individual, but to an individual who is uniquely able to articulate it for a community: an artist. In autobiographical texts such as those by Rhenisch and Blanchet the speakers represent themselves as the artists uniquely equipped to communicate a connection to place for themselves and for their communities; in Cameron’s novel this role is fulfilled by an artist character who is given access to a spiritual world that represents his connection to place. In both the autobiography and fiction, the narrative of spiritual connection serves the dual purpose of authenticating both the work of the artist and his or her representation of the land.

Settler culture generally can likewise demonstrate its authenticity through the artists it enshrines as visionary. Acceptance and circulation of artworks that represent a

spiritual or supernatural connection to place can become a force for the legitimizing of settler community. Blanchet's *Curve of Time* has a prominent place at the front of Munro's bookstore as the text that most nearly represents a British Columbian connection to place; Rhenisch is a favourite of eco-critics who tout his life-long familiarity with the Okanagan landscape as representative of a new way to live on the land. Similarly Emily Carr provides a well-known example of an author and artist who describes an encounter with a supernatural figure early in her career, an encounter that seems to authorize her subsequent attempts to express a spirit of place. "D'Sonoqua," a prose sketch that appears in the collection *Klee Wyck*, describes three progressively intense encounters with "the wild woman of the woods," a coastal First Nations spirit often depicted in carvings. The narrator's eventual recognition that D'Sonoqua is like her, "wild in the sense that forest-creatures are wild—shy, untouchable" (*Klee Wyck* 74) heralds her identification with the forest landscape, and authorizes her to express "the underlying spirit, the vastness, the wilderness . . . the eternal big spaceness of it" (*Hundreds and Thousands* 24). Carr's paintings, in turn, have been generally adopted as icons of the settler "sense of place" in coastal British Columbia and an important focus of their articulation. Carr represented the B.C. settler "sense of place" in the VAG show *Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: Places of Their Own* which linked her representations of British Columbia coastal and forest landscapes with Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings of New Mexico and Frida Kahlo's inspired by Mexican folk art. This example is only one of many instances in which public narrators such as art museums, tourist boards, writers and ordinary people have represented Carr's artwork, inspired by a spiritual encounter with a spirit of place, as a means to understanding the link between settler culture and the land in British Columbia. The role

of the visual artist who not only contacts and articulates a supernatural spirit of place, but whose work provides a focus for a community sense of being at home is depicted by Anne Cameron in her novel *Wedding Cakes, Rats and Rodeo Queens*.

*Wedding Cakes* appeared during the “more than a dozen years” in which Cameron “‘stepped aside’ to ‘deliberately avoid Native content in [her] stories’” (Cameron “Interview”), and Jimmy seems to be in part created as a non-native artist whose experience, particularly with critical reception decrying him as fake, resembles her own (*Wedding Cakes* 216). The story attempts to create a story of “good” settler presence that is not just an alternative to the colonial soldiers and sustainable farmers, but equally an alternative to stories that attempt to establish legitimacy for groups of settlers through various types of indigeneity-by-proxy — from the appropriation of story discussed by Lee Maracle (who explains the term as more accurate than “appropriation of voice”), Lenore Keeshig-Tobias and Jeanette Armstrong,<sup>148</sup> through the “totem transfer” motif in settler literature, traced by Margery Fee in “Romantic Nationalism” — and perhaps, for academics and social curators, even to the rigorous subordination to the leadership of First Nations theorists and activists advocated in Len Findlay’s “Always Indigenize!”<sup>149</sup> Her narrative answer is to make a spirit world of multicultural gods that are in frequent

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<sup>148</sup>This is a partial list. See Maracle “Coming out of the House” (82-83) and “Moving Over,” Leeshig-Tobias “Stop Stealing Native Stories,” and Armstrong “Writing from a Native Woman’s Perspective.” For a literary scholar’s perspective essay on the B.C. west coast controversy and partial consensus between the settler author Anne Cameron and Stó:lō author and critic Maracle, see Christine St. Peters’s “Feminist Afterwords: Revisiting *Copperwoman*.”

<sup>149</sup>The structure of the spirit world and artistry in the novel are an *attempt* at to create a space for a settler narrative of home that does not import settler story, appropriate First Nations’ stories, or step into their storytellers’ place.

contact with artists of some British Columbian First Nations cultures. These spirits direct artists in their work, thereby making these artists and the culture they are central to the people with the best (because most divinely-led) possible culture, and making any non-indigenous artists directed by the spirits also a part of this best culture. The implication is that artists and the cultures that value artists are more at home everywhere than is anyone else. The moral difference between the represented settler culture and the represented First Nations' ones is that the former exiles its artists or understands them as mentally ill, rather than visionary.<sup>150</sup>

In brief, Jimmy carves what he sees in his head. From the outside, Jimmy's visions seem to be the product of a mental illness, one that also makes him violently anti-social. The author allows access to Jimmy's thoughts, and Jimmy sees both what he carves and the spirits of other artists who have been granted superior vision in a place he calls "the Alone" (175). Jimmy's carvings sell in galleries that specialize in First Nations artists' work, and he is taken to be a member of a First Nations community, a claim he never makes (140, 188, 269). Not all the carvings are of First Nations spirits, any more than all the spirits in "the Alone" are First Nations ones (174-177, 216, 269). The narrative implies, however, that all of the carvings are *authentic* in the same way that First Nations artists' carvings are because the spirits are external to Jimmy. In other

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<sup>150</sup> This is the same moral difference between settler and First Nations' cultures presented in Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure*, where Bertha Moses recognizes that Coyote is killing children and pursuing Beth Weeks, but the Indigenous spirit in Anderson-Dargatz is only predatory; he does not teach or need her to serve him or her community through him. Anderson-Dargatz's Coyote fits a Judeo-Christian mythology of demons, effectively making Bertha Moses something of a better Christian than the settlers.

words, the Alone, the source of his visions, is not merely Jimmy's own head (as the narrative reveals), and Jimmy's work is First Nations art even though he is not.

Proofs that Jimmy's visions come from a supernatural world that selects people as its students are built into the novel much the way they are built into autobiographical accounts of spiritual experience. Jimmy, like Rhenisch and Blanchet, actively learns what he can about provincial First Nations' cultures and their spiritualities *after* he has had his spiritual experiences (140-141).<sup>151</sup> He finds out what he has seen and carved by matching his work to pictures of other artists' works in books, displays, and archives. Moreover, like Blanchet, Jimmy is granted precognition, and he directs his sister, Kitty, to catch a young boy as he falls from a bridge in a crash that kills the man who had been sexually exploiting him (291-295). Jimmy makes a prophecy that is confirmed; Kitty, who is an "artist" as a champion bull rider, trusts Jimmy and goes where he tells her to even though she does not know what will happen. Jimmy's prophecy and Kitty's trust in it preserve the child (i.e. the future). In this, Kitty shows herself to also be a disciple of the land. The authority of the supernatural world in which Jimmy spends most of his time is further underscored by its contrast with the personal myths that he and his siblings adopt to understand themselves and their own traumatic experiences as children. This mythic

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<sup>151</sup>Up to this point, Jimmy's experience echoes Cameron's, although Cameron claims human sources for her stories. I have not found Cameron ever asserting that she learned anything magically and then confirmed it through study. Likewise, she promotes Nuuchahnulth culture as a better culture than settler culture, but seems to go no further than saying of the stories, "*Daughters of Copper Woman* is a gift that was passed to us from some wonderful, gentle, tough and enduring old women. It has been classed as 'fiction' by some but for me it is as true as the Bible is true" ("Interview"). In other words, her novel asserts an access to a source of truth external to human culture that she does not necessarily believe exists.

world is one in which they view their lives through the lens of *Gunsmoke*, the one stable and shared pleasure of their childhood.

Jimmy quite explicitly is *freeing* the spirits in the wood and is creating indigenous art because he is taking dictation from the same spirits that Native carvers meet in the wood. They have chosen him, most specifically through the Jimmy Spook that guides him to make a medicine stick of some sort, and they instruct him minutely, including teaching him to leave tobacco as a gift for both the tree the wood came from and the vine that shaped the branch (141). Several beliefs underlie this narrative of the artist finding his vocation, the most obvious of which is the most fantastical: that spirits pick “true” artists to make the divine present in the world, or to allow them (the spirits) to access the world. Jimmy’s appropriations are justified, as any medium’s would be, because they are dictations from the spirit world and need Jimmy to “send the faces” (176): to make the masks and carvings that free them into the world. In *Wedding Cakes*, the spirits seem to want access to the human world because they cherish the vulnerable. Through the artist (Jimmy or Cameron), therefore, art can save souls because the messengers of the divine communicate in art. Cameron says, “what we need is more of the faces to help the lost find the abandoned” (177).

While the novel asserts the artists become artists by being chosen, it also demonstrates that art has always also been dictated in the same way to the First Nations people. In the novel, works of art are not merely human-created cultural objects. If the spirits have chosen an artist, then the artist, like Jimmy, may know more about the local spiritual world than do the “rez brothers” around her (141). About fifteen years after he first starts to carve, Jimmy is no longer passing as a native artist (although being “found

out” doubled the price he could command), and the spirits who “need” him are more varied. They include, for example, Celtic spirits from “the Isle of Man” (216) and what seems to be something like Bawon Samdi [Baron Samedi] of Haitian Vodou, with a face partially painted very black, white bones painted on its limbs, and carrying a staff (230).<sup>152</sup> Along with the premises that artists become artists when they are chosen by the land, and that the land of B.C. has always chosen the First Nations people in the same way, a third premise behind the “chosen” narrative is therefore that the supernatural world is a continuous one; that is, that the divine is monocultural. Jimmy’s local spirits seem to be drawn from *every* Coastal First Nations cultural group. When Jimmy goes to find out what he has encountered, he looks in “anything that had Indian designs, anything that had pictures of the stuff the government had taken and stored in the basement of the House of Commons, anything with pictures of the artwork of Bill Reid [Haida], Robert Davidson [Haida], Henry Hunt [Kwakwaka’wakw], Henry Green [Tsimshian] or any of them” (141). Jimmy can “send the faces” of many cultures either because he is more strongly chosen than any one else, or because the inhabitants of “the Alone” accept the equal co-presence in late twentieth century British Columbia of people from all over the world. For the spirits to be the same spirits that have contacted First Nations’ people over the ages, the authority for the stories that form the core of their cultures must be “the Alone.” If this divine authority has now accepted any settler residents who will follow their directions, even at second hand, then these settlers are at home too.

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<sup>152</sup> Bawon Samdi, as Kyra Malika Daniels explains in *The Encyclopaedia of African Religion*, is present at a gateway between life and death, and provides a context for Kitty’s surgery to remove a life-threatening blood clot.

Cameron's novels in general and *Wedding Cakes, Rats, and Rodeo Queens* in particular are not promoted so as to define a provincial culture (the way Emily Carr's paintings are, for example) and, although her repeated creation of the pioneer farmhouse and the self-sufficient, sustainable local economy have a strong resonance in small-town self-construction, what popular belief there may be in something like "the Alone" stops at ubiquitous town descriptions of the surrounding area as movingly beautiful and able to offer renewal, or at the occasional tour of local "ghosts." A far more obvious focus for community identification is the straightforward story of "the lost" who find "the abandoned." In her novels Cameron expands the "home" of coastal British Columbia to any vulnerable people who need the land: the national narrative of tolerance and welcome taught by a nurturing land that Eva Mackey identifies as core to contemporary settler identity, reappears in a ghost story. Not very many settlers are made innocent by it, but some are.

Within the novel, Jimmy's artistic vision gives a certain plausibility to Cameron's *deus ex machina*. Spirits tell Jimmy and Kitty what to do and the humans can then save lives. But Cameron's novel also provides a direct explanation for the way that art functions to communicate the message of the land to a respectful and humbled community. Because Jimmy's art represents things in the governing spirit world, and because it lets the spirits act in the world by freeing them, "art" itself is also the ghost in the machine of culture. Art, in this novel, allows the supernatural to partake in the interactions that form community; thus, the habitual interactions of the group become norms with the spirits as participants. By implication, if art represents supernatural

essences, then a community that lets its artists largely direct its norms is a community that lets the spirit or spirits of the land direct it.

In these “settling” accounts of supernatural experience, individual artists’ personal development is narrated as a series of supernatural events in which the artists’ passive acquisition of knowledge secures the legitimacy of settler culture in British Columbia. Unlike the “unsettling” stories of encounters with ghosts that Sugars describes as representing the persistence of colonial violence and trauma, these stories are optimistic narratives of listening to the land itself and cultivating a peculiarly open and inclusive British Columbian way of seeing. In the stories told by Rhenisch, Cameron and Blanchet, this way of seeing precedes the careful study of flora, fauna, landform, and First Nations’ cultures that W. H. New and Laurie Ricou identify as the basis for a permanent attachment to place, and marks the deserving settler as both equivalent to indigenous peoples and as respectful of greater claims of indigeneity. This story of magic has implications in a field of competing claims to be at home, creating a hierarchy of types of knowledge that privileges the absolute knowledge coming from divine vision, and further privileges art, whether visual or discursive, as its mode of transmission. By implication, First Nations people are at home because they are equivalent to artists and are specifically marked as the land’s (passive) property, and not because they have a greater legal claim to the land as their own property. The narrative of artists as individuals who are at home because the land works through them creates the sense that these particular individuals are innocent of the accusation that settlers treat the land as a mere material resource, therein failing to follow their artists, and against any claim of exclusive ownership and property rights by First Nations people.

What a settler might learn by listening to a place, these stories suggest, is how to make direct contact with a supernatural authority that is constructed as capable of bestowing absolute knowledge and absolute belonging. This sense of belonging, while it claims to respect First Nations and their traditional knowledge, is also constructed as granting an authority that elides or transcends any First Nations claims to primacy or exclusive ownership of land. Instead, in these stories ancestry and history are irrelevant to the sense of being at home; they discard the histories of prospectors and loggers, of pioneer ranchers and self sufficient Edenic farms so important in some models of community stability, to replace them with a kind of community legitimacy that is available at any time, to settlers of any origin, who make themselves available to it. And in this way it is both the most intransigent and the most hopeful claim for the renewal of community legitimacy in this study, for it combines a kind of environmental awareness that may provide the basis for a sustainable economic future for those towns formerly based in resource extraction, even as it sustains a colonialist refusal to acknowledge the legal claims of local First Nations.

## Conclusion

I want to end by telling three stories I found about Tahsis. The first is about corpses – felled trees as the corpses of the forest. It is from Gladys Hindmarch’s *The Watery Part of the World*. Hindmarch’s speaker visits the old Tahsis mill in the 1960s (147). She approaches from the dock, losing the “feel” of “the salt/forest air” to the distraction of the sounds of “stilted-yellow-empty-in-the-middle machines,” and decides to look at the mill rather than follow the road up to the workers’ housing. At the mill, she goes to the lumber stacks, not the buildings. Hindmarch’s description emphasizes lifelessness:

The edge of the yard is enclosed by a high metal fence... to hold in dead pieces of forest which once belonged to all or did until there was a license on a piece of paper from Victoria, a piece of paper made from pulp from this very land, and that piece of paper... gives title to companies. (82-83)

Trees and men are equally de-animated, as the men’s presence is visible only on the wood pulp of the timecards she sees tucked into “wooden slits” (83).

Hindmarch’s speaker re-inserts love and life for the trees with a fairy-tale gesture, kissing the stacked lumber before she leaves, but she does not approach the workers (84). When she walks into the town, she sees only one “red-haired man,” waving at her amid the buildings. The speaker can see nothing compelling in the town except what it lacks, and she turns away (83).

The second story is a story of the power of incorporation, and it urges outsiders to see the people too. Tahsis was expanded as an instant town in the early 1970s, and the

town council commissioned Laurie Jones to compile a town history in 1985 (Jones x). Jones eventually wrote three local histories that blend oral and written histories from both First Nations and settler residents, culminating in *Nootka Sound Explored* (1991). Whalebone Productions, Jones's company, describes the community councils' collective aim as one of both preservation and promotion, and asserts that the book project also "inspired each of the communities to start their own local museums, visitor centres, and economic development organizations to help strengthen and revitalize the region's economy and sense of community" ("Our Work"). Incorporation gave the town the resources to write its own narrative, both for residents and for visitors.

The final story is a story of de-corporatizing. The Tahsis sawmill closed in 2000, and the town is down to about 500 full time residents. In 2009, when Anne Cameron was a councillor, the Village of Tahsis bought the 140 acres of "Pete's Farm" from Western Forest Products. Pete was a logger on a pension who was squatting on and farming the land (Cameron "For Pete's Sake"), as were ex-loggers the "Perry brothers" before him, and Carl Leiner before them – back for a hundred years, before which it was part of a "Mowachaht winter camp" (*Village of Tahsis* 354). In a 2015 article for BC Bookworld, Cameron celebrates Pete for towing a house to the site and then taking care of runaway kids while getting them to help him maintain the building. She also explains why the council spent nearly a quarter of a million dollars on the land:

Western Forest put that piece of land up for sale and the Village of Tahsis bought it, basically to keep it out of the hands of some folks who wanted to log the first growth still growing on it.

It's still called "Pete's Farm."

We still grow stuff here. Or try to. (“For Pete’s Sake”)

In this narrative, a community initially defined by logging, homosocial employment, and direct corporate control becomes a close community with clear shared values of inclusiveness and environmentalism by adopting the land and practice of an independent homesteader and farmer who took care of lost children. The purchase of Pete’s Farm by the Village of Tahsis (incorporated for the logging industry) so that the residents could prevent logging is all the narratives of settler home that I have traced, here set in one place — although that could well be because a British Columbian settler author is telling it.

These three stories illustrate some ways that narrative might create a connection between small resource industry settler communities and the land in British Columbia. The first evokes the histories of resource extraction in small town British Columbia communities, recalling the socially destructive, homosocial and environmentally unsustainable forms of community in its description of the mill-scape and of the trees as corpses. This description provides the backdrop for the more contemporary rejection of those values by writers like Hindmarch, who represents her character experiencing the locale of the resource town while rejecting its people and the way they make their living. Finally Hindmarch represents her character kissing the stacked lumber, a feminine gesture that dissents from the masculinist ethos of resource extraction by evoking the “tree-hugger” values of the new community that will eventually be imagined as the successor to the old. The second story represents a response, in a sense, to the changing values limned by Hindmarch in the first: it is the story of a community waking up to the value of story in changing economic times, purposefully re-imagining itself not as a

temporary community whose lifetime is determined solely by the allowable cut, but as a home for its residents, one with deep roots in historical time that not only legitimize their own imaginative claim to home but also to commodify it for a replacement industry, tourism. And the third exemplifies the new narrative of community through “giving to the land” by sacrifice, stewardship and community building. The story of “Pete’s Farm” rejects the land-ownership regime of resource extraction for the value of individual ownership through work, and its successive inhabitants recapitulate the history of story that has structured this study: a series of solitary resource workers become pioneers, they are succeeded by a family made up of adoptees who cultivate a farm in the shadow of the mill and then finally, a community group, from what was definitely a logging town, sees land as greater any resources drawn from it, and uses its municipal funds to ensure the land is left alone.

These stories illustrate the preoccupation in small resource community British Columbia literature with defining the way that settler culture explains, justifies and claims its own legitimacy – the problem of home that other thematic critics of British Columbian literature have noticed. Rather than seeing individuals as limited by their forced intimacy with stifling garrison communities, or as merely surviving in the face of a hostile wilderness, as the Survival thesis proposes, these narratives propose an optimistic vision of relationship with place that consistently overwrites the historical reality of temporary resource booms and the town planning that supports them with an imagined history of pioneer farmers, Edenic farms and mystical connections to the land. These narratives consistently connect negative values with mere resource extraction, associating hand-loggers and prospectors with independence and entrepreneurial spirit but also with

transience, violence and environmental exploitation. The long boom postwar era of development saw public narrators in some new and newly expanding resource towns attempting to replace these values with narratives of civic responsibility, property ownership, and the nuclear family, by claiming historical connections to supposed pioneer farming or ranching enterprises. These narratives evoked the liberal idea of the citizen/soldier who fulfilled his duty as a community and a family member by his hard work to improve the commercial yield of his land and to thereby reproduce the values of the state. These narratives of multi-generation connection to place and of self-sufficient enterprise, however, seem largely unable to help secure for inhabitants a sense of these towns as stable homes, especially in the face of volatile resource prices and the growing critique of resource extraction by environmental and First Nations groups. Contemporary literary and popular narratives of life in the landscapes of resource extraction have provided, on the one hand, a meta-discourse of critique that constructs a stereotypical resource worker who represents both a violent and predatory masculinity and an unsustainable environmental ethic, and on the other, narratives of alternative relationships with the land that involve sustainability, inclusion, and acknowledgement of the land itself as a spiritual presence. These narratives evoke First Nations in order to acknowledge their continued presence in the landscape, and occasionally to claim their knowledges and supernatural beliefs as legitimating settler presence. What distinguishes these narratives from previous attempts to construct a sense of home in the British Columbia landscape is their clear moral condemnation of the practices of the past and their sense that the land itself chooses its inhabitants.

If stories are all we are, as Thomas King avers, then these are some of the stories that small resource industry community residents might use to claim to settler home in rural British Columbia: the stories of solitary miners and loggers; of pioneer entrepreneurs and ranchers who followed upon and profited from resource booms; of hard-working families who farmed and ranched, and of their contemporary descendants who nurture the soil and assert its spiritual significance. These stories over-write those elements of the historical record that challenge or even deny settler community the right to claim home in British Columbia *at all* — the destructive practices of resource extraction, the contingency of company town settlements and the destruction and marginalization of First Nations communities — in order to discursively minimize or directly reject them. They are also community narratives largely because the patterns they show when collected they lend themselves to allegorical reading: they are stories, primarily, of individuals and their material prosperity, rather than communities and their growth. However, following Ian McKay's envisioning of Canada as the state-sponsored extension of classical liberal values over a geographical area, their focus on the individual and his or her individual claims to personal freedom, material prosperity, private property, and individual happiness reinforce the type of community they present as an ideal. In this, these stories are consistent with the representation of small towns in Canadian literature generally. Like Duncan's Elgin, Leacock's Mariposa, Mitchell's Crocus, Connor's Glengarry and the multiple small prairie towns in the works of Frederick Phillip Grove, the small towns represented in these narratives draw the justification for their existence from a over-arching metanarrative about the growth of Canada as a project of rule that works to replace First Nations cultures, values and

sovereignties with the values of western European liberalism and the sovereignty of the Canadian state. Rather than focussing on the substantial history of collectivism and trade unionism in British Columbia, they tend to characterise dissent in the form of individual actions, personal insight, and alliances with First Nations and other marginalized individuals.

The stories analysed in this study struggle to account for the continuing presence of First Nations on the land. Those that focus on loggers and prospectors generally follow the “frontier thesis” sketched out by Furniss in her study of Williams Lake: they operate in a mythical *terra nullius* in which First Nations people are largely absent, and their legal rights unacknowledged. For this reason, these stories are of little use to contemporary communities in legitimizing and stabilising their sense of being at home. When celebrated by local Chambers of Commerce and tourist boards, hand-loggers and prospectors tend to be narrativized as “rollicking” caricature figures like “Billy Barker” and Jack Hodgins’s Toby Macken, who can provide no model for contemporary relations with local First Nations communities except a negative one. Instead, most community origin stories claim a stable, multigenerational connection to a farming or ranching origin, even distorting the historical record to do so (in the case of the Huble Homestead), and asserting sometimes the parallel existence of First Nations community nearby that benefitted from friendly trading relationships. In general, literary texts set in areas of intense postwar resource extraction tend to critique these stories, representing the impoverishment and violent exclusion of First Nations people from mainstream society and creating individual characters whose moral superiority and fitness for settlement is demonstrated by their willingness to overcome this exclusion and reach out to form

alliances with First Nations. In books by Gail Anderson-Dargatz and Anne Cameron these characters are often depicted as holding values similar to those of the First Nations characters, such as inclusivity, respect for the land, matriarchy and non-violence; they are also sometimes depicted as sensitive to whatever they present as the specific local spiritual beliefs of First Nations, as in the works of Muriel Wylie Blanchet and Harold Rhenisch, as well as Anderson-Dargatz and Cameron. In these stories the problems of aboriginal title and treaty rights is resolved by the tropes of “giving to the land” and inheritance identified by critics like Mackey, but also by the sense created that individual characters somehow become indigenous themselves, with a similar knowledge of and claim to ownership of the land through being chosen by it, through proving they deserve it.

Small resource communities mobilize stories of sustainable land practices, harmonious interdependence with local First Nations, and spiritual attachment to place so as to claim that people like the represented settlers belong in place. These stories, however, are clearly at odds with the effects of the industrial economy that drew most settlers to these towns. They also represent (at best) aspirational non-industrial employment, future multigenerational settler history in place, and hoped-for integration with local First Nations’ interests, rather than any dominant past or current conditions. Even though these stories of home are easy as they are to dismiss as irrelevant to contemporary concerns of environmental and social justice, the province as a community and particularly students of its literature and culture should pause to consider stories of resource area settlers as assertions of belonging in place, and even as claims to land made in a field of competing claims to the same land — though they may not be the most

compelling or even palatable claims. In developing and expanding small communities for large industrial sites, the province as a body strove to make people's belief that they were "at home" itself a resource exploited in the provincial economy. It could be that the belief remains, as persistent any other mark of forestry or mining, whether or not it has lost its value or become a burden to the larger society, and even if the industries it served are gone. If the portraits of contemporary industry workers in British Columbian literature reflect a general cultural understanding of their small town counterparts, then this general understanding in provincial imaginary might be that men flock to mills and mines because they identify with the machinery of these work sites and want to extend and accelerate its violent destruction of the land and the life it supports. As First Nations land claims remain unaddressed, no settler unarguably has a home in the province, not even if there are some settlers reduced in narrative to the animus of a machine whose empty core drains the life from the forest.

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