

LITTORAL FICTIONS:
WRITING TASMANIA AND NEWFOUNDLAND

by

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This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University of Tasmania or any other institution, except by way of background information which is duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Fiona Polack".

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PhD Abstract:

Littoral Fictions: Writing Tasmania and Newfoundland

This thesis examines contemporary literary fiction which takes either the Canadian island of Newfoundland or the Australian island of Tasmania as its imaginative terrain. Utilising a comparative framework, it juxtaposes narratives which have helped construct these regional spaces during the last twenty-five years of the twentieth century.

Informed by post-modern spatial theory, 'Littoral Fictions' is premised on the argument that places are produced, rather than simply reflected, in literary and other modes of cultural expression. Particularly important to the thesis are Michel de Certeau's assertion that 'every story is a travel story – a spatial practice' (*The Practice of Everyday Life* 115), and Fredric Jameson's contention that cultural and economic production are inextricably intertwined. Consequently, the thesis seeks to determine how and why Tasmania and Newfoundland figure within recent fiction, and to consider the ramifications of their constructions.

'Littoral Fictions' examines writing about leaving, walking around, and coming home to regional spaces. In the process, it addresses the work of Christopher Koch, Dennis Altman, Paul Bowdring, Wayne Johnston, Patrick Kavanagh, Robert Drewe, Mudrooroo, Bernice Morgan, Richard Flanagan and E. Annie Proulx, in particular detail. The thesis finds that Newfoundland and Tasmania play comparable, instigative roles within narratives hinging on the alternate spatial trajectories it identifies. Only rarely do these islands serve as sketchy or neutral backgrounds. Instead, their landscapes and histories are presented in detail, and important shifts in narrative action are associated with movements to, from, or within their boundaries.

Paradoxically, the more insistently the islands are evoked as geographically, culturally and/or economically marginal, the more significant their role in the narrative – even to the point of their serving as representative spaces within national imaginaries. Literary constructions of Tasmania and Newfoundland diverge and converge in more specific ways, too. Stories about leaving the two islands are quite different, for instance, whilst the resemblance between narratives of homecoming is remarkable.

‘Littoral Fictions’ does identify signs of a shift in the ways Tasmania and Newfoundland are spatialised in some recent writing. The thesis concludes by speculating that moves to figure the islands as more fully integrated with the world beyond their shores portend an important re-conceptualisation. In identifying parallels in typical figurations of Tasmania and Newfoundland, ‘Littoral Fictions’ seeks to participate in the project of constructing new connections between the respective islands and places elsewhere.

Acknowledgements

I commenced this dissertation soon after coming home to Tasmania, explored both Tasmania and Newfoundland during its writing, and completed it as I prepared to move to Atlantic Canada. People on both sides of the world deserve my thanks.

At the University of Tasmania, Lucy Frost has been an unstintingly generous and supportive supervisor; Ian Buchanan has offered expert guidance on critical theory; and Jennifer Livett helped me find my feet as a post-graduate. Also on the south-side of the world, Angela Rockel, Naomi Cameron, Andrea Collis, Yvette Blackwood, Liz McMahon, Martin Ball, Sharon Bessell and Hayden Jones have been wonderful interlocuters and stellar friends.

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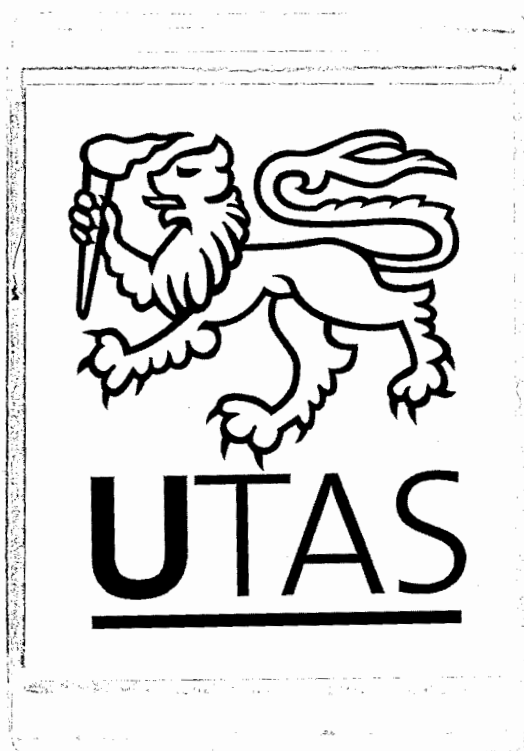
I am boundlessly grateful to Rob Finley, for his love, and his help in building all kinds of bridges to cross the sea between our far-flung places.

This thesis is dedicated to my family – first and foremost my parents, Mary and Alan Polack – for reasons too numerous to tell.

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Prelude



Prelude

Whispers from the Beach: Voices from the beach are hard to hear. The wind snatches them from lips. They are lost in the white noise of the waves. Vast spaces are high-country, Grand Canyon, grave silent. But a circumlittoralist hears with her eyes, listens in her colours. Lines whisper. Shapes moan.

(Dening, *Terra Spiritus* 8)

Each turn of the tide confirms that the littoral is the most tenuous of borders. As Greg Dening's meditation on spaces by the sea highlights, coasts invite figuration as turbulent arenas of flux and change. Yet islands, rimmed entirely by the littoral, are rarely constructed as possessing shifting boundaries. Instead of constituting 'territories of translation' (New, *Borderlands* 5), their coasts are more typically conceived as definite borders between one kind of space and another. Edged so indelibly, they fulfil the kind of longing David Malouf describes as unsatisfied when crossing between New South Wales and Queensland: a desire that 'somewhere, on the far side of what I knew, difference began, and [. . .] the point could be clearly recognised' (12 *Edmondstone Street* 127).

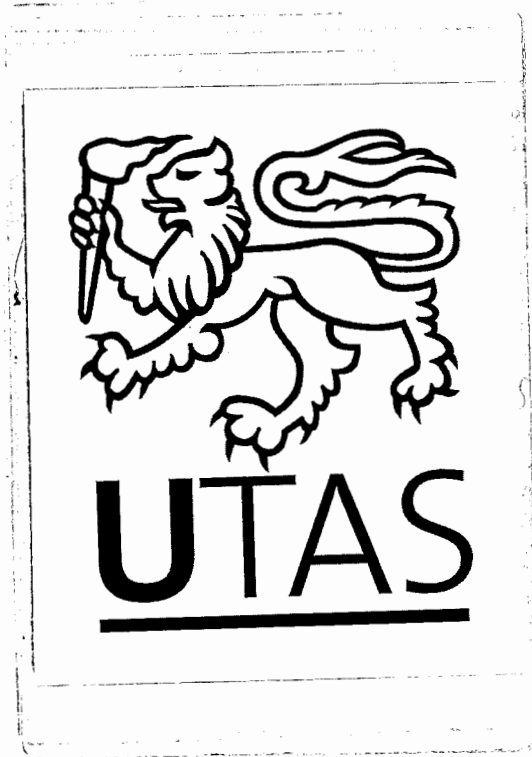
Canadian critic W. H. New claims that boundaries seem 'to be metaphors more than fixed edges: *signs* of limits more than the limits themselves' (*Borderlands* 4). This observation by no means trivialises the significance of

the way we place borders, for as New further argues 'we are in daily contact with metaphors. They shape how we conceptualize the world' (5). This thesis identifies 'boundary rhetorics' (5) deployed in contemporary literary fiction about Newfoundland and Tasmania, and asks: How are they created through narrative? What inspires them? What ramifications do they have? How and why do they so frequently isolate these places as distinct and unique zones? How are they crossed and re-crossed?

The littoral is the thesis's own implicit guiding boundary metaphor. In the face of stringently circumscribed conceptions of Tasmania and Newfoundland the image signals that these territories can always be seen in more fluid ways. Thinking 'litorally' prompts recognition, for instance, that the political territories of Tasmania and Newfoundland are not coterminous with the geographical limits of their mainlands. Tasmania encompasses close to 350 islands, and Newfoundland, in addition to similarly including a myriad water-bounded tracts of land, is also linked with Labrador. As Epeli Hau'ofa so convincingly testifies when he re-envisages the Pacific Islands as 'a sea of islands' rather than 'islands in a far sea' (7) inclusive, rather than exclusive, figurations of islands can be powerfully enabling.¹

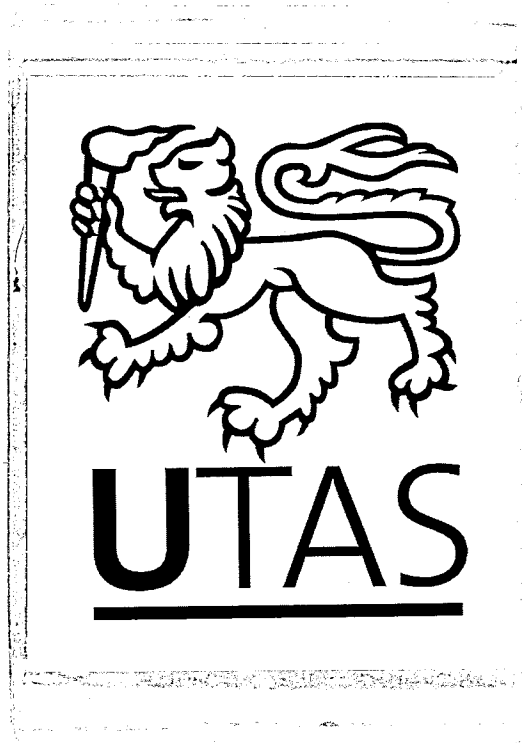
¹Because the smaller islands off the mainlands of Newfoundland and Tasmania have historically been the dwelling places of those marginalised within their cultures – re-associating them with the mainlands is a salutary reminder of the differences which bisect the more monolithic conceptions of Tasmania and Newfoundland. In Tasmania, indigenous people were relocated to Flinders Island in Bass Strait, and convicts to small islands like Maria, in the east, and Sarah, in the west. In Newfoundland, prior to the programs of re-settlement, impoverished fishing communities existed in settlements off the main shore.

The image of the littoral is pertinent to figurations of all kinds of boundaries – not only those delineating island-ness. Contemporary fiction draws many different lines to encompass Tasmania and Newfoundland – lines on real and imagined maps, lines of argument, time-lines – the littoral reminds us that these demarcations are rarely as unwaveringly constant as they might sometimes seem. Voices on the beach may be hard to hear but they never cease their whispering.



Introduction

On the Littoral



Chapter 1

Contemporary Itineraries

‘Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice’, writes Michel de Certeau (*Practice* 115), but contemporary fictions which imagine Tasmania and Newfoundland tend to be travel stories in the most literal of senses. Protagonists in these texts rarely sit still for long, and they stray far and wide. This thesis argues that journeying is foregrounded in recent narratives about Tasmania and Newfoundland because moving to, from or around them is associated with the crossing of definite boundaries. By simultaneously figuring Newfoundland and Tasmania as distinct from elsewhere, these texts lend travel great narrative weight. Moving inevitably relocates a character to an altered environment and consequently offers opportunities to figure shifts in his or her subjectivity.

This thesis contends that there are four recurrent shapes to the journeys protagonists take in recent writing about both Tasmania and Newfoundland. It further proposes that each of these itineraries entails distinctive narrative preoccupations, genres, subjectivities and, most importantly, ways of defining the two locations. Travels represented at an overt narrative level signal deeper modalities of emplacement. The movements of protagonists provide an appropriate starting point for identifying these modalities because, as Deleuze and Guattari imply, figures in literary texts are our reference points for interpreting the worlds that they

create. As the French theorists evocatively put it: 'Figures [. . .] are the condition under which the arts produce effects of stone and metal, of strings and wind, of line and colour, on a plane of composition of a universe' (*What is Philosophy* 66).¹ The modalities of emplacement in contemporary fictions associated with Tasmania and Newfoundland are premised on 'leaving', 'walking around', 'coming home' and 'going nowhere/being everywhere'. Their chief characteristics diverge markedly.

In stories premised on leaving, Tasmania and Newfoundland are frozen in time in order to make a character's departure seem to constitute personal progress. The modality of leaving typically engages with male-centred versions of the genre of the *bildungsroman*, and its close cousin autobiography. By contrast, historical fiction is the prevalent genre utilised in stories hinging on walking around, rather than abandoning Tasmania or Newfoundland. Locations are constituted in complex ways in this modality. On one hand, Tasmania and Newfoundland act as activating spaces: their landscapes prompt transformations in the subjects who encounter them. However, the changes they effect are often reincorporated into formations of place at one remove from present-day Tasmania or Newfoundland –

¹ Curtis and Pajaczkowska take this argument even further when they suggest that a text's characters provide readers with a psychological entry into a text because they offer points of identification: 'Through narrative the subject self is allowed a regressive splitting – into fragmented component selves – and is offered forms of identification for subsequent reintegration' (212).

they are made to signify the *nation* of Australia or the 'lost' nation of Newfoundland, for instance.

The modality of homecoming is premised on a protagonist's return to Tasmania or Newfoundland after a substantial period of absence. Female subjectivities are explored with greater frequency in this modality than in the others – in keeping with the long-established association of women and home. Stories about homecoming are the most generically diverse, although several are historical fictions which generate an explicit dialogue within the text between stories set in the past and present. As in the modality of 'walking around', Tasmania and Newfoundland are valorised in 'homecoming' as activating spaces. Rather than re-placing their transformed characters back into the nation, however, these texts situate them within the geographical localities themselves.

The fourth modality of emplacement, in which the characters simultaneously 'go nowhere' and yet 'travel everywhere', is the most distinctive. Texts which utilise this modality depict the act of physically relocating from or to the islands, or even undertaking large-scale journeys around them, as pointless. Characters in these novels focus on ways of travelling on the spot by performing micro-journeys. The genres of these texts vary, but they tend to subvert established narrative forms, or deploy more radical ones.

The modalities of leaving, walking around, coming home and going nowhere/being everywhere recur in recent writing about both Tasmania and Newfoundland, although sometimes with different frequency. Using the terminology Raymond Williams develops in *Marxism and Literature*, this thesis argues that within contemporary fiction concerned with both territories, the modality of leaving is residual, whilst those of walking around and homecoming are dominant. Going nowhere/being everywhere is an emergent mode. This balance, the thesis contests, is indicative of significant shifts in the cultural positioning of Tasmania and Newfoundland over the course of the last years of the twentieth-century, and portends more changes to come.

Why Tasmania and Newfoundland?

Correspondences in the modalities of emplacement apparent in recent writing about Newfoundland and Tasmania may well be astonishing, but why go looking for them in the first place? What evidence suggests that juxtaposing literature figuring these territories might be a worthwhile exercise? If, as J.B. Harley notes, 'all maps state an argument about the world' (242), the central contention of most cartographic representations of the earth must be that Tasmania and Newfoundland are as distant from, and irrelevant to, each other as it is possible for two places to be.

Despite the physical distance that separates them, the imperatives for a comparative study of contemporary fiction concerned with the Canadian and Australian islands are pressing and multifarious. Social, political and economic factors have intersected in strikingly similar ways in these locations during recent years: literary writing has reported upon, been implicated in, and intervened in these conjunctions.

‘Selling Like Hot-Cakes’

During the twenty-five years leading up to the turn of the millennium both Tasmania and Newfoundland, along with other locations perceived as bounded and peripheral, became ubiquitous terrains for fiction, and wide-ranging audiences emerged for writing about them.² Prior to the mid-1970s, literary figurations of each place appeared more sporadically, and, collectively, garnered less sustained interest.³ Books set in Newfoundland, including R.M. Ballantyne’s *The Crew of the Water Wagtail* (1889) and

² To name just two other widely read examples of writing about places outside of these locations, Alistair McLeod’s *No Great Mischief* (which recently won the highly lucrative IMPAC award) represents Cape Breton, and David Guterson’s *Snow Falling on Cedars* an island in the Pacific Northwest.

³ See Patrick O’Flaherty’s *The Rock Observed*, and his entry on Newfoundland Literature in the *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, and Joan Strong’s *Acts of Brief Authority* (which focuses on twentieth-century writing), for histories of writing about the Canadian province. No book-length study of the history of literary fiction associated with Tasmania has yet been published, but V.A. Salisbury’s M.A. thesis ‘From Agony to Acceptance: Van Diemen’s Land in Fiction’ (1979) considers depictions of convictism. Margaret Scott touches on the history of fiction about the island in ‘Tasmania’s Literary Landmarks’.

Norman Duncan's *Way of the Sea* (1903), captured attention, and Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*, which depicts convictism in nineteenth-century Tasmania is possibly 'the most significant and most famous nineteenth-century Australian novel' (Wilde et al 371). But the impact of texts about Tasmania or Newfoundland published prior to the latter part of the twentieth-century was not sufficient to fundamentally alter perceptions that these locations were not appropriate terrains for literary representation. Novelist Bernice Morgan, who was born in pre-Confederation Newfoundland, notes that until recently: 'It never occurred to me that a Newfoundlander could write a book. It never occurred to me that Newfoundland could be the scene where a piece of fiction took place' (Porter, 'Conversation' 39). Christopher Koch, who grew up on the other side of the world in Tasmania, describes how he, too, was raised on writing from elsewhere which depicted places he had no personal experience of (*Crossing* 92).

By the late 1990s, however, the situation was quite different. Newfoundland was 'hot literary territory' (Govier 62), and books associated with Tasmania were 'selling like hot cakes' (Crawford, 'Fully Booked' 32). Writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland was being simultaneously lauded in critical, as well as popular contexts. E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News*, which takes Newfoundland as its imaginative terrain, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1994; Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide*, set in Tasmania, was shortlisted for the Australian Miles Franklin

Award, and won the Victorian Premier's Award for First Fiction a year later.⁴ Success bred success. Proulx's book, for instance, opened up an even greater space for the publication of writing about Newfoundland. Gerald Howard, executive editor with Doubleday in New York commented on the publication of Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*: 'it helped that other books, notably *The Shipping News* and *The Bird Artist* had introduced American readers to this – in their eyes – rather exotic place called Newfoundland' (Vaughan-Jackson 1).

The turn of the millennium has done nothing to stem the flow of writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland, nor interest in it. Newfoundland writer Michael Winter's first novel, and Wayne Bartlett's *Louder than the Sea* were published in 2000 and 2001 respectively; Donna Morrissey's next Newfoundland-set fiction, *Downhill Chance* (to be published in 2002) is being touted as 'the most eagerly anticipated book of the season' (Penguin website). Matthew Kneale's *The English Passengers*, an historical fiction featuring Tasmania, was short-listed for the Booker Prize in 2000 and awarded the Whitbread. In the same month as this thesis is to be submitted Richard Flanagan's *Gould's Book of Fish* is due to appear. My study of contemporary writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland, however, takes the turn of the millennium as its end point (the latest text considered is Wayne Johnston's *Baltimore's Mansion* (1999)). By that time, former

⁴ Unfortunately for Flanagan, the Miles Franklin listing came in the year Helen Demidenko was controversially given the prize. When Demidenko's Ukrainian identity was eventually exposed as fraudulent, critics suggested Flanagan had been hard done by.

preconceptions had been completely overturned, and patterns in writing about the islands firmly established.

The Logic of Capitalism

The recent rise to literary prominence of both Tasmania and Newfoundland has occurred along with profound and comparable changes in their economic and social landscapes. The two locations' experiences of the global phenomenon of late capitalism have much in common. Newfoundland and Tasmania have been similarly imbricated in world experiences before. Well prior to the advent of 'time-space compression' (Harvey 4), which reduced travel-time and seeming distances between places, the imperial networks connecting the two colonies of Tasmania and Newfoundland were strong – and indeed direct. Bodies, including those of court-martialled soldiers, were exported from Newfoundland to Van Diemen's Land within the British Empire's convict system.⁵ Explorers also moved between the two places. As a memorial in the West Coast Newfoundland town of Corner Brook commemorates, Cook's success in charting the coast of Newfoundland between 1764 and 1767 led to his being appointed to travel in the Pacific. Just a few years later in 1777, accompanied as on previous journeys by the botanist Joseph Banks, he was anchored at Adventure Bay off Tasmania's Bruny Island. The same colonial figures

were instrumental in inscribing both Newfoundland and Tasmania within European signifying systems, and, in so doing, expanding the possibilities for colonisation in each.

Since the mid-1970s, late capitalism has re-shaped the world economy and its impacts on Tasmania and Newfoundland have been reminiscent of each other. Their shared colonial histories, and their subsequent inclusion within post-colonial, commonwealth nations, have an influence in this, for as Fredric Jameson insists, there is 'no "late capitalism in general" but only this or that specific national form of the thing' (*Postmodernism* xx).

Jameson, (following in the tradition of the Frankfurt School) uses the notion 'late capitalism' to highlight:

not merely an emphasis on the emergence of new forms of business organization (multinationals, transnationals) beyond the monopoly stage but, above all, the vision of a world capitalist system fundamentally distinct from the older imperialism, which was little more than a rivalry between the various colonial powers.

(*Postmodernism* xviii)

⁵ Archives Office of Tasmania records show that William Green of the Royal Newfoundland Fuesilliers, for example, was transported to Van Diemen's Land on 29 January 1811.

He uses the term, too, as 'something like a literal translation of the other expression, *postmodernism*' (*Postmodernism* xxi), and explores the broader cultural changes which have occurred with the economic ones.

Interchangeably with 'late capitalism' and 'postmodernism', Jameson employs the additional descriptors 'globalization', 'multinational capitalism', 'spectacle or image society', 'media capitalism', 'the world system'. All of these 'synonyms', he suggests, highlight particular aspects of a single and complex phenomenon (*Postmodernism* xviii).

Jameson dates the appearance of late capitalism from around 1973 (*Postmodernism* xx). His chronology holds in the cases of both Tasmania and Newfoundland. From the mid-1970s on the new 'world system' led to falling demand for the primary and secondary industry products Tasmania and Newfoundland traditionally supplied.⁶ Whilst periods of impoverishment were not new to either place, both shared the dubious distinction in the closing years of the twentieth century of having the highest unemployment rates in the federations of which they are part.⁷

⁶ These difficulties were compounded in Newfoundland's case by the extinction of the province's most important primary product – cod.

⁷ Anthony Trollope, visiting Tasmania in the 1870s, commented: 'It seems hard to say of a new colony, not yet 70 years old, that it has seen the best of its days' (1); Patrick O'Flaherty describes Newfoundland in 1934 (when it surrendered responsible government) as a 'fractious and backward colony' (144).

Their populations also declined as members of their communities left to search for work elsewhere.

The 1970s also mark the beginning of the new waves of writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland; the earliest work this thesis considers is Robert Drewe's book about the Tasmanian Aborigines, *The Savage Crows* (1976). The connections between this fiction and the advent of late capitalism are complex, and I refer to different aspects of them throughout the thesis. At the most obvious level, contemporary novels articulate the impact of the new world economy upon the territories. Here is Richard Flanagan describing Tasmania's plight:

Aljaz walked the streets of Hobart aimlessly, wandering through the old town's streets, past its small stolid buildings of the state which were without ambition but retained a dour intent, past its dingy shops more akin in their emaciated displays to the shops of Eastern Europe before the wall came down than to those luxurious displays of the mainland. The whole town was poor, desperately poor, and he saw it in the eyes of the tracksuited hordes that walked past him and he smelt it rising from the gutters. (DRG 253)

Hobart's spaces are the backdrop for 'aimless' wandering, and provide a stark contrast with those of the 'mainland'. Aljaz, *Death of a River Guide's* protagonist, assumes the role here of anti-flaneur, the antithesis of Charles

Baudelaire's Parisian window-shopper. There is nothing worth seeing, nothing worth buying in 1990s Hobart. In a neat metaphor for the lack of regional identity, 'tracksuited hordes', presumably wearing mass-produced garments churned out of factories elsewhere, take the place of distinguishable individuals. Buildings of state retain only their 'dour intent'; they cannot symbolise real power, for the loci of control are elsewhere.

In *Waiting for Time*, Bernice Morgan writes about related difficulties in the context of the outports of Newfoundland:

To Lav the road seems endless. She drives past miles of burnt-over land where fingers of dead trees point skywards: past bleak schools that might have been lifted from any city slum and dropped carelessly in gravel-pits midway between communities – on through half a dozen outports of neat, well-kept houses, of Legion Halls, Beer Halls, past wood frame branches of the Bank of Nova Scotia, Sears mail order outlets, Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets, video outlets, car lots and supermarkets, drug marts and beauty marts – and of course churches.
(WT 190)

In Morgan's novel, Kentucky Fried Chicken is as much a part of the outport's landscape as the local beer hall. Morgan's description highlights that late capitalism has led to the rise, and interconnection, of the local and

the global. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake in their book *Global/Local* confirm that in recent years a 'fractal terrain' (1) has developed:

a new world-space of cultural production and national representation which is simultaneously becoming more *globalized* (unified around dynamics of capital logic moving across borders) and more *localized* (fragmented into contestatory enclaves of difference, coalition, and resistance). (1)

Late capitalism has had harsh economic consequences for Tasmania and Newfoundland, but the shift to a new kind of world economy has also seen both become increasingly fetishised and commodified as zones of the 'unique', the 'authentic', the 'different', the 'past' and 'home'. As Rob Shields notes, 'marginal places, those towns and regions which have been "left behind" in the modern race for progress evoke both nostalgia and fascination' (3). Being 'left behind' has ensured that Tasmania and Newfoundland have retained features which prompt just these kinds of responses – large tracts of wilderness and significant historical sites, relatively stable, mono-cultural populations, and a perception of being 'remote and islanded' (Gillis 39).⁸

⁸ Kay Daniels notes in regard to Tasmania that the retention of historical buildings has happened quite by accident. Only lack of funds to pull them down has meant that the state still possesses them.

The 'uniqueness' of Tasmania and Newfoundland has been highlighted in efforts to enhance the value of their spaces – most especially in tourist discourse, although again literary fiction is implicated. As James Overton notes, 'the themes and techniques of advertising shade into those of art, literature and film. There is a huge cultural output which, in some way, promotes and explores travel, place and coming home' (6). The spaces of both Tasmania and Newfoundland have been recodified in recent years in line with market demand for 'unique' and 'authentic' places. Tasmania's Midland Highway, for example, is now designated the 'Heritage Highway', and the road from Deer Lake to L'Anse aux Meadows on Newfoundland's West Coast has been re-named 'The Viking Trail'.⁹ Comparative work reveals the irony that 'uniqueness' can be constructed in standardised ways. Both places have recently marketed themselves, for example, through the almost identical slogans of 'More than you can imagine' (Tourism Tasmania's 1998 campaign) and 'Imagine that' (Newfoundland's chief advertising slogan since the mid-1990s).

The Critical Terrain

Given the similar ways in which literary, social and economic considerations have been converging in Tasmania and Newfoundland

⁹ In a striking instance of how tertiary rather than primary products have become important under late capitalism, formerly unemployed fishermen in the coastal village of Trinity in Newfoundland now earn a living *acting* the role of fishermen in the annual, and phenomenally popular, pageant.

since the mid-1970s, a comparative study of literary fiction associated with them is timely. Incipient moves have been made to connect experiences in Tasmania and Newfoundland in non-literary and literary contexts, but no detailed study has been attempted. In the economic realm, for instance, Saul Eslake, chief economist for the Australia and New Zealand Bank, has encouraged Tasmania to look to Newfoundland to compare notes on its economic woes (7). In the literary context, the Institute of Island Studies in Prince Edward Island has initiated a series of conferences on the literature of small islands which have provided a forum for the presentation of work on Tasmania and Newfoundland individually. Terry Goldie, however, has been one of few to directly juxtapose Tasmania and Newfoundland in literary critical work. In *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* Goldie notes in passing that: 'Newfoundland is, like Tasmania, an island state/province with a much longer white history than the federation of which it is now a part, but it has similarly fallen on economic hard times and become the target of jokes from "the mainland." And it also was the home of a now extinct people, the Beothuks' (154).

The scarcity of critical studies associating the two places has also persisted despite several precedents for linking representations of each island with those of locations in opposite hemispheres. Lake Sagaris's *Medusa's Children*, for example, is a poetic meditation drawing together Newfoundland and Chiloe – a small island off the coast of Chile; Gillian

Whitlock in her article 'The Carcereal Archipelago' links Marcus Clarke's *For the Term of His Natural Life* with a novel about Upper Canada – John Richardson's *Wacousta*. Neither is there a shortage of critical work addressing the encoding of Newfoundland and Tasmania individually. Jim Davidson, Gregory Young, Amanda Lohrey, Richard Flanagan and Elizabeth McMahon, to take just a handful of examples, have all meditated upon figurations of Tasmania. Ronald Rompkey, Pat Byrne, Lawrence Matthews, Patrick O'Flaherty, Joan Strong and Adrian Fowler are just several of the critics who have done likewise with Newfoundland.¹⁰

By making a sustained connection between constructions of Tasmania and Newfoundland this thesis is intended to redress a significant gap. In providing detailed, comparative readings of literary fiction which foregrounds these locations, and situating these readings within the social and economic contexts into which they emerge and with which they engage, this thesis argues that contemporary modalities of emplacement construct geographically distant locations in distinctly similar ways. In discerning these similarities the thesis concludes that there is a profound paradox at the heart of contemporary fictional constructions of Tasmania and Newfoundland as distinct and unique territories. By relying upon reproducible modalities the currency of 'uniqueness' is ultimately devalued.

¹⁰See Bibliography for details.

Chapter 2

The Territories of Fiction

A central tenet of this project is that literary fiction must be interpreted in the context of the wider culture into which it emerges: my approach is diametrically opposed to the liberal humanist position that literary works can be read independently of broader social considerations. In the next few pages I spell out how my insistence on literature's imbrication with non-literary realms inflects other methodological underpinnings of the thesis – particularly my arguments about emplacement. The very definition of 'literature' I apply reflects this assumption. As Randall Johnston puts it, 'Literature, art and their respective producers do not exist independently of a complex institutional framework which authorizes, enables, empowers and legitimizes them' (10). All the novels this thesis treats have been widely reviewed as 'literature' within at least the local and national milieus into which they emerged. Many have also received attention in the literary pages of newspapers and magazines in other countries, too.¹

¹ I have foregrounded the recognition a work receives beyond its immediate context in order to highlight how writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland circulates as literature in national and global as well as local arenas. In line with this aim, I also extend my scope beyond the work of writers who live in either place. The thesis does not assume an intrinsic causal relationship between writers' origins and the patterns that emerge in their writing, but it pays particular attention to the way authors are positioned in relation to the places they write about. The contemporary focus of this project accentuates the fact that the ways in which authorial subjectivities are constructed impact upon how we read the fiction associated with them. All of the texts I treat are marketed alongside their authors. Author interviews, published biographies and autobiographies act as explicit intertexts to a writer's literary fiction.

Guiding Fictions

Because literature is imbricated with broader cultural contexts, the modalities of emplacement it presents act as guides to Tasmania and Newfoundland in both overtly literal, and more complex ways. The literal guiding role of writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland has been pronounced in recent years. In both locations, fictional texts can be found alongside non-fictional guidebooks in souvenir outlets; Bernice Morgan's novels, for example, have been prominently displayed alongside conventional forms of travel literature in Gros Morne National Park's Visitor Centre. Tourist guidebooks also provide lists of recommended fictional reading for the potential visitor. In Lonely Planet's guide to Tasmania, Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide* is described as 'an excellent introduction to Tasmanian history and life' (McGaurr 25). Most strikingly of all, fictions about Tasmania and Newfoundland have incited people to travel to the scenes they present. Andrea Peddle, manager of Advertising and Communications for the Newfoundland Provincial Government, believes the success of E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* was a significant factor in the twenty-seven percent rise in the number of people visiting Newfoundland between 1998 and 1999 (Personal interview).²

² The reports Peddle received of American tourists searching for the locations of Proulx's novel as they travelled the road along the northern peninsula to St. Anthony confirm that these visitors were looking for 'real' places they had first encountered in fiction.

Readers' tendencies to assimilate fiction literally are the most obvious manifestation of the fact that writing and reading are inherently spatialised, and spatialising, activities. As Stephen Muecke suggests, 'There is more than one way to move – writing [or reading] can be moving, trips in intensity even when sitting still' (*No Road* 16). Like the physical experience of travelling, writing and reading involve a series of departures, explorations and arrivals. Little wonder, then, that through writing and reading we discover new ways of inhabiting the spaces we negotiate when we put down the pen or the book. As Michel de Certeau claims, stories 'traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories' (*Practice* 115). Furthermore:

These narrated adventures, simultaneously producing geographies of actions and drifting into the commonplaces of an order, do not merely constitute a "supplement" to pedestrian enunciations and rhetorics [. . .]. In reality, they organize walks. (*Practice* 116)

But how, more specifically, might they do this? Articulating a theoretical stance on this issue seems especially urgent because of the contemporary focus of my project. As Terry Goldie says, 'the most useful source of analysis is [. . .] not chronological but ideological distance' (*Fear and Temptation* 7). My use of spatial and literary theory is intended to provide this kind of distance.

Guiding Theories of Fiction

De Certeau's theories of spatiality are an excellent place to begin. His work has particular appeal because it foregrounds the economic shifts wrought by changes in the operation of capital – and takes many examples from fiction. Furthermore, de Certeau's ideas are consonant with my guiding boundary metaphor of the littoral. Locations, for de Certeau, are never as stable as they seem.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* (first published in English in 1984) de Certeau juxtaposes two perspectives on New York. The first, the view of the city from above, he calls the “geometrical” or “geographical” space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions’ (93). The second, the ground-level experience of walkers in the city, is invisible from the perspective of the first: ‘Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface’ (93). The ground-level view constitutes an “anthropological,” poetic and mythic experience of space’ (93). De Certeau suggests that it slips into the ‘clear text’ (93) of the view from above.

De Certeau refers again to his distinction between the view from above and the experience of life below in the chapter 'Spatial Stories', in the process of defining the terms place and space:

A place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (*place*). The law of the "proper" rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are *beside* one another, each situated in its own "proper" and distinct location, a location it defines. A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability. (117)

By contrast,

A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements. It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities [. . .]. In contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a "proper".

In short, *space is a practiced place*. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. (117)

Crucially, as well as connecting urban planning/walking with the place/space distinction, de Certeau also associates the difference between place and space with a difference between storytelling practices. Stories, he suggests, 'carry out a labour that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places' (118). Some tales are more likely to carry out one of these operations than the other, for there are:

two sorts of determinations in stories: the first, a determination through objects that are ultimately reducible to the *being-there* of something dead, the law of a "place" [. . .] the second, a determination through *operations* which [. . .] specify "spaces" by the actions of historical *subjects*. (118)

It is important to emphasise that de Certeau sees literary fiction as creating both place and space, as there is, at first glance, some ambiguity apparent in his conception of its role. Most of the examples de Certeau provides of how stories create space are taken from orally presented, everyday kinds of tales – how people talk about the homes and suburbs they occupy, for example. Furthermore, he states that 'literary and scientific representations' (120) have both tended to turn 'tours' into 'maps' (120), and reads Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* as a place-making text par excellence (in his chapter 'The

Scriptural Economy'). The case for literature as place-making, rather than space-making, appears strengthened by de Certeau's apparent division of society into powerful producers (who impose place), and oppressed consumers (who activate space), and his seeming bias for the practices of the latter. John Frow, for one, accuses de Certeau of creating a 'polar model of domination' (55). Statements professing 'an interest in how the "'common people"' [make use of] the culture disseminated and imposed by the "elites" producing the language' (xiii) suggest the difficulty. Because of its high-brow associations, literary fiction would seem to fit into this latter category; and if it *is* something to be mobilised, again, it seems, its stories must create place in the de Certeauian sense.

The grounds for rejecting an inevitable connection between literature and place-making are, however, convincing. De Certeau's use of double quotation marks around the terms "elites" and "common people" hints that his understanding of them is more complex than Frow implies (as do his differing examples about literature). Ian Buchanan highlights this complexity, by way of Deleuze's notion of transcendental empiricism, which suggests that 'Relations are external to their terms' ('De Certeau and Cultural Studies' 187) and insists on deploying the conjunction 'AND' instead of 'OR'. Buchanan argues that the terms elite/common people and the other seeming binaries identified as following from them in de Certeau's work – such as place/space, and strategy (the way of outlining place)/tactics (the way of subverting it) are:

Not founded on positives and negatives, or on any other such binaristic forms; strategy and tactics [for instance] do not divide the social between the powerful and the powerless, but rather discriminate between different types, or modalities as it might also be put, of power. This means that strategy and tactics are adjacent rather than complementary; they distort and ramify one another. ('De Certeau and Cultural Studies' 188)

The logical extension from this argument is that stories that create place do not exist in a binary relationship with stories that create space, the two are imbricated in more complex ways that 'distort and ramify one another'. This becomes particularly apparent when one considers that every text, whatever its genre or content, is initially written as an exercise of space-making, that is, an attempt to mobilise (em)placed literary traditions. Furthermore, the most rigidly constructed text, the one that most overtly establishes a "proper" (*Practice* 117) and lays out ground (as *Robinson Crusoe* does, for instance) still must contain within it disparate, and potentially mobile elements. For, as de Certeau argues, 'Stories about places

are makeshift things. They are composed with the world's debris' (*Practice* 107).³ Place and space, then, occur together.

Karen Bermann's comments in her insightful article on Anne Frank are relevant here to my arguments that literature inevitably figures both place and space, and that place and space do not fall into a stringent binary opposition that also entails respective linkages between bad/good and powerful/powerless. Considering both the place-ing structures of the house in which Frank and her family hid in Amsterdam before being discovered by the Nazis, as well as the em-placing structures of Anne's diary, Bermann shows how the structures of place can shelter, as well as imprison. The disruptive effect of spatial elements within place can thus have appalling effects. Anne's family are finally revealed because:

A building is a collection of opacities and transparencies, a theater of appearance and disappearance [. . .]. Every existing wall contradicts itself with openings, places where the obduracy of matter yields to the necessity of passage: joints and seals, points of rupture, of flow and failure, where water seeps in and air pours through, where materials meet and pull away. These gaps present us with opportunities to be

³ To put this in more concrete terms, one can refer to a similar point Homi Bhabha makes about stories of nationhood – stories which attempt to make a 'place' of a nation. Quoting the work of Ernest Gellner, he notes that 'the historical necessity of the idea of the nation conflicts with the contingent and arbitrary signs and symbols that signify the affective life of the national culture' ('DissemiNation' 293). The place-making efforts of nationalist narratives thus are borne of a situation in which 'Nationalism is not what it seems, and above all not what it seems to itself' (Gellner quoted by Bhabha, 'DissemiNation' 294).

seen and heard. Yet the exchange across the building's porous envelope makes us vulnerable. One's presence may be betrayed by a discarded orange peel, a bit of smoke, the sound of a toilet flushing or a pipe banging as water passes through. We are revealed through these traces, the things that architecture cannot keep, the separation that it cannot provide, its secretions, the excess that leaks through like light.

(169)

Similarly Anne's diary, initially at least, 'constructs a world in which one is safe' (170), but it, too, 'accumulates its dangerous traces, expands inside its cover. Over time, its writing poses an increasingly grave danger to the friends outside who are aiding them in hiding' (172).

As Bermann's writing on Anne Frank can be used to highlight, place and space are both orders 'of whatever kind' (de Certeau, *Practice* 117). Not only are they flexible enough to facilitate both positive and negative outcomes, the place- and space-making structures Bermann refers to can be found in such apparently disparate contexts as a house and a diary. Given the flexibility of de Certeau's definitions of place and space it follows that in reading for them in literary fiction we can refer to a number of a text's features.⁴ In this thesis I expose a range of place- and space-making

⁴ As Deleuze and Guattari comment about the process of territorialization, a process which again recalls that of place-making: 'We already know the importance in animals of those activities that consist in forming *territories*, in abandoning or leaving them, and even in re-creating territory on something of a different nature (ethologists say that an animal's partner or friend is the "equivalent of a home" [])' (*What is Philosophy* 67). In their example, even a 'partner or friend' might be a 'place'.

elements within the novels I treat. I argue, too, that particular incarnations of, and balances between, place and space correspond to the respective modalities of emplacement that I identify.

Sketching an Outline

This thesis is structured around the modalities of emplacement which exist in contemporary fiction about Tasmania and Newfoundland: Part 1 addresses narratives about 'leaving', Part 2 looks at those premised on 'walking around', and Part 3 examines stories of 'homecoming'. I canvass texts about 'going nowhere/being everywhere' in the Conclusion.

De Certeau's theories of place and space inform every chapter, but they are most explicitly referenced in Part 1. Even when I diverge to employ the work of other theorists, as I do most markedly in the chapters contained in Part 3, de Certeau's schema is still a crucial reference point. In my deployment of Sigmund Freud's notion of the uncanny, and Julia Kristeva's theories of abjection in Chapter 7, for instance, my emphasis lies on what are essentially place- and space-making tendencies yet again. I read the Law of the Father as standing in for de Certeau's 'place', whilst the impacts of the uncanny and the abject are tactics for turning it back into space.

Part 1 contains the chapters 'Island Escapes' and 'Staging Homecoming'. The first of these considers two fictions which I argue (despite their quite

different politics) 'place' Tasmania in comparable ways: Dennis Altman's novel *The Comfort of Men* and Christopher Koch's *The Doubleman*. It also briefly addresses Paul Bowdring's Newfoundland-centred novel *The Night Season*, to highlight how the 'leaving' narrative has been re-situated within Newfoundland fiction. Bowdring's work (more properly described as about 'going nowhere/being everywhere') presents such a compelling story of 'escaping without leaving' that I return to it again in the Conclusion. 'Staging Homecoming' looks at narratives of leaving as they appear in autobiographical writing. Work by Koch (*Crossing the Gap*) and Altman (*Defying Gravity*) is again addressed, but this time it is juxtaposed with a text with which it shares more in common – *Baltimore's Mansion*, by Wayne Johnston. My reliance on de Certeau's work is supplemented in this chapter by reference to the ideas about discursive constructions that Michel Foucault outlines in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

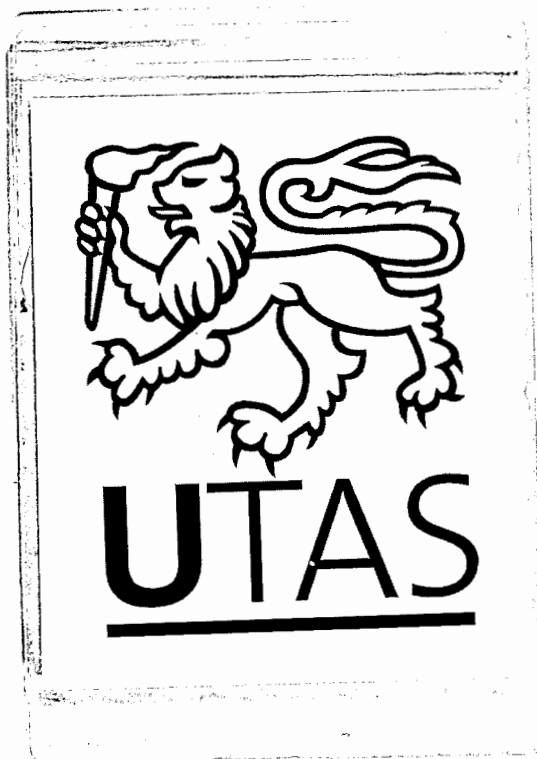
Part 2, 'Walking Around', comprises the chapters 'Traversing the Old Lost Land', and 'Walking Races'. The first of these focuses on Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and Patrick Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails*. Both texts are interested in the implications of Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada, and in this chapter I address whether their retrospective attempts to 'place' the 'lost' nation also hint at the kind of exercise in nostalgia that I noted Rob Shields identifies. 'Walking Races' considers how Tasmania is placed in relation to the nation of Australia in Robert Drewe's *The Savage Crows* and Mudrooroo's *Doctor Wooreddy's*

Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World. Both of these novels engage with George Robinson's travels around Tasmania in his attempts to persuade the surviving Tasmanian Aborigines to relocate to Flinders Island. I argue that each deploys Tasmania as a microcosm of the Australian nation – but also distances it in problematic ways.

Part 3, 'Coming Home', juxtaposes Tasmanian and Newfoundland texts directly, and here that the parallels between the fictions of the two places are astonishing. The narratives of the texts I address in Part 3 often overlap, even in their minor details. The theoretical structure for this part is devised by connecting de Certeau's work on place and space with psychoanalytic and feminist theory. In 'Taking the Waters' I compare Proulx's depiction of Newfoundland in *The Shipping News* with Flanagan's construction of Tasmania in *Death of a River Guide*. Both present male protagonists who, I argue, re-position the Law of the Father and, in the process reconstitute themselves and the spaces they inhabit. 'Home Births' looks at the role of maternity in Bernice Morgan's *Waiting for Time* and Flanagan's *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*. I look at how the protagonists of these texts 'give birth' to place.

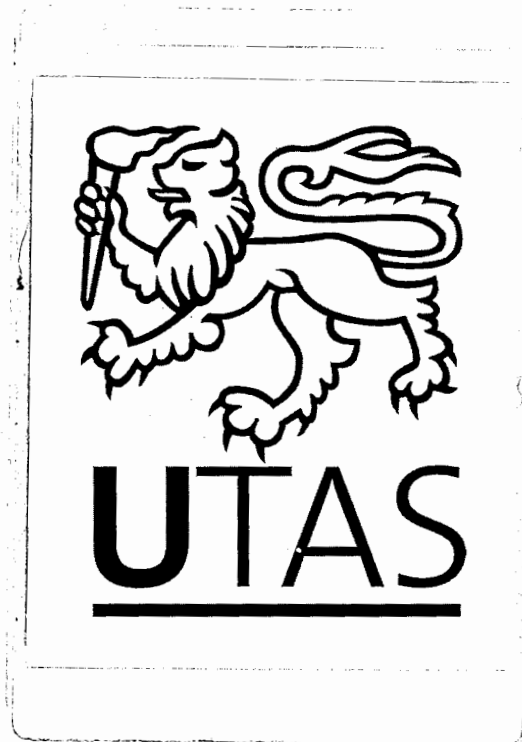
The Conclusion to the thesis considers texts whose narratives are more disparate than those of the other parts: given their 'emergent' status this is perhaps to be expected. I refer again to Bowdring's *Night Season* but I also consider Newfoundland-related texts by members of the Burning Rock

Collective. On the Tasmanian side, I address Amanda Lohrey's *The Morality of Gentlemen* and Carmel Bird's *Bluebird Café*.



Part 1

Leaving



Part 1

Introductory

In this Part I examine the modality of leaving, a modality premised on narratives about irrevocable and significant departures from long-established homes in Tasmania or Newfoundland. The main figures in leaving narratives might flirt with the possibility of homecoming, even staging temporary returns, but they never do come home for good. Leaving Tasmania or Newfoundland for economic reasons has been a necessary step for people from both places for decades now, and many of the departures undertaken in search of work have been made reluctantly. But whilst these kinds of economically driven, unwilling removals haunt the modality of homecoming that I examine in Part 3, contemporary fiction (particularly as it figures Tasmania) has foregrounded different stories of departure.¹ The 'leavers' we meet in this Part are motivated more by their desire for personal growth than their need to find paid work.

In the following chapters I address deployments of departure in both literary fiction (in Chapter 3) and literary autobiography (in Chapter 4). I justify the

¹ Bernice Morgan's homecoming story *Waiting for Time* is even dedicated 'to young Newfoundlanders who must go away – especially to my own children Greg, Jackie and Jennifer. May you all find that a going away can be a homecoming'. It is appropriate that narratives about unwilling departures should be absorbed into the modality of homecoming. In fiction, reluctant exiles can make their desired returns. In Part 3 I explain further why contemporary novelists have foregrounded homecoming over unwilling departures.

foray into non-fiction (the only one I make in the dissertation) on the grounds that the specific fictional and non-fictional genres I treat in the following chapters (the *bildungsroman* and autobiography) are closely related – as befits their common use of the modality of leaving. The leaving narratives in Chapters 3 and 4 all foreground ‘individualism and mobility’ (Fraiman 139), and dwell upon movement from a provincial to a metropolitan setting. These features are all ‘imperatives’ (139), as Susan Fraiman notes, of the traditional (male) *bildungsroman*. That non-fictional narratives should share them is less remarkable when one considers James Hardin’s contention that the first *bildungsroman* actually evolved out of autobiography (ix).

The modality of leaving appears to be of diminishing importance in writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland. This is not to say it lacks cultural power. As Raymond Williams argues, the ‘residual’ is that which ‘has been effectively formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present’ (122). Globalisation has lessened the centrality of the modality of leaving in both places, but specific local factors have conspired to hasten its disappearance from writing about Newfoundland. Graham Huggan argues that ‘Comparatists are not syncretists [. . .] comparatists are best seen as mediators, moving among texts without seeking to ‘reconcile’ or ‘unify’ them’ (xi), and this approach is especially crucial in treating the modality of leaving in writing about the two places.

Of the three Parts in this thesis, the literary encoding of Newfoundland diverges most radically from that of Tasmania in this one.

No significant Newfoundland-centred fictions about leaving were published in the period on which I focus. Indeed, *The Night Season*, the St. John's based novel by Paul Bowdring that I juxtapose with Dennis Altman's *The Comfort of Men* and C.J. Koch's *The Doubleman* in Chapter 3, constitutes a subversion of the leaving narrative presented in the Tasmanian work. Bowdring's protagonist finds a totally new way of occupying an intolerable homespace without physically leaving it.

The modality of leaving has proved more tenacious in autobiographical writing centred on Newfoundland. I suggest in Chapter 4 that this is because the narrative still has power to lend prestige to a writer. However, even the autobiographical 'I' Wayne Johnston presents in his memoir *Baltimore's Mansion* (which I treat in Chapter 4 alongside Koch's *Crossing the Gap*, and Altman's *Defying Gravity*) differs in significant ways from those that appear in the Tasmanian-related work. The fictional and autobiographical protagonists of Koch and Altman are invariably and unequivocally happy to be leaving Tasmania; they have somewhere to go, and their physical departure from the island reflects spiritual, emotional and intellectual progress; homesickness is a markedly absent emotion. Although leaving is associated with personal growth, departure is not

relished in *Baltimore's Mansion* to nearly the same extent; home is only left with reluctance.

Subjects more willing to depart Newfoundland can be found in writing prior to the period on which I concentrate in this thesis. Margaret Duley's novel *The Eyes of the Gull* (1936), for instance, tells of a frustrated heroine trapped in a bleak Newfoundland outport who longs to leave for Europe.² For Isabel Pyke, Newfoundland is 'Helluland'; however her dream of escaping to Andalusia is never realised; she only leaves the island by wasting away to an early death.³ The narrator of Percy Janes's *House of Hate* (1970), Juju, also endeavours to leave behind a life of misery in Newfoundland. Janes's novel is a study of the dynamics of a horrifically and claustrophobically dysfunctional family, but the violence Saul Stone, Juju's father, inflicts upon those around him (the violence that prompts Juju's departure) is explicitly connected with his Newfoundland upbringing. Juju decides that Saul's behaviour is symptomatic of 'an island-wide inferiority complex' (319). Juju relocates to mainland Canada because,

² The narrative has, however, recently appeared in other genres in the Atlantic context – and in female-based form, too. The Nova Scotian film *New Waterford Girl* presents a frustrated and sensitive character trapped in a restrictive Cape Breton town. Although the central protagonist ends up being equivocal about her departure, and her plight is offset by the arrival in New Waterford of a New Yorker who professes to adore the place, some of the themes of a more traditional 'leaving' form are still apparent.

³ Patrick O'Flaherty, whose sympathies lie unequivocally with those who feel positively towards Newfoundland, is scathing about Duley's novel in *The Rock Observed*. He describes it as expressing perfectly 'the disdainful attitude towards the outports that we would expect from a coddled sophisticate in St. John's East' (132).

as Gwendolyn Davies notes, 'the hardscrabble social base of the island contains little to feed his literary and artistic future' (50).

Contemporary novelists who write about Newfoundland have chosen to avoid the modality of leaving altogether. Johnston, for instance, confines his use of the leaving narrative to his autobiographical work. In *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* he re-imagines an historical figure who made a conscious decision not to leave Newfoundland. In *Colony*, Joseph Smallwood performs similar pre-departure rituals to fictional characters from Tasmanian texts about leaving, but his stay in New York is only a temporary one. Johnston's earlier novel *The Divine Ryans* is a *bildungsroman*, and it does conclude with the protagonist departing Newfoundland. However, as Draper Doyle's plane rises above St. John's he expresses no interest in looking out the window. The nine-year-old Draper, his mother, and sister leave St. John's because of family discord rather than a more general dissatisfaction with the island. In this novel, life in Newfoundland and an unbearable family situation are not associated in the explicit fashion they are in *House of Hate*. The narrator's failure to make even a passing mention of their destination enforces this point. The microcosmic space of the family is the main issue – hence it is not of vital importance where Draper and his family go.

There are disparities in the recent histories of Tasmania and Newfoundland which help to account for the speedier demise of the modality of leaving in

texts about the latter in the period I examine. Newfoundland underwent a cultural renaissance in the 1970s and 1980s, the like of which Tasmania did not experience.⁴ Pat Byrne describes the period as 'the most artistically productive in the Island's history to date' ('Folk Tradition' 397), but suggests it is difficult to determine its exact causes:

It is a relatively easy task to demonstrate, in quantifiable terms at least, that the winds of change which brought about the first exchange of political power after Confederation in the early 1970s also precipitated changes in the artistic and cultural life of the Province. To determine exactly how these changes came about, and to discover not only the reasons why they happened, but also why they happened when they did, without indulging in the wildest form of unfounded and virtually undocumentable speculation, is another matter entirely. (398)

During the 'Newfoundland Renaissance' (Gwyn, 'Renaissance' 38) cultural producers from a range of fields made conscious decisions to stay or return to Newfoundland, rather than leave it, and their portrayal of Newfoundland subject matter may well have reflected their decisions. Sandra Gwyn's article on the 'Newfcult' revival, describes, for example, the members of the comedy group Codco's decision to return to Newfoundland

⁴ Interestingly, *The Doubleman*, chronicles the evolution of a folk group whose music is inspired by Tasmania. But the Rymers do not contribute to a culture constructed as uniquely Tasmanian. They take their music elsewhere.

from Toronto (43). Gwyn also quotes actor and writer Donna Butt as saying 'I want to stay in Newfoundland', 'I want to be *involved* here' (44).

Whilst it did not constitute a cultural renaissance, the rise of green politics in Tasmania in the 1980s (as contributors to *The Rest of the World is Watching* confirm) did help begin to shift conceptions of the island.⁵ However, the changes it produced were not always immediately apparent to expatriates who, after all, tend to be the main producers of leaving narratives.⁶ Less locally specific cultural changes are beginning to have a wider impact. Peter Conrad, whose autobiography *Down Home: Revisiting Tasmania* (1988) constitutes the apotheosis of Tasmanian 'leaving' narratives, has written recently in *Granta* magazine of his regret about abandoning the island.⁷ Conrad attributes his change of heart to shifts in Australia as a whole:

After I left, Australia decolonized itself. Taking stock of my life, I can see only a quaint historical specimen [. . .]. Perhaps there is a glass case waiting for me somewhere, with a label identifying me as the end of another line: here you see the last expatriate – the final victim of a

⁵ Some recent fictions (adamantly *not* part of the modality of leaving) have engaged explicitly with the rise of green politics. James McQueen's *Hook's Mountain*, for instance, situates its protagonist in a fight with authorities over logging. Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide*, which I examine in a different context in Chapter 7, is also part of a debate about conservation issues in the state.

⁶ See, for instance, Paul Ehrlich's Preface, and Cassandra Pybus's introduction to this collection that addresses the impact of green politics on Tasmania.

⁷ See Pybus's 'The Landscape of Self' for her criticism of Conrad.

delusion which made so many people renounce their parentage and repudiate their household gods. (24)

I note intimations of a similar shift in consciousness in Altman's and Koch's autobiographical work (published in both cases more recently than their respective fictions), even if the texts as a whole do not develop them. Altman, for instance, argues that globalisation is making it less necessary to leave places like Tasmania because 'there are no centres any more' (DG 247). Koch's most recent fiction, *Out of Ireland* (1999), published right at the end of the period on which I focus, is still centred on a protagonist who leaves Tasmania; Robert Devereux takes the advice 'Be careful not to love this island too much [. . .] or you may never escape it' (*Out of Ireland* 534). But because the work is an historical fiction based on the experience of the Young Irelanders, Devereux's departure is very differently contextualised. Furthermore, Devereux leaves behind an illegitimate child. In *Highways to a War*, the prequel to *Out of Ireland* his descendants are still in Tasmania.

The leaving narrative, at least as it manifests itself in fiction, seems to be heading towards the same extinction in Tasmania that it has already reached in Newfoundland.

Chapter 3

Island Escapes

I open this chapter by focusing exclusively on the leaving narratives of *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men*, before going on to consider the 'going nowhere/being everywhere' story of *The Night Season*. I do, however, utilise a theoretical approach to the three texts which allows me to make direct comparisons among them. My chief interest in this chapter is how place and space are inscribed in different modalities of emplacement. De Certeau's connection of notions of writing and reading with those of place and space helps me highlight the markedly different ways these novels conceive of Tasmania and Newfoundland respectively. I argue that the leaving narratives of Koch and Altman work to inscribe Tasmania as a distinct, bounded place, by utilising a 'capitalist and conquering' form of writing which makes the Australian state a literal 'island of the page'. Bowdring's novel, by contrast, is concerned with how a Newfoundland too firmly 'placed' might be turned back into space through the reading practices of those who inhabit it.

Divergences in the overt narrative concerns and implied politics of *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* demonstrate that the modality of leaving is highly flexible. *The Comfort of Men* presents the story of Steven, a gay man who is politically awakened in the turbulent 1960s and '70s. Despite being active in left-wing student politics, and deeply involved in

protests against the war in Vietnam, it takes many years for Steven to come out. The progress of his, and his friends', attempts to recognise connections between the personal and the political are a central focus of the novel. By contrast, Koch's text concentrates upon a heterosexual protagonist, Richard Miller, whose development is presented as predominantly self- rather than socially-determined. We follow Richard as he moves from a childhood spent absorbed in the 'Otherworld' of the imagination, to a career as a music producer in which he can continue to indulge his obsession with folktales and the supernatural. The central drama of the text revolves around his awakening to 'reality'.

The receptions of the two novels have reflected their divergent perspectives. Although Dennis Altman 'wanted to have my cake and eat it, to be able to write simultaneously for both a specialised [gay] and a general audience [the wider community]' (*Meridian* 63), he notes that his novel is typically displayed in bookshops under the heading 'Gay Fiction'. *The Doubleman* has, however, found a much wider readership, and received important critical accolades.¹ Susan McKernan suggests that the Australian literary establishment has long-favoured Koch's work because of his interest 'in the spiritual and [his] conservative literary and social views' ('Two-Faced' 433).

¹ The novel won the Miles Franklin Award in 1986.

Despite differences in their concerns and receptions, an intriguing and overt inter-textual connection exists between *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men*. Altman's narrator mentions listening to the music of the Rymers, the Tasmanian-inspired, apocryphal band whose progress *The Doubleman* follows. In the 'Acknowledgements' to *The Comfort of Men* Altman elevates this fleeting reference to something beyond an obscure coincidence. He states: 'For more information on the Rymers on p. 106, see Christopher Koch's novel *The Doubleman*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1985'. Providing this formal acknowledgment of *The Doubleman*, and referencing it as a source of 'information' solidifies a connection between the worlds of the two novels. It also suggests that the Rymers are actual, rather than fictional musicians, and that *The Comfort of Men* is an 'authentic' narrative. Indeed one critic, despite Altman's use of the term 'novel' to describe *The Doubleman*, mistakes the reference as evidence of 'the specificity' (Murrie 177) of the historical world presented in *The Comfort of Men*. I will address this nexus between fiction and non-fiction in greater detail in Chapter 2.

The briefly referenced inter-textual connection between the work of Koch and Altman hints at deeper similarities between their novels. Despite contrasting political orientations, and their quite different audiences, *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* both construct Tasmania as the terrain of childhood and adolescence, a limited world to be left behind in early adulthood for the more expansive possibilities of the metropolis. It is only in the city of Sydney that the characters can complete their journeys

towards self-realisation – the achievement of which is most obviously attested to in their ability to present the reflective and retrospective, ‘autobiographical’ stories that constitute the novels’ narratives. I want to turn now to the work of Michel de Certeau in order to tease out more precisely how these movements are textually enacted and what their implications are.

Making Way for Writing

According to de Certeau, places distribute their elements in ‘relationships of coexistence’ (*Practice* 117); they create ‘an instantaneous configuration of positions’, and thus ‘an indication of stability’ (117). Spaces, however, consist of ‘intersections of mobile elements. [They are] in a sense activated by the ensemble of movements deployed within [them]’ (117). Stories, for de Certeau, ‘carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places’ (118).

The main ‘labor’ in *The Comfort of Men* and *The Doubleman* is this latter project – that of transforming spaces into places.² The centrality of this aim is made explicit in their structures; both are organized around defined, literal locations. *The Doubleman* is divided into two books, the first set in Tasmania, the second in Sydney. *The Comfort of Men*, has four parts, each

² Although, as I argued in Chapter 2 place and space are always both present in a text, whatever its aim.

identified by a location ('Hobart', 'Melbourne', 'Sydney', 'Hobart'). Even though the latter novel presents three intersecting temporal strands, meaning that the narrative may shift between different temporo-spatial locations within these respective sections, its Prologue and Epilogue (which could also be titled 'Hobart' and 'Sydney', respectively) reinforce an overarching organisation which relies on a movement between places (that is, from Hobart to Sydney).³

This trajectory of space to place is appropriate to both texts' engagement with the form of the male *bildungsroman*.⁴ The genre they deploy relies on a notion of a subject's progress from instability to stability, and a concomitant translation of space to place corresponds with this goal. Both Richard and Steven write themselves from past to present by framing their earlier experiences to generate 'relationships of coexistence'. Steven does this explicitly when he suggests that we are reading the narrative 'I decided to write down' (CM 244); Richard authors his work implicitly through his first-person narration. In their retrospective narratives, then, earlier movements through space are interpreted and contextualised.

Not all the elements the texts present are 'placed'. We know nothing, for instance, of the physical location from which Richard narrates his tale.

³ The temporal strands presented in *The Comfort of Men* include the time present of Steven's narration; the time in which he tells his dying lover, James, the stories of his adolescence and early adulthood; and the more distant past of the time of these recollected stories.

⁴ They share this engagement with the male *bildungsroman* at a formal level, despite the fact that *The Comfort of Men* questions masculinity in its overt narrative through focusing on gay subjectivities.

Unlike Francis Cullen, the central figure in Koch's 1958 novel *The Boys in the Island*, who leaves but then returns to the island, Richard does not move back to the landscape in which he spent his early adulthood. *The Doubleman* opens with his telling us about his feelings: 'When I go back to my native town' (D 11) – implying that his visits to Tasmania are only ever temporary. Altman's Steven does locate himself in the present – the novel closes with him sitting outside a café in Oxford Street in Sydney. But the text's last lines see him leave the reader behind to move into the as yet unwritten future. As he signals for the bill, he tells us 'It is time to leave behind the comforts of the past and return to the world of today' (CM 247). These open points in the novels share one important feature: neither disrupts the stability with which Tasmania has been constructed as place. It is on this irrevocable construction that Richard's and Steven's abilities to write their stories (and, in doing so, create themselves) depends.⁵

The Doubleman and *The Comfort of Men* make place from space by utilising a model of writing de Certeau describes in his essay 'The Scriptural Economy' as 'capitalist and conquering' (*Practice* 136).⁶ De Certeau defines this form of inscription as 'the concrete activity that consists in constructing, on its own, blank space (*un espace propre*) – the page – a text that has power

⁵ The narrators' persistence in 'placing' Tasmania in both the contemporary and the recollected strands of their narratives confirm that these texts do not just deploy the modality of leaving in order to figure an historical moment which is now in the past.

⁶ De Certeau's definition extends beyond the scriptural processes of literary texts. He also describes the organisational and meaning-making practices of various scientific, political and administrative structures as 'writing'.

over the exteriority from which it has first been isolated' (134).⁷ As his phrase 'capitalist and conquering' implies, there is a colonising impetus to this endeavour. Indeed, as this chapter proceeds, I find it useful to refer to the work of several theorists – including Mary Louise Pratt and David Spurr – who also analyse the operations implicit in colonising discourses, in order to expand upon de Certeau's ideas. I argue that *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* paradoxically colonise Tasmania in order to chart the development of their central post-colonial 'Australian' subjects.

De Certeau suggests that three elements underpin 'capitalist and conquering' writing. The first involves delineating a blank page: 'a place where the ambiguities of the world have been exorcised. It assumes the withdrawal and the distance of a subject in relation to an area of activities' (134). This place initiates:

the mastery (and isolation) of a subject confronted by an *object*. In front of his blank page every child is already put in the position of the industrialist, the urban planner, or the Cartesian philosopher – the position of having to manage a space that is his own and distinct from all others and in which he can exercise his own will. (134)

⁷ He contrasts this model with that of others. The work of Kafka and other modernists, for instance, is premised on there being 'no entry or exit for writing, but only the endless play of its fabrications' (150).

De Certeau refers to this distinct place as 'the island of the page' (135). The most crucial point to note here is that the process of delineating an 'object' upon which to write is also that by which the subject itself is created. As de Certeau suggests, the first element of writing isolates the subject, not just the object. The creation of subject and place are thus mutually interdependent.⁸

The second element is the construction of a text: 'Linguistic fragments or materials are treated (factory-processed, one might say) in this space according to methods that can be made explicit and in such a way as to produce an order' (134). In other words 'on the blank page, an itinerant, progressive, and regulated practice [. . .] composes the artefact of another "world" that is not received but rather made' (135). Finally, the third element of writing is its impact upon the world outside of itself. De Certeau argues that 'the "meaning" of scriptural play, the production of a system, a space of formalization, refers to the reality from which it has been distinguished *in order to change it* [. . .]. It manipulates its exteriority' (135). Thus writing is 'not merely a game', it is a process by which the subject 'fabricat[es] objects' (135).

De Certeau uses the story of *Robinson Crusoe* to illustrate his argument. He traces how Crusoe's decision to write his diary is a way of creating a location in which he can 'master time and things, and [. . .] thus constitute for

⁸ We will see a similar relation between subject and place in the narratives of homecoming in Part 3.

himself, along with the blank page, an initial island in which he can produce what he wants' (136). Crucially, de Certeau suggests by this example that the three elements involved in writing do not necessarily occur sequentially; Crusoe's deployment of textual elements, for instance, both creates, at the same time as it retroactively assumes, the initial island of the page.⁹

Because *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* are retrospectively narrated *bildungsroman*, the mature subjects who present them have already delineated a 'blank page' upon which to process 'linguistic fragments or materials' (and therefore have also constructed themselves as coherent subjects). Yet the stories they tell recall the period before and during their completion of this operation. From the very openings of the texts the reader is presented with the objectified 'island of the page', but also given the story of the creation of this page. In each case the island has a geographic correlative: Tasmania.

The Comfort of Men commences with the statement: 'Tasmania celebrated its independence on a fine spring day in 1971' (CM 1), immediately establishing its separateness from elsewhere through an imagined political difference, before Steven goes on to compound it with additional historical and geographical distinctions. The device of imagining Tasmania as a

⁹ One is reminded here of Simon Ryan's point that the early explorers in Australia came pre-equipped with assumptions about what it was they would find, even though they had never visited before. These assumptions, in turn, determined what they *did* find.

separate (and as we soon learn, neo-conservative) nation seems anomalous within the predominantly realist narrative the text presents.

Unsurprisingly, reviewers have responded negatively to this feature of the novel. Jim Davidson describes it as a misguided 'prodigal son's revenge' ('The Sixties' 9), and Greg Murrie calls it 'a badly executed attempt to merge a Bildungsroman, remembrance-of-time past narrative with a more speculative fiction' (178).¹⁰

Imagining Tasmania as an independent state is also problematic, although perhaps more explicable, within the context of Altman's political project of furthering gay rights. *The Comfort of Men* was published during a period of bitter debate prior to the decriminalising of male homosexuality in Tasmania. However, Rodney Croome, the leader of the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group which was instrumental in having the law changed in the late 1990s, has condemned Altman for using Tasmania in *The Comfort of Men* as 'a blank slate onto which to project his own preoccupations' ('None for Tasmania' 44), and ignoring 'the radical new politics of place that has arisen in Tasmania in the past decade and found expression through the green, Aboriginal and gay movements' (44).¹¹ Yet

¹⁰ It also seems at odds with Altman's claims in *Defying Gravity* that he is 'not convinced by the myth of Tasmanian exceptionalism' (DG 20).

¹¹ For an insightful account of the campaign to change the law see Miranda Morris's *Pink Triangle: The Gay Law Reform Debate in Tasmania*.

the construction of Tasmania as a separate nation *is* consistent with the text insofar as it needs a distinct page upon which Steven can present the story of his development.

Tasmania is also distinguished as a bounded page early in the narrative in *The Doubleman*. Richard tells us:

The whole of dry, Time-flattened Australia lies north of latitude forty, its climate Mediterranean and then sub-tropical. But small, mountainous Tasmania, filled with lakes and rivers is south of latitude forty; and this makes it different. Politically, it is part of the Commonwealth of Australia; physically, it is not. (D 32)

In this paragraph the initial emphasis is on geographic and climatic, rather than political separation: latitude forty is used to draw a precise margin between one kind of terrain and another. But Tasmania is also separated from elsewhere, Richard believes, because it is 'unalterably strange' (D 33). The island offers Richard a doorway to an 'Otherworld', a realm of the imagination. Like Tasmania's imagined political independence in *The Comfort of Men* this marker of difference has also been seen as problematic by reviewers. Susan McKernan, for instance, believes that Koch's choice of a conventional, realist genre when his subject matter is otherworldly results in a representation of Tasmania which displays a 'tourist mentality' ('Two-Faced' 434). Nicholas Mansfield argues that *The Doubleman's* construction

of Tasmania as 'menacing and mysterious' (58) is an instance of the novel's problematic reliance on 'the scandal and mystery it is claiming to repudiate' (58).

From the outset, then, Richard and Steven sketch Tasmania as a discrete space. We need to move further into the texts, though, to understand how this space operates as the 'page' of their narratives, and as the object which defines them as subjects. The scenes around Richard's and Steven's movements as young adults from Tasmania to the mainland are most revealing here, as they present a model of the means by which subject and space are separated in the texts as a whole. Both texts present these moves as involving a series of quite specific stages – the respective scenes follow an identical progression from phenomenological 'ground level' encounters with the space to conceptualised, aerial presentations of it, and both end by emphasising Tasmania's island status, and the subject's separation from it. These moves evoke a transition between what de Certeau calls (as I noted in Chapter 2) 'anthropological' and 'geographical' views of space. As de Certeau puts it:

These fixations [conceptualised, mapped representations] constitute procedures for forgetting. The trace left behind is substituted for the practice. It exhibits the (voracious) property that the geographical system has of being able to transform action into legibility, but in doing so it causes a way of being in the world to be forgotten. (*Practice* 97)

Ground Level - Withdrawing the Subject

Disgusted with the new ultra-conservative regime in Tasmania, and having made several preliminary excursions to the mainland and overseas, Steven decides to leave for good. Just prior to his final departure from Hobart, he takes a late-night walk. During this walk Steven is both separated from and bound to the space he traverses. He has yet to make it the page of his writing, although he has begun the process that will allow him to do so. Later in his life (although in a scene presented earlier in the novel, because of its inter-leaved temporalities), when he returns for a brief sojourn to the town with his dying lover, Steven's responses show that he has gained mastery over this same space. Buildings which once 'loomed' seem diminished now that he lives 'in the larger world' (CM 12).¹²

During the walk he takes just prior to moving to Sydney, Steven's perspective is partially alienated. He has already separated himself from the social world of the place he is about to leave: he walks alone on a cold, dark, night, encountering no-one and noting no sites of communal, civic importance. Ironically, his conscious estrangement from place is interrupted by the workings of his unconscious connections with it. Indeed

¹² This move to see Tasmania on a smaller scale recalls the miniaturisation processes Elizabeth McMahon identifies in her paper 'Tasmanian Lilliputianism'.

the very motivation for his walk is presented as an unconscious desire to 'imprint [Hobart's] cartography on my brain' (CM 228). Steven describes childhood memories as hitting him 'at unprotected moments' (CM 229) emphasising their unbidden nature. The detailed and evocative images which constitute these memories – 'the green brine of the old swimming baths' (CM 229) in which he once had lessons, 'the rough grey granite of the old barracks' (CM 229) where he endured visits to his dentist – hint at the possibility for a quite different relationship with the terrain. But such images must be suppressed because their richness and sensuous immediacy undo the distance between subject and terrain.

In *The Doubleman*, after Deidre Dillon, Richard's lover in Sydney, breaks off their correspondence, Richard decides to depart Tasmania. Like Steven, he takes a solitary walk just prior to leaving home, traversing a Hobartian landscape similarly imprinted with personal memories. But his personal connections with the place are more openly acknowledged, and he describes the streets he walks as 'stitched into my spirit' (D 136). Richard distances himself through sentimentalising, rather than outrightly suppressing his connection with his home terrain. As in *The Comfort of Men*, no-one is presented as emerging into the street in a way which might challenge the finality of his views on the place he presents.

Though the ground-level traversals in both *The Comfort of Men* and *The Doubleman* occur within an urban context, they do not take place within a

metropole. Steven and Richard, unlike Benjamin's Parisian flaneur, wander within the 'tedium' (D 136) of suburbs. Richard, for instance, walks beside 'rows of neat bungalows' (D 136), 'houses which were of no style, and shrivelled the heart' (D 137). The streets they walk are also contextualised by a seemingly hostile natural world. Leigh Woolley notes in his article 'Naturally Urban' that nature and culture are juxtaposed in almost all Hobart vistas. Rather than seeing this as a positive attribute of the city, as Woolley does, *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* see nature's impingement as decidedly disturbing. In the former, the hills surrounding the town are described as shot through with 'fields of unknown force' (D 138), and in *The Comfort of Men* Mount Wellington looms like a 'threatening step-mother' (CM 229). Whilst Benjamin's flaneur traverses a city from which nature has been so effectively banished that even 'the moon and the stars are no longer worth mentioning' (*Charles Baudelaire* 50), Richard and Steven walk through a town in which nature is ever-present. Thus in departing it, they are seeking to separate themselves from the natural world, as well as the social world of the place in which they have grown up.

The sense that the subjects must surmount nature is compounded by the implication that geography has left them stranded in it. The cartographic imaginaries of both novels situate Hobart at the end of the earth. During his late-night walk, Steven describes the city as directly linked with Antarctica via 'the stormy waters of the south that stretched in long,

unbroken, chilly waves' (CM 229). He also quotes an Israeli woman, Alena, with whom he had come in contact during his university days, as describing Tasmania as 'the end of the world' (CM 229). Alena compares Tasmania with the 'Jewish Autonomous Republic of Birobidzhan, between the Amur River and the Trans-Siberian Railway, on the Sino-Russian border (CM 229), evoking connotations of political and geographical exile, and proximity to the opposite pole. She concludes, though, that Tasmania is even more peripheral than Birobidzhan, describing it as 'truly' (CM 229) the end of the world.

Richard also connects Tasmania with the inhospitable southern reaches of the planet as he makes his final reconnaissance of the place. The west of the island with 'long waves that rolled from Cape Horn booming on its beaches' (D 138) does not invite him. Earlier in the novel, he characterises Tasmania as 'a shield above Antarctica [. . .]. South of Hobart, south of Port Davey's last little lights of settlement, there was nothing: there was the ice' (D 33). From here it seems 'the centre of the world was twelve thousand miles away' (D 33).

The ground-level traversals in *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* establish the ways in which Tasmanian space encroaches upon their protagonists. In the following stage of the scenes of leaving, Richard and Steven are shown moving above and beyond these constraints. Both go on to assume positions of literal and metaphorical mastery over the terrains

they have inhabited, and employ concepts (most notably that of island-ness) which figuratively enforce their dominance. John O'Carroll suggests that the concept of the island, whilst still retaining some shards of earlier, Platonic, notions of island-ness has, since the Enlightenment, stood 'in renewed opposition to mainlands and to cities as a negatively definitional ontology [. . .] tiny, away from it all, peripheral' (276). What has been lost, he suggests, is 'the peculiarly civic value of the island' (273). Even before Richard and Steven move beyond ground level to see the island 'whole' from above, Tasmania's peripheral location has been well and truly established.

Gaining Altitude

Altman's Steven leaves Tasmania soon after it 'secedes' from Australia, and only a few days after his ground-level farewell to Hobart. His description of the crowded plane which transports him beyond the island creates the sense that he is part of a mass exodus. But although this meditation on place, unlike his solitary walk, occurs within the context of a plane full of other people, Steven is still alone. He tells the reader: 'as we taxied to the end of the runway the malachite green of the giant pines sheltering us from the occasional cruising bather I felt a palpable sense of relief' (CM 233). There is a double movement implicit in this sentence. Steven here displays his particular knowledge of the hidden and persistently subversive use of

Hobart's spaces – that the bathers at Seven Mile Beach also 'cruise', a knowledge negating his use of 'we' and 'us' which identify him with his fellow passengers who do not share this knowledge. Yet the syntax of the sentence means that his 'sense of relief' is associated with leaving the homosocial spaces and people of Hobart behind too. Steven is thus simultaneously distanced from 'we', but also from the bather.

As the plane takes off Steven's disassociation from others is enforced by his final aerial and panoptic perspective on Tasmania. Looking down from his seat in the plane, he possesses the power to outline spatial regimes in the 'geographical' way de Certeau defines. To recast this slightly in Simon Ryan's terminology, he deploys a 'cartographic eye'. Despite the fact that he is leaving not staying, and that his viewpoint is facilitated by twentieth-century modes of transport, Steven's positioning here is similar to those Mary Louise Pratt and David Spurr (in their respective studies of discourses of colonisation) identify as pertaining to modes of imperial surveillance. As David Spurr notes, visual observation 'marks an exclusion as well as a privilege: the privilege of inspecting, of examining, of looking at, by its nature excludes the [viewer] from the human reality constituted as the object of observation' (13). Pratt confirms that contemporary observers, and not only historical ones, deploy the methods of imperial surveillance. Early in her book she also notes that such strategies are to be found in use all over the world: 'within Europe', for instance, 'as well as in southern Africa or Argentina' (10).

In *The Doubleman*, Richard's last encounter with Tasmanian space engages with the same modes as Steven's does. From ground level Richard also ascends to a point at which he can survey the island more comprehensively. Having walked through the streets of New Town he climbs Quarry Hill. From here, 'a quarter of the quiet island lay at my feet [. . .] My spirits expanded; I threw my stick into the grass' (*D* 137). Richard is completely alone in this place and he feels 'a sense of liberation, as though I were flying' (*D* 137). From his eyrie he takes in the scene beneath him.

Mary Louise Pratt argues that the rhetorical convention of surveillance used in colonial writings involves a three-part operation: the aestheticization of the landscape, the investing of it with a density of meaning, and a reference to the speaker's mastery of the terrain he views (204). As his plane flies over Tasmania, Steven clearly deploys these strategies: he describes the landscape in aestheticized terms as a 'patchwork of haybrown, bleached greens, eucalypt blues' (*CM* 234); he invests Tasmania with a density of meaning by inferring the place's promise as a source of conceptual (rather than material) riches; and he concludes the passage with the emphasis upon himself: 'I was not to go back until James and I revisited it almost twenty years later' (*CM* 234).

Richard's narrative follows a similar pattern. The landscape is first aestheticized, most dramatically in the description of the sunset's effect on

the Organ Pipes of Mount Wellington. Whilst the hill upon which Richard stands is not the highest point in the vicinity (Mount Wellington is behind him), aestheticizing the mountain serves to subordinate it to him:

The Organ Pipes, those fluted volcanic rocks on its pinnacle, were touched with pink; and the advancing sunset had deepened its colour to an astounding composite of blue and violet, deep as fathoms of water – so close, I could almost dive in. Nothing stood between me and those fathoms: up here on my barrow, I'd become the centre of some vast process of transfiguration. (D 139)

Crucially, once again, the focus ends on the speaking subject, with the beauty of the sunset being perceived as solely for his benefit. The conceptual riches of the land are most clearly evident in the density of its aestheticized beauty, beauty which invites Richard to 'dive in'.

A further element of the rhetoric of imperial surveillance is evident here, pertaining to what Spurr calls the rhetoric of appropriation. Spurr suggests that 'colonial discourse thus transfers the locus of desire onto the colonised object itself' (28). However, rather than enabling Richard to appropriate the land physically, this trope in *The Doubleman* allows him to colonise it conceptually as he leaves. By 'saying goodbye' to him the land validates his decision to go. This trope operates slightly differently in *The Comfort of Men*, and is more obvious in Steven's ground-level encounter with Hobart

rather than at the moment of his flying over the island. Instead of communing with him sympathetically, the land's very hostility, the mountain's appearance as a 'threatening stepmother' (CM 229) justifies Steven's decision to leave, and to colonise conceptually the space which has rejected him.

Islanding

After Steven and Richard separate themselves from the terrain of their formative years by, literally, rising above it, their scenes of leaving end with remarks upon Tasmania's island status. These remarks serve to confirm it as the page of their writing. Steven, flying over the land, describes looking into the 'centre of the island' (CM 234), and then along the thin edge of the north coast. Richard, similarly, concludes his description of his last encounter with Tasmanian space by claiming that 'the island was saying goodbye to me' (D 139). Importantly, neither character views the island in its entirety, Steven sees a portion of the midlands, and then the north coast, Richard only 'a quarter of the quiet island' (D 137), but they extrapolate from what they do see in order to imagine a complete, bounded world.

The shared emphasis upon Tasmania's island-status at the conclusion of the protagonists' scenes of leaving is in keeping with the colonising bent of both texts. There is a long and problematic history of imperialistic

deployments of the island topos, and de Certeau's naming of the page utilised by 'capitalist and conquering' writing as an 'island' is well-founded. Diana Loxley, in her book *Problematic Shores*, suggests that since the publication of *Robinson Crusoe*, islands have repeatedly been constructed as offering 'the possibility for absolute power and total domination' (3). She claims that the period of British high imperialism coincided with particularly intensive use of tropes of island-ness (3). Gregory Woods has noted similar correspondences, and in his article 'Fantasy Islands' focuses especially closely on the ways in which imperial centres have used islands as locations for interrogating metropolitan notions of selfhood.¹³

The protagonists of Koch's and Altman's novels conform closely to Woods's observation that islands can provide a perfect location for tracing the vicissitudes of coming into Western subjectivity – particularly masculine selfhood.¹⁴ However, unlike *Robinson Crusoe* and other figures Woods focuses on (and a host of other male characters in Tasmanian fiction which I examine in this thesis – from the protagonist of *The Savage Crows* through to 'M' in Julia Leigh's *The Hunter*), Richard and Steven do not travel *to* the island to undergo the process of self-formation. Rather, they commence their journeys towards maturity from within it. This adds an

¹³ Woods orients his analysis around 'tropical "desert islands"' (126), but he notes that 'Island fiction may be taken to represent any situation of human isolation' (128) – including, presumably, other kinds of islands. Certainly the gist of his argument is relevant to representations of Tasmania.

¹⁴ Whilst Altman's text avowedly endorses a homosexual masculinity, unlike the texts Woods focuses upon, the novel still utilises the island space as the primary locus in which Steven's sexuality is determined. His decision to leave coincides with his very public coming out on the local radio show that he presents.

additional dimension to the development of their characters. Even though *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* present Tasmania as a restrictive place which the protagonists must leave to realise their full potential, Richard's and Steven's Tasmanian childhoods are depicted as contributing to the evolution of their unique sensibilities (especially in *The Doubleman*). In *The Comfort of Men* Steven's lover James's fascination with Steven's Tasmanian background hints at this, and it is confirmed in *The Doubleman* by the success of Richard Miller and his Rymers' Tasmanian-inspired productions. We will see this pattern replicated in Koch's and Altman's autobiographical writing.

Despite being written well after the high point of British imperialism, Koch's and Altman's texts adhere to a conservative notion of the island as a single entity, an appropriate canvas for the self. Their figurations have similar effects to those inherent in another recent incarnation of the island topos; that presented in David Malouf's 1998 Boyer lecture, 'The Island'. Speaking of Australia as a whole, Malouf claimed:

When Europeans first came to these shores one of the things they brought with them, as a kind of gift to the land itself, was something that could never have existed before; a vision of the continent in its true form as an island that was not just a way of seeing it, and seeing it whole, but of seeing how it fitted into the rest of the world. (1)

Even leaving aside the problem created by the fact that Tasmania, a place with a landmass equivalent to that of Eire, is a blank space on Malouf's cognitive map, there is a problematic slippage in Malouf's argument – from cultural constructedness (the island as a European imaginative invention) to ontological fact (the 'true form' of the country). This slippage highlights the way the island imaginary often brings with it a desire for stasis and incontrovertible closure, for a pure truth. Whilst it can provide an undeniably useful and evocative way of thinking about place (or, analogically, self) the elisions it produces, and its way of evoking a misplaced sense of certainty, are tenacious difficulties.¹⁵ The use of the island trope in *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* serves to confine Tasmania to the past, and to distance it from elsewhere.

Like homecoming, as we shall see in Part 3, 'leaving' is not always coterminous with physical departure. Even after they arrive in Sydney,

¹⁵ It is important to note that the problematic conventions of island-ness *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* engage with are by no means the only ones now culturally available. I made reference to Epeli Hau'ofa's re-conceptualisation of the Pacific islands in my Prelude, but there are also precedents for envisaging island-space differently in a Tasmanian context. J.A. Taylor asserts that Tasmania's Aborigines only formed the idea of Tasmania as an island 'after contact with the European settlers' (7). He notes that within Aboriginal epistemologies 'Islands, peninsulas and capes were often thought of more as hills, and not so much as areas of dry land surrounded in whole or in part by water' (7). Furthermore, 'A very large number of words for these features have an element meaning *water*, and often with the sense of *sea/expanse of water*' (33). Most significantly, 'No distinction seems to have been drawn between islands and peninsulas, and at times no distinction between those features and capes' (33). Within such concepts of space 'islands' are a dissolvable page. If hills are made of water, and promontories as well as distinct landforms can be islands, boundaries are not so rigidly defined. Alternative conceptions of Tasmania's 'island' space are not confined to indigenous discourse. The frame of the archipelago is another variant construction – one which has been enthusiastically adopted by a recent Tasmanian premier. Jim Bacon made particularly effective use of this image at the handing-back of Wybalenna on Flinders Island to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, in 1999 (1). As Gilles Deleuze suggests in his *Essays Critical and Clinical*, an archipelago is like a spine, rather than a skull, all the pieces reverberate with connection whilst remaining separate and distinct.

Richard and Steven still take some time to move completely beyond their Tasmanian pasts. It is not until the dissolution of the Rymers – the Rymers with their haunting music of the Tasmanian ‘Otherworld’ – that Richard cuts his ties with the island – and so his connection, too, with his previous self. For Steven, it is meeting his lover James that finally allows him to move on.

Although they do not end up constituting the absolute break at an overt narrative level, I have paid particularly close attention to the scenes in which the protagonists depart Tasmania in *The Comfort of Men* and *The Doubleman* because within them, in microcosm, we see a model of the interconnected processes by which an island of the page, and the subject who identifies it, are isolated. In these scenes we observe, in reduced scale, the colonising moves underpinning the manipulation of ‘textual elements’ which occurs in the novels as a whole.

Subduing the Other-world

I noted above that one of the elements de Certeau identifies as crucial to ‘capitalist and conquering’ writing, is its attempt to manipulate an exteriority. This writing, he claims, is ‘not merely a game’ (135). Why, then, do *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* deploy the strategies of colonial discourse that they do? What is it that they seek to conquer?

The terrain both these texts want to subdue is the past – and Tasmania becomes the symbolic repository for all that has been left behind. As *bildungsroman* both texts must present figures who progress over the course of the narrative. Tasmania acts as the 'other' by which development can be charted. Within the bounds of the island Steven can lock away all that he moves beyond – Tasmania is the terrain of conservatism and homophobia. Richard, similarly, comes to repudiate, and freeze in his past, the 'evil' that is the (Tasmanian) Other-world.

The strategies by which Tasmania is deployed in these novels are flexible enough to encompass the novels' divergent politics. Interestingly, there is one aspect of the past that both wish to dispense with by moving their characters to mainland Australia. Tasmania is depicted in both texts as a space still subject to the legacy of British colonialism, whether in its conservative politics (the independent Tasmania in *The Comfort of Men* flies the Union Jack alongside the 'nation's' new flag) or in the imaginative frame of reference it offers for creating 'the passing illusion that Hobart is an English town, rather than an outpost in the farthest reaches of the Antipodes' (CM 40). As Miller puts it, 'Our seasons were the seasons of English storybooks, and of the films we saw on Saturday nights brought from the northern hemisphere. Our great-grandfathers had put together a lost, unknown home in landscapes that made it perfectly natural' (D 32). By leaving Tasmania for the Australian mainland, then, Richard and Steven

also leave the imperial past behind. Both texts endorse the creation of an Australian, metropolitan subject over both a former colonial one and a potential regional one.

I want to turn now to Paul Bowdring's novel *The Night Season*. Like Richard and Steven, Will Wiseman, its Newfoundland-based protagonist, is introduced to us as dissatisfied with his island life. Yet moving away from Newfoundland is not canvassed as a possible solution to Will's woes. In the world of *The Night Season* metropolitan centres no longer hold the promise they do in *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men*. In this novel, departures must take forms other than physical relocation. Will Wiseman must endeavour to turn place back into space, rather than vice versa.

Escaping without Leaving

In the concluding pages of *The Night Season* Will Wiseman walks back from St. John's airport towards the city, along a road 'like the scar of an old wound' (NS 243). Will is not returning home from a trip away from Newfoundland, nor has he missed a flight he intended to leave by. The futility of his trip to a place usually associated with more decisive arrivals and departures is accentuated by the irony of its timing. Although he walks on the Feast of the Epiphany, Will experiences no revelations.

I have argued that the main project of *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* is to make place from space in order to establish a ground for the story of a subject's progress. The chief aim of *The Night Season*, however, is the reverse of this. Paul Bowdring's novel presents the kind of narrative de Certeau describes as creating space from place. Rather than exercising strategic moves, such as Richard's and Steven's high altitude delineations of bounded areas which encapsulate time in space, and are subject to their will, the ironically named Will Wiseman remains a wanderer at ground-level. Recently separated from his wife, Kate, and daughter, Anna, Will drifts around St. John's for most of the narrative. Concomitantly, *The Night Season* is a kind of anti-*bildungsroman*.¹⁶ By not delineating an island of the page Will is unable to write himself from one temporo-spatially defined stage of his life to another. Whilst this inability is partly presented as relating to his age (Will is in his early 40s) and even, in the eyes of his ex-wife, to a kind of stubborn perversity, Will's lack of movement is given a context which makes it appear as more than just the result of an individual's mid-life crisis. The novel's structure also reflects the indeterminacy of his journey. Although divided – like *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* – the sections of the book are short and self-contained, creating an episodic effect compounded by what Hadley Dyer

¹⁶ In this form's traditional sense which, as I have noted above in my referencing of Hardin's definition, typically involves a movement in space as well as time.

calls 'the near absence of a discernible plot' (69). Furthermore, each chapter is prefaced by epigraphs which work, as Stan Dragland suggests, to tease the reader 'into active relationship with narrator and novelist' (84). The epigraphs and fragmentary structure encourage the reader to travel, like Will, into the interstices of established texts – even destabilising the world the novel itself creates.

Wiseman's inability to fix space into place makes sense within the specific cultural context he inhabits. In the late 1980s, as they are imagined in the text, places no longer occupy positions within hierarchies. Will does make one trip away during the course of the narrative, to Vancouver, and we are also told of earlier travels to Europe, as well as a period spent in Toronto. But none of these journeys is presented as a foray to a centre away from a periphery. Unlike Hugh, the protagonist of Bowdring's earlier work *The Roncesvalles Pass* (1989), who recalls how the possibility of 'escape' from Newfoundland had once offered him a sense of 'consoling certainty' (24), Will does not conceive of Vancouver as different in any sense other than climatically from Newfoundland. Furthermore, St. John's is realised in such detail that it appears a world sufficient in itself. As Stan Dragland puts it, *The Night Season* is 'very much a St. John's book' (73). Like the Hobart of *The Comfort of Men* and *The Doubleman*, the city of St. John's is by no means large, and nature is ever-present, but these factors are not constituted as motivations for flight.

Will's assumption that Newfoundland is not a place he needs to leave is reflected in the way the text maps his location. Whilst still conceived as a distinct body of land, 'a cold, hard rock' (NS 129), Newfoundland is not depicted as remote from elsewhere, nor is its island status emphasised in the same way as Tasmania's is in *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men*. A physical incarnation of its implicit cartography is presented when Will visits Cape Spear near the end of the novel. At the Cape, he views a 'plastic-covered Azimuthal Equidistant Projection map of a Newfoundland-centred world *le monde vu de Terre-Neuve*' (NS 238) in which distances are charted only from Newfoundland, and the island appears as the defining point of orientation for the rest of the world. Will observes this map in the company of the morbidly depressed Kerry, whom he had met in a pub the night before. Seeing it prompts Kerry to tell him of another map, one her former lover had made, oriented around the Ship Inn in St. John's where Kerry had spent 'nearly every Friday night of her adult life' (NS 239). This scene illustrates that those who inhabit Newfoundland conceive of it as a centre, rather than 'the end of the world', in both their public and private cartographies. It also shows that island-ness is not a precondition for mapping of its location – Kerry knows where she is, from the Ship Inn outwards.

Whilst envisaging Newfoundland as a centre rather than fringe might help valorise the meaningfulness of lives lived there and make people less inclined to leave, Newfoundland's integration with elsewhere causes some

tenacious difficulties. Unlike *The Comfort of Men* and *The Doubleman* which conceive of Tasmania as beyond the pale of the Australian nation, Newfoundland is well and truly part of Canada. As well as the map, Will also views the officious Parks Canada notices at Cape Spear:

Every hundred feet or so there was a Parks Canada DO NOT GO BEYOND THIS POINT sign on the edge of the cliff, reminding us of the federal presence here, even in this most isolated spot, its purpose not just heritage preservation and conservation, but the actual saving of lives. Care Canada, determined to keep us from drowning ourselves, calling us back from the precipice. (NS 239)

Because it is winter and they are the only people on the Cape, Will and Kerry are able to ignore the notices without reprimand. As they descend the cliff, though, they encounter yet another sign, this one reading 'DANGEROUS SURF' (NS 240). Will comments ironically 'Surf? You'd think this was Waikiki' (NS 240). His statement highlights the lack of relevance of the sign, and implies that the Newfoundland coast is here being written into a spatial regime which properly belongs somewhere else. Though Will and Kerry can largely ignore the signs of nation represented at Cape Spear, those of global capital prove more difficult to evade.

The methods by which capitalism converts space into place are presented as highly suspect in *The Night Season*, and its effects as perniciously

widespread. In the opening chapter of the novel, Will visits his mother on a bleak Christmas Day. He finds her at Vinland Villa:

a seniors' complex of dreary brick blocks whose aging exteriors matched the façade of their residents. In the fading afternoon light a rusting replica of a Viking longboat was listing to starboard in the common courtyard. It sat upon a crumbling concrete pedestal floodlit by high intensity lamps. (NS 4)

At Vinland Villa, Newfoundland's Viking history is parodied and left to rot in the context of a now decrepit property development. Worse still, in Will's eyes, is the gentrification of the past, the signs of which he sees in central St. John's:

In the previous decade most of the downtown had been declared a Heritage Conservation Area. Developers had bought houses for ridiculous sums, restored them with government money, and sold them for twice the price. Property values had doubled; taxes had tripled; poor people had moved out and rich people had moved in. The Heritage Conservation Area had become a yuppie garrison. (NS 57)

In both examples the specificity of place is a commodity to be exploited. In the name of 'Heritage', the preservation of which is endorsed by the government, places and histories lose their original contexts.

The widespread commodification of the 'real' is presented in the novel as having fully extended into the supposedly private realm of the middle-class home – and it is this phenomenon that Will tries to escape. The house which Kate and Will live in during their marriage is overflowing with the kinds of possessions John Urry describes as valued by the 'service class'.

Urry notes that post-Fordist consumption is typified by 'the emergence of new kinds of commodity which are more specialised and based on raw materials that imply non-mass forms of production ("natural" products for example)' (*Tourist Gaze* 14) – Kate and Will's kitchen is replete with healthfood, their bathroom with non-allergenic soap. When Will returns briefly to house-sit after he and Kate have separated, he sees their objects d'art, books and other supposedly unique items as devoid of meaning: 'All the paintings and prints on the walls seemed to have taken on different aspects' (NS 76).

The locations Marc Auge calls 'non-places', 'the ones we inhabit when we are driving down the motorway, wandering through the supermarket or sitting in an airport lounge' (96), offer Will little solace, either. On Boxing Day of the year following his visit to Vinland Villa he finds himself in the basement of the Topsail Plaza 'sitting in an indoor field of stylized

chanterelles – orange, brown, mushroom-shaped stools and tables – sipping coffee from a Styrofoam cup festooned with holly leaves and berries' (NS 197). The surroundings prompt him to remember his former annual practice of picking chanterelles at Logy Bay with his wife and daughter. They also remind him of an occasion on which he and Kate had brought Anna to see the fountain in the mall. The fountain had been closed on that day, but Anna had amused herself with 'the coins and debris' (NS 198) on its floor. A week later the skylight above where she had played collapsed under the weight of a thick crust of silver thaw 'sending an avalanche of glass, snow and ice down upon the fountain' (NS 199). Kate and Will surmise that this is due to an 'undiagnosed congenital defect' in the building, a kind of 'permanent tremor' (NS 199). The combination of these memories, the last with its suggestion that the seemingly innocuous environment of the mall is in fact dangerous, help valorise the memory of mushroom picking in the particularised 'natural' world, over the generalised 'artificial' world. Not that nature is completely safe either. Will also recalls that he and Kate give up looking for morels because they feared accidentally collecting poisonous ones.

Only one spatial form now appeals to Will. Pondering Noseworthy's store on Water Street, a place which he describes as a 'minimalist inconvenience' (NS 25) store, bereft of any obvious items for sale, Will considers that 'Mr Noseworthy was single-handedly and single-mindedly shepherding us all in the right direction, clear out, pare down, jettison, minimize' (NS 27). As

he stares into the store's shadows beyond the display window, Will has two 'not uncomplementary' (NS 28) ideas:

One: John Cabot and his maggoty crew may have started all this by bringing up fish in hand baskets, and the rapacious fishmongers with their deep sea draggers may have inadvertently put a temporary stop to it, but it was Mr. Noseworthy who was finally going to put the Flemish Cap on the whole sorry misbegotten enterprise, exorcise its greedy wasteful consumptive spirit, jettison the cod merchants and Cabot, and perhaps very soon set sail in a handbasket. Two: If Kate and I could only come here for a Pepsi and a hot dog (sans condiments, to be sure), or a black coffee and a cigarette, our own burdensome history might be lifted from our shoulders, and our too too sullied flesh that had once been one might resolve itself anew. (NS 28)

Nowhere Else to Go

In *The Night Season* the subject no longer appears capable of detaching himself sufficiently from the world he inhabits in order to create a blank page upon which to write; everywhere is problematically 'placed', from Cape Spear through to his own home. Even if he could delineate a page, Will no longer believes in the *point* of this exercise now that the whole notion of making place from space seems so discredited. 'Progress', upon

which the exercise of bounding a page in order to make a different world is founded, seems a profoundly misguided concept. How then, in this environment, is the subject to find a livable way of conceiving of himself and his surroundings? Will's not entirely satisfactory solution to this conundrum is to unmoor himself from notions of place and progress at both a personal and a public level. The ways in which he does this are not presented as pre-mediated. He stumbles from one departure to another.

Will leaves his family's home after 'an absurd and wearisome argument in the early hours of the morning about where to place the Christmas tree' (NS 138). Kate, a shadowy figure never introduced in the time-present of Will's narration and thus only known to the reader through the filter of Will's comments and descriptions of her possessions, is not presented as the villain in this situation. Like Will, she desires a different life, as we learn from Will's description of the contents of a suitcase she packs one night soon before he leaves: 'There were no clothes at all – not even stockings and underwear. Apparently she was going to leave with just the raiment on her back' (NS 136). The only reason Will, rather than Kate, eventually leaves is that 'Kate had yet to spend a single night without Anna' (NS 138). The painful magnitude, and indefinable tragedy of the marriage's failure is suggested when Kate's friend Sylvie asks Will: "'What happened with you and Kate?'" and before I had time to recover and offer some vague half-truth, Sylvie's body began to shake and she started to cry' (NS 194). Will and Kate do not reconcile in the novel, and his aborted attempt to meet her and

Anna at the airport at the conclusion of the novel confirms the futility of the prospect.

Will does not wish or need to depart St. John's after he leaves home, but he does find a way of 'escaping' it. Will's interactions with his surroundings become tactical, rather than strategic. As de Certeau says of tactics:

The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The "proper" is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized "on the wing." (*Practice* xix)

As he also comments, 'In our societies, as local stabilities break down, it is as if, no longer fixed by a circumscribed community, tactics wander out of orbit, making consumers into immigrants in a system too vast to be their own, too tightly woven for them to escape from it' (xx). Ian Buchanan points out that it is inappropriate to romanticise de Certeau's tacticians, because 'the person de Certeau has in mind is entirely without qualities and therefore indistinguishable from the crowd' (*Michel de Certeau* 113). But

even if one did wish to romanticise Will's behaviour one would not get far – tactics are not ultimately valorised by *The Night Season*.

Will finds a new way to inhabit St. John's, by moving fleetingly through places he once inhabited (as exemplified in his house-sitting of his former home), and staying only marginally longer in those which are the antithesis of those he frequented during his former life. After he leaves his wife and daughter, Will moves from grim boarding house to boarding house.

Whilst staying in the second, 'the ascetic in me [. . .] began to emerge, and I came to like the bare walls, the empty space, the absence of *things*' (NS 41).

He also spends hours wandering the city, occasionally using its public transport. He transiently uses places, like the mall mentioned above, but also the anonymous George Street bars, and Bird's Family Restaurant and Bakery where people come 'to eat, not to stare into empty cups for whole afternoons and write poems [. . .] or deadline copy on their laptops' (NS 64).

The persistent bird imagery of the novel, conjuring as it does connotations of flight and lightness, corresponds with Will's errant spatial practices.

In addition to his marriage, Will also gives up his job as an academic, the futility of lecturing having become unbearable to him. He confesses that his faith in literature was 'to borrow a phrase from the Reverend Arnold – no longer at the full' (NS 114). But whilst he gives up reading in a formal sense he perfects a different kind of reading, one in keeping with his now itinerant spatial practices and reminiscent of what de Certeau describes as

'poaching'. Kate accuses Will of '*writing* things in secret' (NS 136), but he could more appropriately be charged with reading things in public. He is a voracious hoarder of snatches of written text – even the placemats in Bird's Family Restaurant capture his attention.

In contrast to Richard and Steven, the protagonists of Koch's and Altman's texts, we do not get the sense that Will is writing the narrative he narrates. His discourse has the quality of speech, his tone is persistently conversational as, for example, when he describes his meeting with Kerry on New Year's Eve, 'In her knapsack were [. . .] God, what else [. . .] books' (NS 230). It is also littered with all kinds of high and low cultural references taken from his past and present reading. Describing what it felt like to be cornered by former colleagues in the university library he likens himself to 'poor Prufrock [. . .] *I am pinned and wriggling on the wall*' and then immediately segues into Browning's 'My Last Duchess' saying 'Yes, that's my last lecture there behind you on the shelf' (NS 45). Will also recasts language itself, not just inter-texts, through his continual, often humorous, creation of double meanings and unlikely constructions: Bing Crosby, he suggests, sings his Christmas songs 'unequivocally, or unequi-vocally' (NS 10); of himself he ruminates 'Perhaps I should have been a Father rather than a father' (NS 39).

Kathryn Welbourn quotes Paul Bowdring as saying that 'Reading is one of the few imaginative experiences left [. . .] almost like an act of resistance'

(33), and his character reflects this belief. Will's speaking and reading practices are resistant in that they turn writing back into space, by deconstructing its pretensions to solidity and fixity within the bounds of its 'pages'. In effect, this makes writing travel again. Indeed he uses a metaphor which illustrates this perfectly whilst browsing an article called 'Strategic Interference and the Evocation of Anger and Upset' (NS 49) in the public library. Will comments, 'I might even have ridden along with him [the author] a while longer, sharing some of my own intimate upset elicitors as we loped along; but after only ten minutes I felt as if I was developing the mental equivalent of saddle sores' (NS 49).

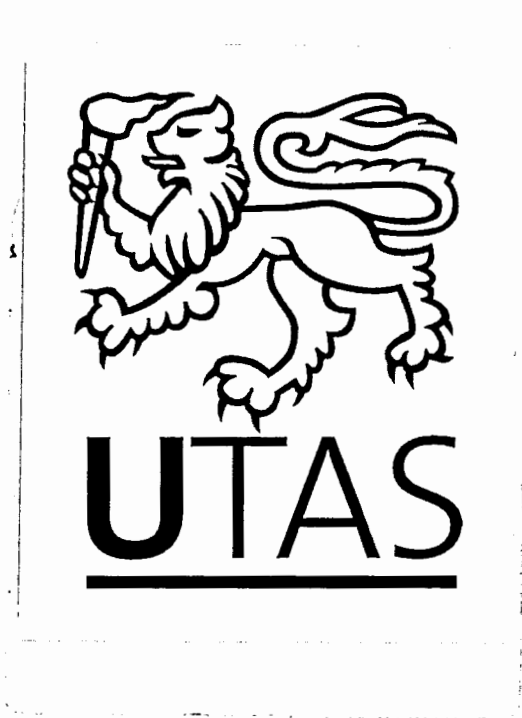
Will's 'resistance' comes at a high price. The trauma of leaving his marriage is, I have noted, only obliquely hinted at in the book. That he might soon have to confront fully the implications of the decisions he has made is hinted in the novel's final lines: 'The snow had held off for long enough. It would block our doors and shroud our windows, fill the streets and gardens to the roofs of the houses. As we slept it would sweep down upon us like the waters of the lake' (NS 248). The allusions in this passage to James Joyce's story 'The Dead', (indeed the epigraph to the opening chapter of *The Night Season* comes from 'The Dead', too) help explain the kind of trouble Will is in.

The conclusion to Joyce's story has the similar effect of the passage in *The Night Season* of moving the reader's perspective from the internal

consciousness of the central figure to a wider sense of 'all the living and the dead' (*Dubliners* 201). But there is a violence in the description of the coming blizzard in *The Night Season* which is lacking in Joyce's story. Whilst the snow makes Gabriel's soul 'swoon' (*Dubliners* 201) it also prompts him to realise that 'The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward' (*Dubliners* 200), suggesting (in the context of the story) he is about to embark on a journey towards Irish nationalism, too. Will, however, faces a situation in which *all* spatial movement will be prevented. Rather than prompting new journeys, (which, by now, would seem futile) the snow will provide the final, stifling *coup de grace*.

The Night Season presents a world in which places have become ubiquitous, globalised and fully commodified. The solitary exercises in place-making that Steven and Richard engage in seem positively quaint in light of the picture *The Night Season* offers – for there is no terrain an individual can still appropriate in order to define his subjectivity. From the Parks Canada signs which stake out Cape Spear, to the placemats in Bird's Family Restaurant, everything has been brought within an endlessly proliferating system of inscription. The positive consequence of this development is that the island is no longer a peripheral, isolated place – Newfoundland is not somewhere to be escaped in favour of more promising metropolitan 'centres', as Tasmania is in *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men*. There is little need to go anywhere else when everywhere else is already contained in the place where you live. However,

the negative implications are stark. The brief interventions by which the subject fleetingly turns place back into space by recombining its elements in new, inter-textual ways are presented as having a limited lifespan. At the end of *The Night Season*, subject, place and space are all about to be blanked out, literally, as the snow sets in.



Chapter 4

Staging Homecoming

In the previous chapter I argued that *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* depict Tasmania as a separate, island-bound place in order to chart the development of their central protagonists. In this chapter I examine the discursive strategies associated with the modality of leaving in three non-fictional works: C.J. Koch's *Crossing the Gap* (1987), Dennis Altman's *Defying Gravity* (1997), and Wayne Johnston's *Baltimore's Mansion* (1999). I argue that the relationship constructed between the autobiographical subject and either Tasmania or Newfoundland within these texts underpins the very authority with which the writers speak. Koch, Altman and Johnston actually construct themselves as authors through their stories of leaving, and entrench these constructions still further by staging 'homecomings'.¹ I conclude this chapter by arguing that the means by which place is deployed in *Crossing the Gap*, *Defying Gravity* and *Baltimore's Mansion* cannot be considered in isolation from the discursive strategies of the fictions of *The Doubleman*, *The Comfort of Men* and *The*

¹ Other autobiographical texts (whose authors have not written comparable fiction), have much in common with these. Peter Conrad's 1988 memoir *Down Home: Revisiting Tasmania*, for example, resembles the work of Koch, Altman and Johnston. Its explicit dialogue with Koch and Altman enforces the sense that they all engage with a common discourse. Altman notes in *Defying Gravity*: 'I grew up in a Hobart caught in time between Christopher Koch's novel *The Doubleman* and Peter Conrad's memoir, *Down Home*' (20), before going on to contest Koch's claim that Tasmania is different from the rest of Australia. Conrad, in turn, compares his view of Mount Direction with Koch's. Koch, Altman and Conrad (born in 1932, 1943 and 1948 respectively) address each other through the kind of 'generational autobiography' (3) John Downton Hazlitt speaks of.

Colony of Unrequited Dreams. The autobiographical texts help lend authority to the depictions of place that the novels present.

Writing Life

Poststructuralist assertions that a text can only ever be self-referential, because of its reliance upon the inherently unstable medium of language, have brought into question autobiographical writing's ability to present the definitive, 'true' story of a subject's 'real' experiences. As Brian Castro puts it, 'truth is available only in the telling and has no privileged existence in real life beyond human language' (*Writing Asia* 33). This position implies that autobiography and fiction are closely linked, and the proliferation of writing in hybrid autobiographical/fictional forms in recent years (including Castro's) has highlighted and extended the challenge to borders between them.

All of the texts I consider in this chapter conform to David McCooey's definition of literary autobiography as that in which 'the writer's intention is to interpret the past as much as represent it' (3). Koch, Altman and Johnston profess interest in making sense of their own pasts, but they also are concerned with wider cultural and social histories which contextualise personal experiences. All three autobiographies display extensive evidence of research into public histories, and are replete with intertextual references.

Altman, for instance, in referring to his presence at the University of Tasmania during the controversy surrounding the dismissal of its Professor of Philosophy, refers readers to Cassandra Pybus's history of the Orr case (DG 1). The three texts are also sophisticated in form and style. Not one presents a consistently linear narrative, each highlights particular moments and themes instead. Furthermore, all are self-conscious in their use of language, and of rhetorical and poetic devices.

As autobiographies, *Defying Gravity*, *Crossing the Gap* and *Baltimore's Mansion* are avowedly hybrids. Dennis Altman defines *Defying Gravity* as a 'theoretical autobiography' and professes to be in search of a way to 'marry lived experience with critical theory' (DG 4). He provides endnotes and a detailed index in line with this aim. Koch's *Crossing the Gap* has the subtitle of 'A Novelist's Essays' and includes some pieces featuring an autobiographical 'I', and others with no overt autobiographical content at all.² *Baltimore's Mansion* is more radical yet. Its subtitle, 'A Memoir' appears positively provocative in light of the innovative ways in which the text combines biography and autobiography with fictional techniques. Leo McKay, perhaps more aptly, describes it as a 'non-fiction novel' (16).³

² 'Return to Hobart Town', 'The Lost Hemisphere', and 'A Tasmanian Tone' are the autobiographical pieces with which I am most concerned in this chapter. 'The Last Novelist' is an instance of an essay without an obvious autobiographical 'I'.

³ Claire Mowat describes her book *The Outport People* as a 'fictional memoir', on the grounds of having altered the names of places and people. Johnston's book is a far more radical experiment in genre.

Baltimore's Mansion resembles another recent auto/biographical text concerned with Newfoundland – David Macfarlane's *The Danger Tree: Memory, War and the Search for a Family's Past* (1991). Rather than making himself the exclusive focus, each author uses his experiences as a catalyst for telling the stories of his forbears. Johnston's father, Arthur, and grandfather, Charlie, are central figures in his 'memoir'. Johnston imagines their points of view, and reconstructs in the present tense conversations and events in which they may have participated, but from which he was certainly absent. *Baltimore's Mansion* also continually contextualises the lives of the Johnstons within broader mythical and historical meanings. Arthurian legend is particularly important: Johnston's father is equated with King Arthur, and the Avalon Peninsula with the Isle of Avalon.

But perhaps the hybrid forms of these texts should not surprise us – nor be taken as evidence of radical poststructuralist agendas. Autobiography, as James Olney points out, has always been a particularly difficult genre to define, because of its imbrication with other forms of writing (4).⁴ Crucially, despite the complexity of their forms, and their overt endeavours to connect the subjectivities they present with wider cultural contexts, Koch, Altman and Johnston (the latter with a great many more qualifications), still largely adhere to the 'autobiographical pact', which defines

⁴ I noted the close historical relationship, too, between the *bildungsroman* and autobiography in the previous chapter.

autobiography as 'the retrospective prose narrative that someone writes concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality' (Whitlock, *Autographs* x). The stories of the individual lives in the autobiographies I examine here rest on the assumption that the autobiographical 'I' is 'an authoritative singular subject whose subjectivity can be represented in language' (Whitlock, *Autographs* xii). Whilst it is possible to detect fissures in the 'I's who narrate these texts, the narrative voices in *Defying Gravity*, *Crossing the Gap*, and *Baltimore's Mansion*, remain predominantly consistent.

In *The Intimate Empire*, Gillian Whitlock suggests that 'autobiographers manoeuvre for their public; for the privilege of addressing the reader' (3). The constructions of Tasmania and Newfoundland that *Crossing the Gap*, *Defying Gravity* and *Baltimore's Mansion* present are a particularly important part of the way in which the 'consistent' voices in the texts are made stable, and supposedly worthy of a reader's attention.

Authorising Place

The autobiographical pact is itself a language effect: the 'I's presented in the texts I examine in this chapter are unavoidably constructed through writing.

Pact or no pact, truth remains 'in the telling' because, as Michel Foucault points out, discourse is unavoidably 'not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary [...] a space of exteriority in which a network of distinct sites is deployed' (*Archaeology* 55). Accordingly, implicit quotation marks encompass the names of the authors/subjects of the texts I cite here. Although their adherence to the autobiographical pact makes it seem appropriate to speak of them as if they are independently 'thinking, knowing, speaking' people, my interest in Koch, Altman and Johnston in this chapter is as autobiographical subjects constructed through language.

In his analysis of 'The Formation of Enunciative Modalities', Foucault shows how a 'network of distinct sites' converge in the practices of nineteenth-century doctors, effectively creating and authorising medical discourse. Foucault's analysis of enunciative modalities identifies three overlapping questions to be asked of discourse: Who is speaking? From what institutional sites do they speak? What position is it possible for the subject to occupy in relation to the objects he speaks of? I want now to address these issues in turn as they relate to the work of Koch and Altman – in order to demonstrate how *Defying Gravity* and *Crossing the Gap* conjure both the subjects they present, and their discursive authority to speak about Tasmania. My treatment of *Baltimore's Mansion*, which I address in detail later in this chapter, is slightly different. The text's more complex form invites a less structured approach.

Who Speaks?

Foucault extrapolates several additional questions from the initial one of 'Who Speaks?':

Who, among the totality of speaking individuals, is accorded the right to use this sort of language (*langage*)? Who is qualified to do so? Who derives from it his own special quality, his prestige, and from whom, in return, does he receive if not the assurance, at least the presumption that what he says is true? (50)

In answering these questions in relation to doctors, Foucault refers to the 'criteria of competence and knowledge' (50) which sanction the work of medical practitioners. Although such criteria may be a little more difficult to identify in relation to authors, they still exist.

Gender is one important factor sanctioning the ability of these autobiographical subjects to speak as they do. As Sidonie Smith points out, until quite recently women, associated as they were with the private realm, have been of limited interest as autobiographical subjects (9). In their linking of the public and private, in making their own lives 'exemplary', and in extrapolating from them to those of others, these texts display typical

characteristics of male autobiography. But geographic origins are equally significant in authorising these writers' speech.

We are told in Koch's essay 'A Tasmanian Tone' that there is a 'distinction between writers who are immigrants to the island and those who are native born since nothing conditions a writer so much as the place in which he grew up' (CG 116). From the opening paragraph of his 'Return to Hobart Town' it is clear that the speaking subject is, above all else, Tasmanian, and that being Tasmanian means being different:

The first sight of the island from the plane causes a leap of the heart, like the sudden appearance of a loved face. All returning Tasmanians experience this. Tugging at its moorings under the giant clouds of the Roaring Forties, Tasmania is different: we are no longer in Australia. All colours have the glassy intensity of a cold climate: the greens greener, the dark blue of the numberless hills and mountains appearing almost black, from the air. (CG 84)

The autobiographical subject claims membership of a collective – 'All returning Tasmanians' – even before identifying himself as an individual. In the process he enforces his Tasmanian identity by suggesting that his experience is truly representative. Whilst he begins by speaking only for 'returning Tasmanians' (hinting at an expatriatism that I will explore further), Koch extends his claims, and speaks for 'All Tasmanians' as the

essay progresses: 'We are fond of Franklin, in Tasmania' (CG 87) he tells us. Alongside this 'us' of all Tasmanians, Koch also establishes Tasmania's difference from the rest of Australia, and so creates a 'them'.

Koch evokes his connection with the island in emotive language. The images he uses have a physical immediacy and intensity: 'a leap of the heart', 'a loved face'. This reliance on physical analogy, and the corresponding suggestion of depth and intensity, recurs later when he tells us that Hobart's 'patterns were inside us; unnoted yet constant as the movement of the blood' (CG 85). Koch also goes on to evoke a more literal blood relation with the place by telling us in some detail of his great-great grandfather, the sea captain Hurburgh's, connection with the island. By establishing Tasmanian difference the autobiographical subject, with his insider's knowledge and attachment to the place, is authorised to interpret for the (non-Tasmanian) reader. Furthermore, by claiming Tasmania's uniqueness, the autobiographical subject, too, is made unique.

Dennis Altman has much to say about Tasmania, and the place provides a frame for his text's narrative structure. His childhood experiences of the island form *Defying Gravity's* opening chapter, 'Leaving Tasmania', and the book concludes with his description of returning to the island for the Salamanca Writers' Festival in 1996. Yet pondering the state is not his primary aim. He claims in the 'Prologue' that his chief concerns are 'the creation of a gay nation and the simultaneous re-imagination of Australia

as a multicultural society' (DG 1). Tasmania, marginal in his view to both gay and multicultural agendas, is primarily valuable to him as a 'particular version of Australia which has failed to grow or change as fast as most of the mainland' (DG 20).

Over the course of the book, the primary answer to the question 'Who is speaking?' is not 'an expatriate Tasmanian'. The autobiographical subject concludes the chapter 'Leaving Tasmania' by admitting that 'my deep sense of being Australian [. . .] is surely shaped as well by having spent the years between seven and twenty-one in Tasmania' (DG 25), but he deliberately subsumes his Tasmanian experience within a wider Australian identity. Nonetheless, Altman's direct experience of Tasmania as a child, and then on subsequent return trips, forms the basis for the authority from which he claims to speak. He suggests, for instance: 'It is hard for outsiders to understand the dominance of the Hydro in the Tasmania of the 1950s and 1960s' (DG 11). As in Koch's work, Tasmanian background is again deployed here to make the subject appear unique. Whilst Altman professes to reject 'the myth of Tasmanian exceptionalism' (DG 20) he cannot help noting 'It is extraordinary how many writers have come from Tasmania' (DG 20), and implying his own inclusion amongst their number.

In answer, then, to Foucault's question 'Who is speaking?' the autobiographical subjects in these writings assume an authority based on gender, and posit one grounded in place. Each claims to 'speak for'

Tasmanians whose island separateness differentiates them from the rest of Australia (even if, in Altman's case, only as a microcosm of its past). Not everyone is qualified to speak about it, they suggest, a certain kind of 'hands on' expertise is required. Tasmanian origins thus allow these writers to 'derive from it [their] own special quality [and] prestige' (Foucault, *Archaeology* 50). This prestige is bolstered by the institutional locations from which they speak.

Insituting Place?

Having addressed the question of 'Who Speaks?', Foucault next enquires into the location of the institutional sites which grant the right to speak within a discourse. In the case of Koch and Altman, the publishing industry which disseminates their work is of primary importance in this regard. However, the related and overlapping realms of the academic and literary worlds (with which all three writers are closely involved) are also crucial. *Defying Gravity* and *Crossing the Gap* both locate themselves within literary and academic contexts, as well as being located by them. Through such means as erudite intertextual references, consciously literary language, scholarly apparatuses of reference, relentless name-dropping and, most importantly of all, emphasising trajectories of expatriatism, these texts position themselves discursively.

The autobiographical narratives of both writers depend (as do Koch's and Altman's fictions) on their escape from an isolated and parochial place to a metropolitan centre where they can realise their full potential. Over the course of both texts we learn of their experiences of 'cultural' exile/expatriatism after leaving Tasmania. Both also, however, report on return visits of varying lengths to the island. In *Defying Gravity* and *Crossing the Gap* these visits are brought within the autobiographical subjects' projects of making sense of themselves and the place they grew up in – each text stages homecoming. Indeed moments of staged homecoming in these autobiographical works actually reveal the most about why and how the subjects initially left Tasmania.

The trajectory from home to away, followed by an attempt to revisit home and come to terms with it is, Michael Seidel suggests, 'a powerful, perhaps even constitutive metaphor for the genesis and disposition of narrative itself' (1). He claims that exile (and/or expatriatism) has provided a material resource for legend, literature and history in the west since the story of Adam and Eve; as well as a symptomatic metaphor for the state of the narrative imagination. The exilic narrative pertains to the life of the writer, the 'bios', as much as to the narratives (whether autobiographical or not) that they tell, for the 'task for the exile, especially the exiled artist, is to transform the figure of rupture back into a "figure of connection"' (x). The autobiographical stories of Koch and Altman thus relate a movement so well-established in literary contexts that its use can help *qualify* them as

writers, and make their texts publishable. As Caren Kaplan puts it 'exilic displacement occupies a privileged position legitimating points of view and constituting a point of entry into a professional domain' (36).

Kaplan criticizes Seidel for de-historicising exilic experience by using the 'ahistorical space' (39) of aesthetics as the basis for his theories. Kaplan asks why narratives of exile are prevalent at certain moments, and is particularly interested in why modernist writers are so often associated with exile. She concentrates upon how literary critics writing about modernism construct writers of this period, and is less interested in whether the claims they make are 'real' than in how their formulation as an 'imagined community' operates. Examining the work of critics including Malcolm Bradbury, Malcolm Cowley, Harry Levin and Raymond Williams, Kaplan identifies a number of recurrent preoccupations in their analyses of modernist writers. She contends that they portray these authors as having surmounted national origins in favour of a new, international imagined community whose membership is based on artistic practice. Another key feature of the critics' analyses is the notion that physical displacement (from margin to centre) leads to ground-breaking artistic insights. Most significantly, European and/or North American cities are the destinations of the exiles of the modernist movements. The peripheries provide immigrants and exiles but are never the sites of modernist cultural production.

The trajectories of the lives of Koch and Altman, as they are constructed in *Defying Gravity* and *Crossing the Gap*, replicate the journeys Kaplan identifies. Extending the term modernism, as Kaplan does, to speak more generally of a cultural mode which persists today rather than a purely aesthetic category relating to a specific group of writers in the first part of the twentieth century, helps explain this commonality. The autobiographical subjects I examine here persist in adhering to a notion of the figure of the author as one legitimised by displacement; both associate themselves with an international artistic/academic community, both valorise their departure from Tasmania as a necessary part of their development as writers, and both describe their travels from Tasmania to European or North American cities. As a result of their associations with contemporary Australia, however, the autobiographical stories of Koch and Altman (like their fictions) do present some twists to the modernist narrative of exilic displacement. An important theme in the work of both is that Australia is increasingly part of the cosmopolitan world. Both express the opinion that the necessity for relocating to the northern hemisphere (a necessity they felt keenly as young men) is fading. The need to leave Tasmania, as we shall see, remains another matter.

The epigraph to *Defying Gravity* reads: 'I only feel really happy when the pilot says we're at thirty thousand feet. I want to defy gravity', and the cover photo shows the author sitting at an inner city café. Before even encountering the autobiographical narrator, then, the reader has met with a

cosmopolitan in the 'old' sense. Bruce Robbins defines the 'traditional' citizen of the world as characterised by detachment 'from the bonds, commitments, and affiliations that constrain ordinary nation-bound lives [. . .] a luxuriously free-floating view from above' (1).⁵ Remembering his time in New York Altman recalls a feeling which corresponds closely to characterisations of modernist sensibilities as trans-national, and grounded in artistic, rather than national communities: 'In my expatriate moods I was fond of finding ancestry in the 100 years or so of artists who had fled home for what seemed greater freedom' (DG 80). This desire to find a cosmopolitan community is compounded for Altman by his sexuality. The autobiographical subject speaks of the gay community as transnational and always cosmopolitan (DG 106), although he also concedes that today's gay writers do not feel the need to move overseas that those of his generation did.

Altman attempts, quite unconvincingly, to suggest that even Hobart has become sufficiently cosmopolitan to be acceptable: that the need to become a cultural exile might be a thing of the past. He quotes Nadine Gordimer to argue that 'there are no centres anymore' (DG 247), yet he also describes how he 'fell back' (DG 247) on this phrase in order to (the suggestion is evade) a question at the 1996 Salamanca Writers' Festival about whether Tasmania 'was now a cultural centre in its own right' (DG 247). Even if the

⁵ Robbins contrasts this to the 'new' kind of cosmopolitan which critics define as referring to the transnational experiences of the 'unprivileged – indeed, often coerced' (1) which are constrained in very particular kinds of ways.

autobiographical subject's inclusion of Hobart in the cosmopolitan sphere is to be read as genuine, it retains the 'high culture' orientation of the modernist: Hobart is possibly acceptable because educated people now congregate there in greater numbers.

Whilst Koch relates his often positive experiences of living in the United Kingdom and the United States in 'Maybe It's Because I'm a Londoner' and 'California Dreaming, Hermann Hesse and the Great God Pot', his writing displays a fondness for the periphery, for Tasmania, which is less apparent in Altman's work. Thus, as well as overtly privileging the cosmopolitan over the peripheral (in the 'leaving'-related parts of his text) Koch's work adheres to another element of the modernist philosophy, one Kaplan identifies as 'imperial nostalgia'. Kaplan suggests that 'Euro-American modernist exile formations foster a culture of nostalgic melancholia' (34), 'When the loss concerns a nation, culture, or distinct territory, the representations articulate nostalgic versions of the past' (34).

Koch, in 'Return to Hobart Town', muses on 'what's lost' (CG 85) in Hobart's ceasing to be provincial. He mourns the passing of the 'authentic' characters that used to wander the streets, and is particularly upset by the renovation of 'the last true sailors' pub' (CG 89), Ma Dwyer's. Ma's provided the youthful Koch with an opportunity to experience the vicarious thrill of mixing with those of a different class from his own. He recalls his exploits there with pride: 'None of its present clientele would have ventured inside

the old pub' (CG 89), he boasts. Of the newly renovated warehouses at Salamanca (one of which formerly contained Ma's), he says: 'One shouldn't complain, it's all very pleasant; but it's merely theatre, set against the backdrop of an extinct port' (CG 88). Despite grudgingly acknowledging that the city has changed, Koch dwells fondly upon any aspects of the Hobart of the 1980s which he can still depict as provincial. The police officers he sees in Elizabeth Mall, for instance, 'have the faces of twelve-year-olds: they look quite incapable of arresting anyone' (CG 84).

Oscillations in 'Return to Hobart Town' between claims Hobart has changed, and suggestions it has stayed the same reveal Koch, like Altman, to be caught in a dilemma. In this essay he struggles to reconcile his reliance upon the modernist way of thinking which validates him as an author (valorising as it does his own trajectory from periphery to centre, and attitudes of 'imperialist nostalgia'), with the emerging discourse of postmodernism. The notion that centres and peripheries may no longer be distinguishable is clearly not one with which the two autobiographical subjects I examine here are completely comfortable.

Subjective Objects?

Foucault claims that 'the positions of the subject are also defined by the situation that it is possible for him to occupy in relation to the various

domains or groups of objects' (*Archaeology* 52). He is referring here to the perceptual levels the subject can inhabit, although he later extends this to include the 'information networks' the subject can occupy. It is in examining this aspect of the texts that contradictions in their discursive frameworks are most apparent.

The dominant perceptual mode in *Crossing the Gap*, and to a lesser extent *Defying Gravity*, is that of the eyewitness; the autobiographical subjects speak authoritatively about Tasmania because they were once, and are again, there. After long absences from the island, Koch and Altman return to Tasmania to write about their childhood selves. Each autobiography stages a (temporary) homecoming. Returning as 'eyewitness' implicates the autobiographical subject in a certain kind of power relation with the island. As Stephen Greenblatt suggests, in speaking of colonial practices, 'Everything in the [. . .] dream of possession rests on witnessing' (*Marvelous* 122). The use of the present tense in 'Return to Hobart Town' enforces the sense of the immediacy with which the subject is viewing/speaking, and his authority to speak.

But the reliance on eye-witnessing is complicated in these texts by the fact that the subjects 'see' Tasmania during their formative years and then again in maturity. These ways of seeing are quite different, as are the kinds of authority they invoke. The 'eye/I' shifts between the role (implied in the first moment) of native informant whose knowledge is predicated on

viewing a place from the inside out, and the stance of the neutral ethnographer whose knowledge is based on dispassionate study and a view from the outside in.

The timing of the two sittings is crucial. Whilst the role of native informant is potentially the most convincing, the texts are presented as being inscribed immediately after the second moment of witnessing – when the position of ‘native’ has long been abandoned. The constructions of Koch and Altman as native informants on their return trips are misleading. Both autobiographical subjects convey the false impression that they possess the kind of intimate familiarity with place (in its *present-day* incarnation) which only a native could have, by making the memories they relate about their childhood years in Tasmania seem relevant to the present, and by occluding any other ‘native’ voices from their stories.

Koch, walking around Hobart on his return, tells us that he is moving through ‘two earlier Hobarts [. . .] the Hobart of the 1940s and my childhood, and the Hobart of the 1840s, and Captain Hurburgh’ (CG 88). Personal memories are presented as the inspiration for the first picture of Hobart (the subject’s recollection of drinking at Ma Dwyer’s being a case in point).

Written histories are relied upon for the second: ‘It’s recorded that on Good Friday in 1847, thirty-seven foreign whalers (many of them Americans) were refitting at Hobart Town’ (CG 89). But the autobiographical subject is not only interested in the Hobart of the 1940s and/or the 1840s. He also

wants to make conclusions about Hobart of the 1980s. In the process of moving between the stances of native informant and neutral ethnographer the authority of his discourse on present-day Hobart is validated – even though he does not engage with it in a particularly meaningful way. He does not, for example, report any exchanges with the contemporary inhabitants of the place.

Altman's autobiographical reminiscences are not framed around the device of re-encountering Tasmanian space during a single return trip – unlike Koch's in 'Return to Hobart Town'. Rather, short statements of his impressions of successive visits are provided. At first glance, the subject's descriptions thus read more like neutral ethnography, and rely less overtly on the position of native informant. Indeed, the role of 'native' of Tasmania is one Altman wants to reject: 'I wish I could say that the visit stirred deep yearnings for boyhood in me, but in fact Hobart seemed cold and distant. It had not proved a particularly happy place for any of us [his family] [. . .] and I feel little connection with it' (CG 24). Even though Altman cannot feel connection with the place, it is Hobart that is attributed with seeming 'cold and distant', rather than himself. Altman's is still a landscape of the self, one informed by his childhood experiences of Tasmania. He still relies on the combination of witnessing/recollecting in order to validate his discourse.

Problematic Selves

Tensions arise in *Defying Gravity* and *Crossing the Gap* between constructions of two quite different historical personal/public moments, formulated through conflicting narratives. The autobiographical subjects both figure (to varying degrees) the Tasmania of their childhoods as a culturally moribund colonial outpost which they escaped for a more cosmopolitan existence. In this they engage in the narrative of exile, a narrative of leaving which has particular power in establishing an author's credentials AS an author. This narrative, in its reliance upon a division between centre and periphery, and its notion of authorship, is, as Caren Kaplan suggests, modern, rather than post-modern.

Nevertheless, the subjects also express awareness that they live and write within a post-modern era by attempting to address its issues and concerns. Whilst modernist exilic narratives include room for a continuing relationship between the writers and the peripheral places from which they came – in the form of 'imperialist nostalgia', for example – they do not abolish the distinction between centre and periphery. The subjects thus need to make some gesture towards abolishing this distinction; they need to write narratives of return which would have the effect of incorporating Tasmania within a wider cosmopolitanism. Their attempts, however, are not particularly convincing.

Coming to terms with Sydney or Melbourne is a compromise position under the modernist mode of authorship Koch and Altman adhere to because it situates the cities of mainland Australia within the cosmopolitan realm whilst allowing Tasmania to retain its status as periphery. It also satisfies the colonial writer's aim of elevating his place of origin to a status on a par with the imperial centre, rather than subordinating it. Koch and Altman cannot argue that Tasmania has ceased to be peripheral, has ceased to be different, because their identities as subjects, and more specifically as writers, rest on the distinction. As my Foucauldian analysis has shown, the claims for authority that the autobiographical subjects of *Crossing the Gap* and *Defying Gravity* make are entrenched in maintaining a distinction between Tasmania and elsewhere. Altman and Koch claim to offer narratives of return, but they provide, above all else, narratives of leaving.

Making History Personal

Like *Crossing the Gap* and *Defying Gravity*, Newfoundland-born Wayne Johnston's *Baltimore's Mansion* foregrounds the autobiographical story of a writer who grows up on an isolated island, before moving to a 'centre'. In the metropole he achieves literary success, and finds himself compelled to write about the place he left behind. Again in common with the figures in the Tasmanian writers' texts, the autobiographical subject of *Baltimore's Mansion* describes returning, temporarily, to the terrain of his early life.

The question of 'who speaks?' in *Baltimore's Mansion* is rather more complex, however, than in the cases of *Defying Gravity* and *Crossing the Gap*. Indeed, it cannot be answered without simultaneously considering Foucault's further criteria of the positions the subject occupies in relation to the objects he speaks of. Whilst the autobiographical 'I' remains identifiable and stable in the Tasmanian texts, even when it digresses from its own story to address other material, the 'I' in *Baltimore's Mansion* is not a constant presence. Furthermore, as I noted earlier, Johnston's perspective gives way to imagined reconstructions of his father's and grandfather's viewpoints – although these are presented through omniscient rather than first-person narration. Speakers, and the positions they occupy in relation to the things they speak of, shift within the text.

It is invariably the autobiographical 'I' in *Baltimore's Mansion* that begins the process of inducting the reader into various stories of the past. Near the opening of the book, for example, Johnston tells us that his father, Arthur, 'grew up in a house that was blessed with water from an iceberg. A picture of that iceberg hung on the walls in the front rooms of the many houses I grew up in' (BM 2). Here the first-person narrator provides us with evidence from his own childhood (the picture of the iceberg) directly linked to the historical event he speaks of. Soon after this, however, the narration subtly shifts from first-person to third-person: a change that invokes a move from autobiography to fiction. The paragraph following commences

with a sentence that, because of its precise evocation of time and place, and its startling imagery, sounds like the opening of a novel:

In 1905, on June 24, the feast day of St. John the Baptist and the day in 1497 of John Cabot's landfall at Cape Bonavista and "discovery" of Newfoundland, an iceberg hundreds of feet high and bearing an undeniable likeness to the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared off St. John's harbour. (BM 2)

The detail with which the iceberg's passing of Ferryland is then depicted moves us even further from the autobiographer's first-hand perspective. Through the omniscient narrator, we learn exactly how twelve-year-old Charlie (Johnston's grandfather, who died long before the author's birth) feels whilst watching the iceberg sail by: 'Though he wanted to run up the hill to get a better look at the Virgin as some of his friends were doing, his parents made him kneel beside them' (BM 3). The narrator also uses distinctly literary, even poetic, prose, describing, for instance, the 'convoy of full-masted schooners [which] trailed out behind the iceberg like the tail of some massive kite' (BM 3).⁶

⁶ As in Richard Flanagan's novel, *Death of a River Guide* (see Chapter 5), there are still oblique references to witnessing, in order to at least cite the conventions of realism, even if they are not adhered to. In *Death of a River Guide* the detail in which Aljaz relates his visions is partially justified on the basis that he is experiencing 'dry' drowning, in which the dying person remains conscious for some time. In *Baltimore's Mansion* Johnston's grandfather's family are described as having 'heard later of things they could not see from the shore, of the water that ran in rivers from the Virgin' (4), suggesting that hearsay may be one source for the narrator's knowledge.

This blurring of autobiography and fiction occurs throughout the text. At other junctures, the departures from the autobiographer's perspective to that of an omniscient narrator's are made even more noteworthy by their use of the present tense. A passage relating Arthur's experiences as a federal Fisheries inspector begins: 'They are heading west, an hour out of Fortune with the engine at full throttle' (*BM* 145). The distance from the autobiographical 'I' is reinforced by an oblique reference to Wayne Johnston himself. The narrator observes that in 'Telling his sons anecdotes about his trips, he [Arthur] speaks these names as soldiers do' (*BM* 146).

The omniscient narrator's powers are, however, circumscribed at some important points in *Baltimore's Mansion*. Arthur's leave-taking of Charlie, for example, the point at which they say good-bye before the younger man departs Ferryland for college in Nova Scotia, is not immediately revealed. Johnston describes knowing from the time of his childhood that something dreadful happened on the beach at Ferryland where his father and grandfather said their goodbyes, but declares himself mystified as to what it could have been. Johnston's 'ignorance' of this event is used to create narrative tension in the text, and the mystery's significance is made increasingly pronounced through continual references to it, and the gradual revelation of clues, such as Arthur's reaction to his own son's departure.

By recurring in so many of the brief, untitled and temporally shifting scenes of the book, the puzzle of 'What happened on the beach?' (*BM* 107) provides

a plot-structure for *Baltimore's Mansion*; too hasty a use of omniscient narration in order to solve it would undermine its value. The mystery also serves to extend the scope of the narrative from the realm of the personal to that of the public, for the problem at issue between Arthur and Charlie is Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada. Johnston speculates that the cause of the rift between his father and grandfather might have been Charlie's confession that he had voted for Confederation, despite his avowed abhorrence for it.

At the conclusion to the text, the omniscient narrator returns to contradict the autobiographical 'I's statement of acceptance that the solution to the mystery will not be revealed. Overturning the conjecture that 'No path leads back from here to there. We cannot find the way because there is none' (BM 239), the narrator presents us with Charlie's moment in the ballot box, as well as his subsequent death. Johnston's grandfather dies between the final ballot on Confederation and the actual moment of union between Newfoundland and Canada. The timing of his passing, Johnston suggests, serves to increase his father's bitterness about Newfoundland's loss of nationhood. It also means that Arthur's brief attempt at leaving the island again, forty years later, is still closely bound up in his feeling that Newfoundland had first left him, that the place he had known had ceased to exist in 1949.

Leaving: Again and Again

By making the stories of the lives of Arthur and Charlie – especially as they relate to Newfoundland's federation with Canada, and Arthur's own attempts to leave the island – so central to the book the autobiographical 'I' is positioned within a wider frame. Rather than a landscape of the self, the Newfoundland of Johnston's text is a shared space. The perpetual shifting of Newfoundlanders from home to away is a recurrent theme in *Baltimore's Mansion* which is extended beyond the Johnstons, too. The narrator of the 'memoir' sees this movement as beginning with Lord Baltimore's abandonment of his colony at Ferryland in the early 1600s. Baltimore (for whose mansion the book is named) makes 'the first casting off, the first abandonment' (BM 260). By 1963, Johnston tells us, 'it was estimated that expatriate Newfoundlanders and their descendants numbered two million, or four times the population of the province' (BM 49).

The reasons for Newfoundlanders' departures vary, but Johnston tends to try to connect them: especially, around his central concern with Confederation. Whilst the intensity of feeling, and the role Confederation plays in his father's reasons for leaving Newfoundland are persuasively evoked, contradictory effects are produced in the discursive construction of

Johnston's own departures when he writes of them in the same vein.⁷ Like Koch and Altman, Johnston wants to 'institute' himself as author. Despite the innovative form of his work, and his insistence that leaving Newfoundland is a kind of collective, rather than solitary experience, at times he must resort to discursive strategies similar to those of *Crossing the Gap* and *Defying Gravity*. He tries, however, to conceal them.

Johnston constructs his own leaving of Newfoundland as a reluctant departure, forced purely by his longing to be a writer: 'I can only write about this place when I regard it from a distance [. . .] my writing feeds off a homesickness that I need and that I hope is benign and will never go away, though I know there has to be a limit. And that someday it will break my heart' (BM 236). Having dwelt upon the traumatic nature of his father's move to Nova Scotia in the 1940s, and having emphasised throughout the book the unwillingness with which so many other Newfoundlanders have left, Johnston is obliged to appear unhappy about going. Elsewhere, however, he has spoken quite differently about his decision to move to mainland Canada. In an interview with Bob Hallett (published several years before *Baltimore's Mansion*) we are given the more hard-headed explanation that 'Lack of fiscal opportunities have forced him to move to Toronto' (8).

⁷ Johnston leaves Newfoundland three times: 'It was only when my parents left that I really felt that I had left Newfoundland' (230).

In *Baltimore's Mansion*, Johnston endeavours to resituate the narrative of exile that predominates in contemporary Tasmanian autobiography. The difference in his approach is evident on comparing a set piece scene which recurs in Peter Conrad's *Down Home: Revisiting Tasmania* (which, as I noted above, utilises the same discursive strategies as Koch's and Altman's texts) and *Baltimore's Mansion*. In both, the writers describe burning their early work, just prior to leaving home.⁸ Conrad recalls how 'I set fire to all the leavings of my life so far – diaries and exercise books, bundles of letters tied by string; anything that might incriminate me by attaching an identity to me' (*Down Home* 3). Johnston describes making the same 'arch symbolic gesture, a purging of my past' (*BM* 205) in the backyard of his parents' house. In a crucial distinction, though, Johnston's recollections emphasise his father's role in the scene. He recalls how Arthur helped him to light a fire, and recounts, and then speculates at length upon, the conversation they had. In doing so, Johnston connects the circumstances of his own departure with those surrounding his father's (associated, as we have seen, with the Confederation issue) in 1948.

This moment is not the only one in which the autobiographical subject describes being diverted from his attempt to engage with the exilic narrative. Johnston remembers standing on the boat which takes him from Port-aux-Basques to mainland Canada, and reflects:

⁸ Both men now profess to be a little embarrassed by the extravagance of a gesture so in keeping with the myth of the solitary and self-made writer. This discomfort befits their narratives of putative return, in order to uncover the pasts which they had attempted to eradicate.

The sight of Newfoundland slowly receding reminded me of something. I could not think what it was until we were several miles offshore. It was not what I had anticipated I would think about as I was leaving. I'd imagined a Stephen Dedalus-like sense of expectation and adventure, standing like Joyce's hero at the rail, open-armed for new lands and new experience, casting off the nets that for so long had held me back. Instead, it was the "resettlers" I thought about. (*BM* 210)

Johnston then digresses from his own departure to contemplate at length the experience of Newfoundlanders from the remote outlying islands of the province who were (often unwillingly) relocated to the Newfoundland mainland in the 1960s. When they arrived 'Most of them had to be coaxed from boats that in some cases had been moored for hours to wharves and fishing stages' (*BM* 211). The only thing that makes it easier for him to leave, he claims, is the knowledge he cannot see mainland Newfoundland from Canada. Like those who refused to disembark onto the wharves he 'would probably have done the same thing if it was possible to see Newfoundland from the ferry all the way to Nova Scotia' (*BM* 211). The connection between Johnston's situation and that of the resettlers is, however, misleading. Aside from the obvious point that Johnston chooses rather than is forced to leave Newfoundland, the resettlers were, as Johnston himself observes, 'immigrants' (*BM* 211) – they were not Newfoundlanders in the way mainland dwellers were at all. Thus the

microcosm/macrocosm analogy confuses two quite differently situated events.

The ways in which Johnston stages subsequent homecomings to Newfoundland are even more revelatory (as in the case of the Tasmanian texts) of the means he uses to deploy space to construct his subjectivity. Before leaving Newfoundland a second time (his account of the misdirected 'Joycean' moment belongs to the first) he presents a scene that, paradoxically, has some elements of staged homecoming in it: 'Having been away from Newfoundland for five years, I came back three years ago and now, at the age of thirty, am trying to decide if I should leave again, knowing that if I do it will be for good' (*BM* 216). Johnston describes how in order to make this decision he travels by himself to an abandoned island off the coast of mainland Newfoundland, and tries to make up his mind. In this scene, which recalls the nostalgic bent of Koch's work, Johnston presents the autobiographical 'I' alone within a landscape that is both familiar and strange: 'Everywhere I've been there are people I can live among [. . .]. I have to know if I can live without the land' (*BM* 217). There is a connection, again, with Confederation as he remembers his father telling him that, ultimately, it is the land, not nationhood that is the 'essence' of Newfoundland.

Alone on his isolated island, Johnston occupies a liminal position, as Koch and Altman do when they return: he is part tourist, part local. Significantly

the terrain here is not that of Johnston's formative years. He tells the stranger who takes him out to his rented cabin that he is from St. John's 'but I might as well have said Los Angeles, for he seemed to draw no distinction between one place he had never been to and another' (BM 216). This statement sets Johnston up as our guide and interpreter, because it assumes that his readers do draw such distinctions. But any sense it creates that Johnston is an outsider is soon undone by other comments. Remarking on the detailed weather warnings on his cabin door he makes a comment similar to Koch's about Salamanca: 'It all seems overdone, designed to impress on city dwellers just how wild this wilderness adventure is' (BM 218). Yet Johnston himself engages in this discourse by emphasising the dangerous nature of his position. Having told us how he tries not to dwell on his isolation he remarks: 'Any help summoned by short-wave to this place might be days in coming' (BM 219). Unintentionally falling asleep in an abandoned church during a ferocious storm he states: 'I might never have woken up, or might have woken freezing in the middle of the night' (BM 226). Johnston is the reader's brave guide to Newfoundland's perilous terrain.

The Persistence of the 'I'

Baltimore's Mansion diffuses the centrality of the autobiographical 'I' by emphasising its connections with others, foregrounding other people's

stories and utilising fictional techniques within its narrative. Still, the discursive strategies Koch and Altman employ are evident – even if in altered form, and within a different context – providing authority for Johnston’s view of Newfoundland. The autobiographical subject claims his right to speak about Newfoundland on the basis of his status as Newfoundlander. Tellingly, there is nothing in Johnston’s memoir about his life in Toronto – where he has now lived for several years. The frequent use of the present tense in Johnston’s autobiographical passages in the book enforces the sense that the autobiographical ‘I’ is, in some important respects, still in Newfoundland. Johnston’s scene of ‘staged homecoming’ shows him in solitary communion with place (in an interview with Andrew Pyper, Johnston described the geography of *Baltimore’s Mansion* as ‘archetypal [and] personal’ (BM 20)) in a way reminiscent of Koch’s experience of Hobart, and shuttling too between a sensibility that expresses a distaste for the cosmopolitan (the warnings to mainland visitors) – but nonetheless participates in its discourse.

Like Koch and Altman in their depictions of Tasmania, Johnston claims a right to speak for Newfoundland because it is his. He also invokes his own uniqueness – a necessary quality of the artist as he is implicitly understood in his text – through his connection with the place. He would well understand Koch’s insistence on the ‘distinction between writers who are immigrants to the island and those who are native born’ (BM 116).

A Writer's Place

Crossing the Gap, *Baltimore's Mansion* and *Defying Gravity* all impact upon our readings of their respective author's fictions. The proximity in the dates of publication of Koch's, Altman's and Johnston's fictional and non-fictional work compounds the effects.⁹ Peter Pierce goes so far as to describe *Crossing the Gap* as 'instruct[ing] us in our reading of Koch's fiction, and especially of *The Doubleman*' (53). At the most obvious level, *Crossing the Gap*, *Baltimore's Mansion* and *Defying Gravity* shore up the seriousness with which we take *The Doubleman*, *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *The Comfort of Men*. For, as I have argued in this chapter, Koch, Johnston and Altman all use the modality of leaving to lend credence to their status as writers. More importantly, in terms of my investigation of the ways in which Tasmania and Newfoundland are emplaced within the modality of leaving, overt and covert connections between figurations of Newfoundland and Tasmania in the writers' non-fiction and fiction help Altman, Johnston and Koch extend their claims to have special insight into these places. I want to argue that this highlights ethical problems associated with the modality of leaving.

⁹ Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* was published in 1998, his *Baltimore's Mansion* in 2000; Koch's *The Doubleman* appeared in 1985, *Crossing the Gap* in 1987; Altman's *The Comfort of Men* was published in 1993, *Defying Gravity* 1997.

Within their fictions Koch, Altman and Johnston are all at pains to make distinctions between the places they write about and their possible 'real life' correlatives. Koch, for example, renames Hobart's Harrington Street 'Harrigan Street' in *The Doubleman*, Johnston plays with the geography of western Newfoundland in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, and Altman imagines Tasmania as a nation separate from Australia in *The Comfort of Men*. Yet outside of their fictional narratives they present contradictory messages about the status of place in their work.¹⁰

Koch and Altman suggest in their autobiographical writing that we should read the places they present in their novels as authoritative depictions of 'real' locations. In *Defying Gravity* Altman refers the reader to *The Comfort of Men* to gain an understanding of his impressions of Sydney and Melbourne (DG 242). Koch makes an even more powerful, although less overt claim for the authority of his figuration of Tasmania in his fiction. In an astonishing overlap between the two texts, the entire initial section of

¹⁰ This obfuscation is not confined to the work of writers who originate in places resembling (in whatever way) those they construct in fiction. The majority of the fictional texts I treat in this thesis come accompanied with contradictory instructions for reading. In the case of *The Shipping News*, for example, E. Annie Proulx presents a disclaimer:

This is a work of fiction. No resemblance is intended to living or dead persons, extant or failed newspapers, real government departments, specific towns or villages, actual roads or highways. The skiffs, trawlers and yachts, the upholstery needles, the logans, thumbies, and plates of cod cheeks, the bakeapples and those who pick them, the fish traps, the cats and dogs, the houses and seabirds described here are all fancies.

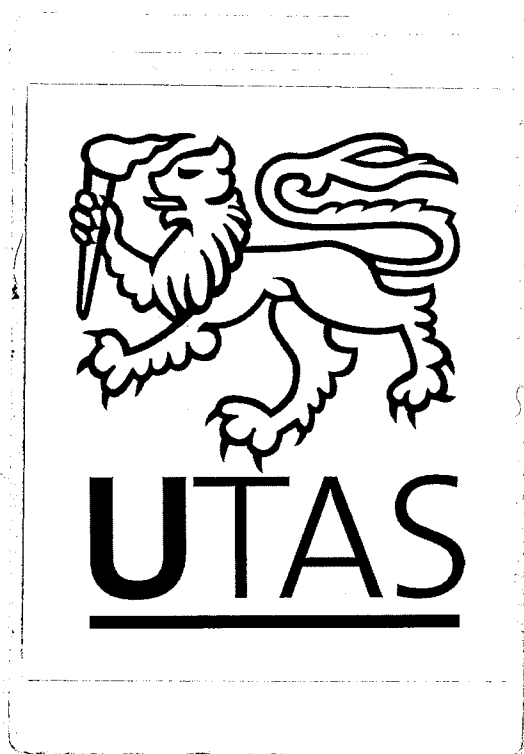
The catalogic form of this statement creates the impression of an excess of authenticity overflowing its boundaries insisting on fictionality. Proulx's emphasis on material culture, and delight in language, undoes it. The same Fourth Estate, paperback edition of the novel quotes reviews on the cover (and newspaper and journal reviews adopted a similar tone) praising the author for evoking the authentic Newfoundland. One notes that 'To read *The Shipping News* is to yearn to be sitting in The Flying Squid Lunchstop, eating Seal Fin curry' (*The Times*).

the second chapter of *The Doubleman*, one constituting the most sustained exposition on Tasmania in the novel, is replicated virtually verbatim in the *Crossing the Gap* essay 'The Lost Hemisphere'. This replication suggests that Koch's 'fictional' depiction is accurate enough to be reproduced in a non-fictional context. The close connections between the forms of the male *bildungsroman* and autobiography further connect Koch's and Altman's non-fictional and fictional depictions of Tasmania. In their autobiographies the writers construct their autobiographical personas in ways which recall their fictional protagonists. The most important similarity, of course, is that both the autobiographical and fictional subjects leave Tasmania to pursue more cosmopolitan experiences elsewhere.

Any mention of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is notably absent from *Baltimore's Mansion* but in interviews the author has spoken of how the experience of writing about Newfoundland in his fiction caused him to think about it from a more personal perspective in his non-fiction (Dolley 29). His comments suggest that the distinction between his fictional and non-fictional portrayals of the place is one of viewpoint, rather than fundamental difference. The text's emphasis on Confederation explicitly evokes *Colony*, too. Johnston's novel is an historical fiction: direct connections between his fictional and autobiographical subjects are not invited in the same way as they are in Koch's and Altman's work. But we cannot help but compare the views of Newfoundland's union with Canada that are presented in the respective texts. Parallel scenes from *Baltimore's*

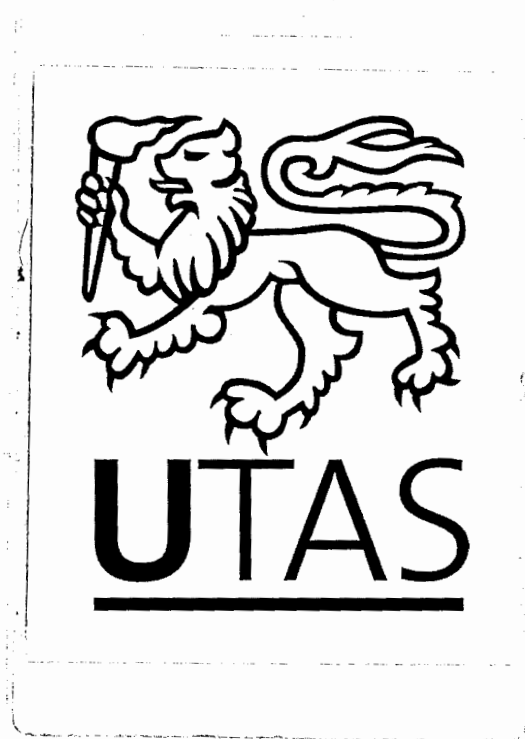
Mansion and *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* also lead us to unite the works. Smallwood's train ride across Newfoundland recalls the one Johnston describes making with his father in *Baltimore's Mansion*. His travels along the south coast also echo the evocation of Arthur's work as a Fisheries inspector in the same area.

In conclusion, the modality of leaving presents fundamental problems for the writing of Tasmania and Newfoundland. Because both fictional and non-fictional writing in this mode fix place in forceful ways, and entrench a solitary subject before it, the visions of the territories presented are particularly powerful. Yet this very entrenchment depends on the subject being distanced from the place he creates.



Part 2

Walking Around



Part 2

Introductory

The modality of emplacement I address in Part 2 is signalled by narratives whose protagonists walk miles across Tasmania or Newfoundland. During these journeys characters are invariably challenged by rugged terrains and extreme climatic conditions. Walking, in these tales, is of a radically different nature from the urban, pedestrian experiences figured in narratives of leaving. In the latter, the ground covered is well-known to the walker. Will Wiseman, for example, can read St. John's as a text of his own past. By contrast, characters in the novels I address in Part 2 often travel over terrain they do not know; making, rather than recollecting, history in the process. Sometimes these figures originate in Tasmania or Newfoundland, sometimes they are visiting from elsewhere, but either way, walking introduces them to new experiences and, invariably, hardship. It would be misleading to describe the protagonists I consider in this chapter as 'pedestrians'; the term's connotations of circumscribed and safe travel are inappropriate to the epic dimensions of the walks, or more accurately treks, performed here.

The epic nature of the journeys the characters in stories which 'walk around' perform, and their unfamiliarity with the terrains they cross, make these narratives especially suited to the exploration of epic histories. Texts which deploy the modality of walking around all connect extensive journeys through space with extensive journeys through time. The ways in which they do so, however, are complex. As de Certeau argues 'to walk is to lack a place'

(*Practice* 103). When one is on the move, one quite literally lacks a fixed temporal or spatial location; walking is, consequently, connected with space (the modality of brief temporal interventions) rather than place. Yet an epic history needs to organise time in a more concerted fashion. As de Certeau argues in *The Writing of History*:

historiography separates its present time from a past. But everywhere it repeats the initial act of division. Thus its chronology is composed of "periods" [. . .] between which, in every instance, is traced the *decision* to become different or no longer to be such as one had been up to that time [. . .] In their respective turns, each "new" time provides the *place* for a discourse considering whatever preceded it to be "dead," but welcoming a "past" that had already been specified by former ruptures. Breakage is therefore the postulate of interpretation. (4)

To expand upon this point we can refer to Paul Carter's view of history in *The Road to Botany Bay*. In his book, Carter examines the 'intentional world of active spatial choices' (xvi) informing the ways in which early explorers and colonists in Australia made place from space. Carter rejects what he calls 'imperial history', claiming it misleadingly constructs white Australia's past as an inevitable process unfolding across a pre-given stage. Instead, he focuses upon small-scale spatial practices, such as marking routes and bestowing names, in order to restore a sense of just how tenuous the process of *constructing* a 'stage' is. Walking, then, is a tenuous process in which one is immersed in the 'intentional world of active spatial choices'. Texts which wish

to figure both walking and epic history must find a way of mediating between the small-scale, detailed experiences associated with moving gradually over a landscape and 'breakages' which allow them to figure history.

The novels I address in this Part pay great attention to presenting details of the 'intentional world of active spatial choices' their protagonists participate in during their experiences of walking around. The particular nature of these details arises out of the conjunction of a character's specific walking style, and a particular terrain. Walking styles reflect more than just modes of physical movement. The depictions of walking in the Newfoundland texts *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *Gaff Topsails*, as well as in the Tasmanian ones *The Savage Crows* and *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*, give weight to Robin Jarvis's argument that whilst 'there is nothing more concrete than putting one foot in front of the other [. . .] walking is also an idea, or form of thinking' (4).

The texts I address in Chapters 5 and 6 exemplify how the approaches people take to walking are determined by their cultural assumptions about what it *means* to walk. In order to highlight their protagonists' specific approaches, the texts often juxtapose their central figures' methods of walking with those of other major characters. Consequently, few of the journeys they present are solipsistic experiences. Walking, in these texts, frequently entails encountering, and sometimes even travelling with, people who figure as 'other' – sometimes in quite pronounced ways. The texts are particularly interested in contrasting indigenous and non-indigenous walking styles. Wooreddy, for instance, the

eponymous Aboriginal protagonist of Mudrooroo's novel, must change his pace, and his way of thinking, in order to walk with the white man George Augustus Robinson.

The terrain over which walkers in Wayne Johnston's, Patrick Kavanagh's, Mudrooroo's and Robert Drewe's texts travel helps highlight the distinctive features of their individual walking/thinking styles. It also circumscribes the nature of the spatial choices they are able to make. In his article, 'Bridgeheads', yet another meditation on the experiences of moving through landscape, Carter suggests that moving through 'difficult country' (57) has the potential to prompt a particularly rich experience of place. Pondering Valery's description of the heightened consciousness he experiences whilst walking through the city, and contrasting it with the walking practice of South Australian explorer Colonel Light, Carter argues that because the city offers 'minimal resistance to his train of thought' ('Bridgeheads' 58) Valery 'can walk for the sake of thinking, transferring the exploratory charge of the occasion from the environmental to the poetic, from the desire to get somewhere to the desire to experience a liberating state of physical animation [. . .]. In this view the ground forfeits its independent existence' ('Bridgeheads' 58). The 'difficult country' the protagonists in the texts I examine in Part 2 traverse often issues an invitation to reformulate their own senses of themselves, which is absent in Valery's case. Walking styles/patterns of thinking are challenged by this terrain; they are also brought into stark relief with those of others.

Texts which are part of the modality of walking around deploy two particularly important strategies for contextualising the micro-scale encounters between their walkers and the terrains they traverse. By these strategies they also introduce 'breakages' into the unfolding narratives of their protagonists' travels. Firstly, and most crucially, they use the genre of historical fiction. In most instances, the journeys presented, and the characters who undertake them, have a basis in recorded history. Joe Smallwood's crossing of Newfoundland in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, and the Tasmanian travels of George Augustus Robinson, Truganini and Wooreddy in *The Savage Crows* and *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*, all have historical correlatives. By reimagining journeys from the past these texts situate their walkers within a preconstituted field. They have something, in other words, to break *from*.¹

The second strategy is an overt narrative technique. The novels I address here resolve relationships between characters with disparate walking styles at the conclusion of their narratives. Texts which belong to the modality of walking around conclude by moving their figures beyond the world of active (and conflictual) spatial choices to some broader dimension in which micro-scale experiences and conflicts are transcended. This strategy relates to the first in that in the process of moving from a temporality which foregrounds

¹ The pasts these texts engage with is a textualised past. Novels which 'walk around' resituate primary and secondary textual incarnations of the past in implicit and explicit ways. George Augustus Robinson's journals of his travels in Tasmania, for example, provide both source material and a thread to the overt narrative in *The Savage Crows*. The novel quotes almost verbatim at times from the journals, and Stephen Crisp, the central protagonist, becomes obsessed with the account; embarking on his own attempt to write a history in response. D.W. Prowse's *History of Newfoundland* serves similar purposes in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*.

experiences of fleeting moments to one that invokes infinite time, these novels draw their own lines around the past. As I will explore further in a moment, it is also in line with the place-ing aims of nationalism. Benedict Anderson notes that the nation transforms 'fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning' so effectively that it appears to 'loom out of an immemorial past' (11). Having taken the recorded past as their starting point from which to 'break', *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, *Gaff Topsails*, *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* and *The Savage Crows* then reconstitute history in the way that they wish. At their conclusions, texts which utilise the modality of walking around re-place Tasmania and Newfoundland yet again.

Of National Importance

But why are texts which use the modality of walking around so interested in re-placing the past? The answer to this question has its key in Tamsin Spargo's observation that 'Arguments about the past are often explicitly and, I would argue, always implicitly interventions in debates about the present and the future' (2). The participation of these authors in discussions about the present is confirmed in the timing of their texts' publication to coincide with anniversaries relevant to the historical events they reimagine. Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* (1996) and Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (1998) both appeared around the time of celebrations to mark the 500th anniversary of Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland in 1497, as well as Newfoundland's 50th anniversary of Confederation with Canada in 1949. Publication of Drewe's *The*

Savage Crows (1976) coincided with the 100 year anniversary of 'the last' Tasmanian Aborigine, Truganini's, death. Each anniversary was an occasion for debating the meaning of the past in the present, and, frequently, for addressing issues of nation, not just of region. These texts added their voices to the discussions.²

Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake suggest that 'Regions and region-states increasingly override national borders and older territorial forms' (2) but novels which deploy the modality of walking around are intensely interested in figuring national imaginaries through their depictions of the regional territories of Tasmania and Newfoundland. They seem to give more weight to Anthony Smith's contention (made in the light of persistent claims that globalisation has made the nation state irrelevant) that nations and nationalism in a global world are still positively 'ubiquitous' (159). I want to argue, however, that Tasmania- and Newfoundland-related texts premised on walking around each do this quite differently.

The Tasmanian texts adopt a microcosm (Tasmania)/macrocosm (Australia) paradigm of nation. *The Savage Crows's* central character, for instance, journeys to Tasmania to draw his final conclusions about the issues of white/black relations he has been pondering in Australia as a whole. *Dr Wooreddy* concludes with a different movement in space, but one which evokes a similar

² Even the banners that bedecked Newfoundland's tourist centres in 1999 announced that the 50th anniversary of Confederation involved 'Celebrating Canada Our Way'.

effect. By having the Tasmanian characters sojourn in Port Phillip at the end of the narrative, Mudrooroo makes their plight reverberate more strongly in mainland Australia. The island, in both *The Savage Crows* and *Doctor Wooreddy*, is depicted as a symptomatic space within the Australian national imaginary, one with the power to bring about definitive conclusions in questions relating to the nation as a whole. In Chapter 6, I argue that this approach has a problematic side-effect – one which recalls the problem we saw *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* produce in Chapter 2. By overburdening its role to figure the past, these texts elide Tasmania's present.

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams and *Gaff Topsails* adopt a different approach. The nation at issue in these texts is that of Newfoundland itself. Both novels pay particular attention to Newfoundland's formerly independent (and/or British- dependent) years, and construct the island during this time as a place with unique characteristics. To highlight Newfoundland's distinctness, Kavanagh's book is, for instance, saturated in the language of the pre-Confederate outpost.³ Johnston explicitly extends a similar sense of Newfoundland's intrinsic difference beyond the moment of Confederation; whilst Kavanagh's text is more oblique on this point. In concert with their preoccupation with Newfoundland's difference, the central characters of both *Gaff Topsails* and *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* originate in and remain in Newfoundland, rather than shifting between island and mainland as in the Tasmanian texts.

³ Although the location of his narrative is never overtly named, surreptitious references (the pink, white and green washing drying outside the houses, suggesting Newfoundland's former national flag, for instance) do refer to it.

Despite these emphases on the uniqueness of Newfoundland's culture, the places Kavanagh and Johnston construct are potentially containable within the dominant paradigm of Canadian nationalism; for Canada has long been conceived of as a 'mosaic' rather than an American-style 'melting pot'. George Woodcock argues that 'to deny regionalism is to deny the Canadian nation as it historically and geographically exists and as it is likely to exist in any foreseeable future' (10). Eva Mackey makes a similar point when she argues that 'pluralism as an ideology and mythology [. . .] intersects with the construction of dominant national identity and culture in Canada' (2). Newfoundland's difference, rather than being inimical to the project of Canadian nationalism could, in light of these comments, in fact be in concert with it. The timing of the texts' publication around issues of national as well as regional importance seems to lend weight to this argument.

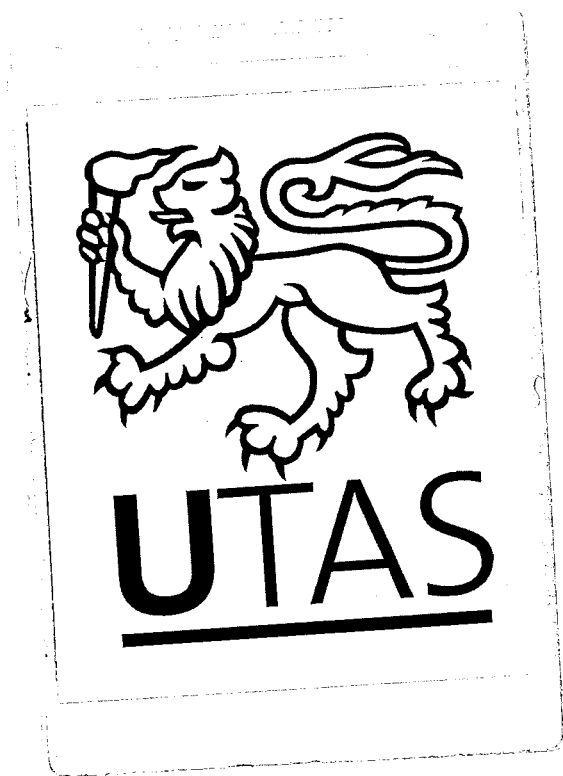
But whilst the distinctive pictures of Newfoundland that *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *Gaff Topsails* present are potentially assimilable within broader concepts of Canadian nationalism, I want to argue that important features ask us to consider an additional reading. Neither *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* nor *Gaff Topsails* overtly connects Newfoundland's distinctiveness with a Canadian national imaginary. Rather, the (lost) nation of Newfoundland remains the foregrounded category of nation in these texts. *Colony* even persists in referring to Newfoundlanders living on the island after 1949 as 'a people' (CUD 562). This emphasis upon Newfoundland's intrinsic national difference (as opposed to regional difference), in Johnston's text

especially, is curious in that it is not linked with any attempts to reignite a secessionist movement. We seem to be dealing here with an exercise in nostalgia.

Fredric Jameson argues that within postmodernism regional areas often act as repositories for the past (*Seeds* 199). He suggests that this association leads to the problem of 'how to fashion a progressive strategy out of what are necessarily the materials of tradition and nostalgia' (*Seeds* 202). Focusing upon the materials of the past is a potentially meaningless exercise, he claims, unless 'coordinated with a variety of other local, social, and cultural movements' (*Seeds* 203). Without this connection, focusing on difference is a practice in concert with the goals of post-Fordism. Whilst post-Fordism 'can be thought to "respect" the values and cultures of the local population by adapting its various goods to suit those vernacular languages and practices [it, in fact] inserts the corporations into the very heart of local and regional culture' (*Seeds* 204). In other words, difference unlinked to a political project is in danger, under late capitalism, of lending itself to commodification. In Chapter 5, I explore how the depictions of Newfoundland in *Gaff Topsails* and *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* negotiate this risk.

Wilson's and Dissanayake's statement that 'Regions and region-states increasingly override national borders and older territorial forms' (2) requires qualification in the case of both Tasmania and Newfoundland as they are depicted in the modality of walking around. The emplacement of Tasmania in this mode suggests that 'national borders and older territorial forms' are still

taken very seriously in Australian writing (even if this does produce problems of representation for its component parts). In writing about Newfoundland, however, the situation is different. Nationhood is still a foregrounded category, but it is of dubious status because of its linkage with a former, rather than present day, political state.



Chapter 5

Traversing the Old Lost Land

In this chapter I focus on the modality of walking around in recent writing which figures Newfoundland. More specifically, I read the 'intentional world of active spatial choices' (Carter, *Botany Bay* xvi) associated with walking in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *Gaff Topsails* and address how the texts associate these micro-experiences with larger temporo-spatial configurations. I argue that both Wayne Johnston's and Patrick Kavanagh's novels lend the former nation of Newfoundland an eternal dimension. *Gaff Topsails* subtly confines the 'eternal' time it associates with the nation to the island's pre-Confederate days; but *Colony*, problematically, extends it into the post-Confederate contemporary moment. I want first to address the difficulties Johnston's text presents, before turning to Kavanagh's novel.

The theorists Deleuze and Guattari use the terms 'smooth' and 'striated' to describe categories of space-time. They argue that 'In striated space [-time], lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points: one goes from one point to another. In the smooth, it is the opposite: the points are subordinated to the trajectory' (1000 *Plateaus* 478). Deleuze's and Guattari's terms, 'smooth' and 'striated', can help us understand the ways in which Johnston constructs both s/place and time in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. For most of its narrative the novel is focused on striating history – joining the dots of Newfoundland's past – but at its conclusion, Johnston's text makes a troubling move to invoke smooth-space-time.

I noted in my introduction to this Part that the modality of walking around invariably invokes the genre of historical fiction. Wayne Johnston's novel is an historical fiction in epic form. The chief protagonist (and chief walker) in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is Joseph Smallwood – a figure with an historical basis in the instigator of Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada. The timing of the historical Smallwood's birth (his life spanned most of the twentieth century), and the level of his engagement with public affairs, make him the perfect subject for a fiction treating Newfoundland's history in depth. As Johnston has put it, 'I set out to write an epic book about Newfoundland [. . .]. So Smallwood seemed like the perfect character because he spanned so much of our history' (Dooley, *Newfoundland Herald* Nov. 7 1998, 30).¹ Johnston broadens the epic sweep of his narrative still further by imagining his fictional Smallwood present at crucial moments in Newfoundland's recent history from which the historical Smallwood was absent. He 'witnesses', for instance, the sealing tragedy involving the S.S. Newfoundland in 1914. The freedom with which Johnston reimagines Smallwood's life has attracted criticism from some reviewers of his book – Sandra Gwyn, Rex Murphy and Stephen Smith in particular. But Johnston claims: 'There are many precedents [. . .] in world literature' (*Globe and Mail* A14). By making this claim he signals that he aspires to elevate

¹ Smallwood himself noted in his autobiography: 'I have known half a dozen worlds since 1900 and lived a dozen lives' (7).

Newfoundland and its history to 'world' standard by taking it seriously enough to treat it in a sustained and complicated way.

Timothy Brennan notes that the genre of the epic is crucial to nation-building projects. Referring to the work of literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, and the writer on nationalism Eric Hobsbawm, he argues:

If the novel for Bakhtin tended to parody other genres, the epic was that genre the novel parodied in its nation-forming role. Hobsbawm's description of the rhetoric of nationhood can be found also in Bakhtin's description of epic, where "beginning", "first", "founder", "ancestor", "that which occurred earlier", and so on, are . . . valorized temporal categories corresponding to the "reverent point of view of a descendent" [. . .]. In its [the novel's] hands, "tradition" became what Hobsbawm calls a "useable past", and the evocation of deep, sacred origins – instead of furthering unquestioning, ritualistic reaffirmations of a people (as in epic) – becomes a contemporary, practical means of *creating* a people. (50)

Johnston's project is indeed 'nationalistic' – he wishes to evoke a Newfoundland people – but his use of the epic *form* is complicated by his foregrounding of issues of an epic nature at the level of *content*. The fictional Smallwood also has an active desire to make history for Newfoundland on a large-scale (not simply witness it). Just as Johnston figures his own depiction of Newfoundland's history as ambitious, he also

depicts Smallwood's goal as unusual within the context in which he displays it. In the world in which Smallwood moves, the predominant feeling is that: 'A history of Newfoundland cannot be great [. . .] because there is no greatness in Newfoundland' (*CUD* 38). Ironically, though, the ultimate 'epic' act Smallwood achieves is the extinguishment of Newfoundland's nation status through its Confederation with Canada.

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams must, then, reconcile the tension between its epic form – with its implicit linkage with nation-building projects – and the problematic consequences of epic acts in its fictional narrative. In order to explain how it attempts to do so I want now to turn to the presentation of Smallwood's trek across Newfoundland in 1925.

Walking the Line

Smallwood makes several monumental journeys across Newfoundland by a variety of modes of transport in the course of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. It is his first serious pedestrian undertaking that I wish to focus on.² Smallwood treks seven hundred miles along the railway line from Port-aux-Basques to St. John's for two reasons. Ostensibly the goal of his journey is to organise railway workers into a union, and so cause the railway bosses to rescind a recent cut to their wages. But there is a more

² Unlike the walk along the south coast this trek has a basis in recorded history. In his autobiography, *I Chose Canada*, Smallwood describes his experiences in terms reminiscent of those Johnston uses.

personal motivation, too. Smallwood is returning to St. John's after several dejected years in New York. He wants to create the impression that 'my five years abroad had been full of just such adventures, walking in service of a noble cause from one side of the island to the other' (*CUD* 212).³

Smallwood's trek is an undeniably arduous undertaking, and Smallwood endeavours to highlight its difficult nature. To further both his goal of attracting the sectionmen to his union, and making himself appear noble, he wants his trek to invoke the mythical figure of a self-sacrificing religious wanderer. Smallwood plays this role for the sectionmen by carrying a Bible which, despite his public pronouncements to the contrary, he does not read once during his journey. He also uses his insubstantial physique to accentuate the impression of the hardship he undergoes. When he eventually abandons his walk thirty-six miles outside of St. John's, he knows that the railway director who invites him to be his guest for the remaining portion of the journey 'did not want me, in my state, looking the way I did, to stagger down the tracks and walk into the station in St. John's, where the press might – I liked to think so anyway – be waiting for me, a walking martyr for the sectionmen' (*CUD* 242).

Smallwood's trek is not only physically arduous, it also involves mental labour; although he does not publicly promote this aspect of his journey. As Smallwood walks, he reads D.W. Prowse's monumental history of

³ Smallwood's return is not a 'staged homecoming' in the same sense as the return journeys of the figures in the texts I addressed in Part 1. Smallwood's ambitions always lie in the province, not outside of it. He never leaves in the way that Altman's and Koch's figures do.

Newfoundland. If the Bible is merely a stage prop, reading Prowse is an end in itself. So avidly does Smallwood read as he walks that physical exhaustion and the task of reading become blurred. Smallwood begins to think that committing the history of Newfoundland to memory, 'and not the walk, was the epic task that I had set myself' (*CUD* 214). The slippage between the two difficult tasks of walking and reading, as well as Smallwood's use of the word 'epic' to describe them, is revealing. Johnston's protagonist vacillates between seeing himself as performing one of two tasks – traversing space (the walk), or traversing time (reading the past). However, the two projects he believes separate are in fact closely connected. Both Smallwood's eyes and feet take similar routes through time and space respectively. His uni-directional progress along the unwavering railway line mirrors the unrelenting forward-focused and linear movement of Prowse's narrative.

Smallwood's walking and reading evoke Deleuze's and Guattari's striated rather than smooth space. Both practices are completely goal-focused, and organised by linear paths directing his 'trajectory' towards his destinations. Indeed, whenever he encounters a space which is not so easily assimilable within the striations by which he operates (and which, given his goal of making history, he also wishes to extend) Smallwood becomes disoriented. He finds the sea particularly abhorrent because it is 'suggestive of no beginning and no end, as purposeless, as pointless as eternity' (*CUD* 131). Points to link journeys are not easily established on the sea's surface and, unsurprisingly, Deleuze and Guattari identify it as 'a smooth space par

excellence' (479). Smallwood's dislike of the sea is so intense that he wishes to reconceive of Newfoundland as land-, rather than sea-bound:

This is not an island, I told myself, but a landlocked country in the middle of an otherwise empty continent, a country hemmed in and cored by wilderness, and it is through this core that we are passing now, the unfoundland that will make us great some day. (*CUD* 141)⁴

In contrast to the sea, Smallwood relishes the central Newfoundland landscape he walks through for much of his trek. It is more amenable to his epic ambitions; ambitions reflected in his act of joining points with his footsteps and, in doing so, making his own name a next point in Newfoundland's linear history. During his outward train journey to Port-aux-Basques on his way to New York, several years before he returns to undertake his walk, he characterises Newfoundland's interior in terms of its indefinability and supposed emptiness: 'There was beauty everywhere, but it was the bleak beauty of sparsity, scarcity and stuntedness [. . .]. It was a beauty so elusive, so tantalizingly suggestive of something you could not quite put into words that it could drive you mad' (*CUD* 137). The land's elusiveness is soon connected with its supposed lack of history (the implication being that it invites striation): 'No one, not even aboriginals,

⁴ It is interesting at this point to compare Smallwood's approach to that of Richard and Steven in *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men*. All three figures are engaged in what de Certeau would term place-making exercises – they wish to organise time through laying out space. But the spatial analogue for Smallwood's method is the railway line, not the island. Rather than freezing Newfoundland into an island, as Richard and Steven do Tasmania in order to allow it to stand for the personal pasts they leave behind when they pursue their lives elsewhere, Smallwood needs a spatial image that will organise time, but allow it to proceed in the same terrain. The rail line allows him to conceive of Newfoundland's history as proceeding in an orderly way.

had ever lived on this part of the island. It was impossible to speak of its history except in geological terms' (CUD 137).

Like the efforts of Richard and Steven in *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men*, Smallwood's attempts at place-making (in his case through creating a sequence of linear points, rather than imagining time as frozen through the analogue of the island) inevitably obscure other ways of experiencing space and time. The land is, of course, familiar to those who built and maintain the railway line over which Smallwood travels, and he cannot have any definitive knowledge of where the Beothuk may have journeyed. So obsessed is he with imposing striations upon it, that people who inhabit the land in other ways are invisible in this important respect. He only perceives them fleetingly. In a brief epiphany during his outward journey to Port-aux-Basques, interestingly when he is temporarily and rarely experiencing space and time as 'smooth' rather than 'striated', Smallwood momentarily sees:

other passengers in other cars unaware that I was watching them, and I felt as the people we passed along the tracks must have felt and saw myself as they must have, as impossibly remote from them as I was to the lives I had left behind and was headed towards, caught up in the dream of travel, the travel-trance that overtakes you when there are no familiar landmarks to remind you you are making progress, when it seems you have no destination and the landscape you are moving through goes on forever. (CUD 141)

In this statement Smallwood briefly acknowledges that he is divorced from the terrain he travels through, (and, at that particular moment, from the notion of a destination) but that the land is potentially rich with landmarks he cannot read or bring within his own system of points-making.

As I noted in my introduction to this Part, characters' preconceived notions are often challenged during the arduous treks they undertake – both because of the physical hardship they experience and because they encounter people who hold different views from their own. Smallwood's representations of Newfoundland's space and time cannot always sustain him, and he experiences both of these challenges. Given his dislike of the sea, and by imputation of smooth space, it is highly appropriate that things start to go wrong for him once the sea comes into view. It is also appropriate that those who save Smallwood have quite different approaches to space/time from his own.

Near the end of his trek, on the branch line on the Bonavista Peninsula, Smallwood twice finds himself breaking down physically and mentally. For most of his journey the route of the train-line he follows is 'not determined by the sea, nor was the sea visible at more than a few points along the way' (*CUD* 137), but the branch route along the Peninsula is an exception. Here the sea is visible, and the coastal wind cuts mercilessly across the barrens.

The first time Smallwood is in trouble, he becomes delirious from exhaustion and hunger as he faces the relentless wind across a monotonous landscape. He is 'rescued' by a railway worker clad only in 'coveralls, his arms and shoulders bare' and his daughter in 'a ragged burlap dress with [. . .] tattered shoes untied' (*CUD* 221). Smallwood finds the man 'staring uncertainly at me and at times at the little girl as if he was still not sure if I posed a threat' (*CUD* 221), but their simple presence brings him back to his senses. On this occasion, he is able to reconstitute himself in the face of their otherness.⁵

Smallwood's second brush with death comes during a snowstorm.⁶ Even the featureless landscape becomes invisible and he is forced to cling to the railway bed for fear of becoming lost. Here Smallwood engages in self-parody, although 'without ironic intent' (*CUD* 225). To keep himself from giving way to hypothermia he sings 'When Joey comes marching home again, hurrah, hurrah' (*CUD* 224) and 'The Ode to Newfoundland', a stanza of which euologises Newfoundland in winter. The inappropriate choices show just how fragile the representational structures that usually sustain him have become. On the verge of death he is rescued by Sheilagh Fielding.

⁵ The sectionmen are 'other' to Smallwood, despite the fact that he shares his race and nationality with them, and is almost as desperately impoverished. His description of their shacks as teepees (*CUD* 215) is an important clue here. Richard Budget's analysis of recurring patterns in the way Newfoundland writers depict the relationship between the Beothuk and Newfoundlanders recalls Smallwood's attitude toward the sectionmen. Budget suggests that Newfoundland writers commonly assume a 'particular responsibility for maintaining the memory of the Beothuk, and particular expertise in explaining what happened' (26). Smallwood will later claim that his walk along the railway line inspired him to pursue Confederation – he develops a sense of responsibility towards the white 'indigenous' Newfoundlanders.

⁶ We might recall here Will's experience of snow obliterating both space and time in *The Night Season*. It serves a similar purpose in *Colony*.

Fielding acts both as a love interest and a foil to Smallwood's way of approaching time and space throughout *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*.

Like him, she is obsessed by Newfoundland and its history, but her approach is antithetical to Smallwood's. Fielding is preoccupied with upsetting linear orders of historical points. Hers is a philosophy of anti-striation.⁷ That Smallwood loves her despite (or, one might even argue because of) their different views highlights yet again the way that notions of place and space inevitably 'distort and ramify' one another. Smallwood must love the symbol of that which he tries to cast off.

In contrast to Smallwood, who is based on an historical figure, Fielding is wholly invented. That she is formally necessary as a balancing device (in the place/space sense I have just been discussing, as well as in a more technical sense) becomes clear at several points in the novel. When Smallwood finally recognises Fielding, after she has rescued him from the storm and brought him back to recover in her sectionworkers' cabin, he comments: 'This was about the last place on earth I would have expected to encounter her' (*CUD* 227). The reader may well have the same reaction. For Fielding to be available along the railway line in the middle of a snowstorm seems improbable, in spite of the explanation Johnston devises by way of a narrative of tuberculosis and a keen desire to write. Basically,

⁷Fielding's approach could not be linked directly with smooth-space-time, in that she still is obsessed with the points in a linear history, even if her aim is to challenge them.

Fielding appears as a plot device, a *deus ex machina*. The introduction of Fielding as rescuer makes possible an alternative version of Smallwood's trek. Fielding would never contemplate undertaking a walk like Smallwood's – indeed, she treats his effort with amused disdain. Furthermore, in this scene Smallwood learns that Fielding is writing a history of Newfoundland – one which he fears (and by this point, given the way that chapters from it are juxtaposed into Smallwood's narration) the reader knows that his fears are justified. Fielding's approach to the past is antithetical to Smallwood's.

Their methods of narration reflect this. Most of Smallwood's walk is narrated in the first person, as is the bulk of the novel. There is no framing context for this narration. Exactly when Smallwood writes, or who his intended audience is, is never clear. All we know is that his narrative is retrospective, although time itself gets blurred in his telling. During his outward journey to Port-aux-Basques, for example, Smallwood mentions the Come By Chance oil refinery which he will one day build, as well as Gambo, where he was born. Because of its lack of context, Smallwood's narration is not generically confined (it is not a pseudo-journal, -diary or -autobiography, for instance) and this creates an impression of omniscience. Fielding's contributions to the narrative seem strangely imprisoned by contrast. Her first-person accounts are always contextualised by the medium they appear in – a journal, a newspaper column, or her history of Newfoundland. But the frequent, short sections of the novel which present Fielding's work also have the effect of deflating Smallwood's pretensions.

The shifting point of view is emblematic of a tussle between two ways of writing place and events: Smallwood's mode is heroic, or epic, Fielding's ironic.

Smallwood's narrative of his walk is interrupted by chapters from Fielding's history of Newfoundland, although these are not directly related to it. Although she, too, is obsessed with Prowse's *History*, Fielding's relationship to it is quite different to Smallwood's. Whilst both characters have their lives marked by a letter constructed from words excised from a copy of Prowse's history, (the mystery over its origins provides a major part of the narrative suspense of the book) their relationship to it as written, historical text differs. Instead of spending her time exiled from St. John's memorising Prowse's words, Fielding goes about writing a sardonic rejoinder to his book: 'It sits on the desk in front of us as we write, goading us to refutation, disputation, sustaining us through this corrective' (*CUD* 405). The chapters of Fielding's history, presented directly to the reader in the interstices of Smallwood's narrative, are as short and sharp as Prowse's are lengthy. Fielding's history covers Newfoundland's history from the moment that 'The earth's crust cools' (*CUD* 43) up until 1919, but rather than requiring an epic stamina to read it, it calls for an appreciation of succinct irony:

So eloquent is [the merchant Sir Josiah] Child that the king's ministers swear they would pay just to hear him speak. Child, however, insists that so much do they honour him by listening it is he who should pay

them, which he does, one at a time, eschewing ostentation by doing it behind a curtain or in some antechamber. (*CUD* 147)

Fielding's journalism, presented elsewhere in the novel, is equally focused on deflating pretension and exposing corruption. She remains cynical about all political programs – to such an extent that she works for both liberal and conservative papers under different pseudonyms at one point. In *The Writing of History* de Certeau speaks of the relationship between the one who holds political power directly (the 'prince') and his chronicler (the historiographer). He observes that in historiography, 'The prince receives a "lesson" provided by a technician of political management' (*The Writing of History* 7). This point could not be more appropriate to the relationship between Fielding and the men she writes about. Smallwood is aware of her power as a chronicler, and for years hopes she will 'do as Boswell did with Johnson' (*CUD* 3) and write him into history in glowing terms.⁸ When the notion of being Smallwood's 'Boswell' is suggested to her, however, Fielding, characteristically, laughs.

Unsurprisingly, Smallwood's sojourn in Fielding's cabin does not end well. Shaken by the challenge she presents to the whole philosophy motivating the epic tasks in which he is engaged (a challenge epitomised in her refusal to join his union and so allow him to 'join the dots' between all of the sectionworkers' cabins) Smallwood cannot bring himself to thank her for

⁸ So eager is he to find himself in her text, that after he recovers in her cabin he is furious when he discovers the door to her study is locked. He contemplates fetching an axe to break it down. The violence of Smallwood's behaviour confirms the power of the historian.

saving his life. Her caustic note of farewell is the ultimate deflation of his pretensions: 'Don't mention it. You would have done the same for me, if I were a forty-five pound dwarf' (*CUD* 238).

Apart from a brief reference to his being picked up by the railway bosses on the last leg of his journey, Johnston's presentation of Smallwood's walk ceases after the character's stay in Fielding's cabin. There is no need to continue the narrative once his protagonist's undertaking has been re-conceived of by way of the plot device of his encounter with Fielding.

History Out of Time

At the end of *Colony* the characters, and their different approaches to conceiving of Newfoundland, become reconciled. This shift is enforced by and reflected in the narrative mode. Fielding's history is not inserted between the last chapters; her ironic voice is inappropriate at this point in the text, and Smallwood's voice disappears altogether. Instead, an excerpt from 'Field Day', Fielding's newspaper column, is presented. However, it is not in Fielding's usual style. This piece is confessional and it blends received history (Howley's book on Shownadithit) with Fielding's personal experience.

The text reconciles the different approaches of Fielding and Smallwood, and consequently elevates the epic tenor of its own, wider project, by

subsuming them within figurations of time-eternal. Whilst Smallwood's ambitions have an epic quality and his goal of striating space and time fits well with them – allowing him as it does to extend the reach of the beginning and end points of journeys and histories – his method, the text suggests, does not allow him to do full justice to Newfoundland.⁹ His is ultimately a failed epic project. Smallwood's failure has its roots in his inability to construct timeless time, and in his prioritising of historico-political (striating) goals. Both difficulties, he suggests, might be rectified by a different approach:

I did not solve the paradox of Newfoundland or fathom the effect on me of its peculiar beauty. It stirred in me, as all great things did, a longing to accomplish or create something commensurate with it. I thought Confederation might be it, but I was wrong.

Perhaps only an artist can measure up to such a place or come to terms with the impossibility of doing so [. . .] Or Fielding [. . .] to whom no monuments will be raised, after whom no streets or buildings will be named. Unlike me, in whose name books have been written, plaques placed, statues erected. (*CUD* 552)

Johnston's own wider project is here implicitly referenced: 'Perhaps only an artist', we are told, can achieve what Smallwood fails to. He or she might be able to figure the very impossibility of the task.

⁹ In fact by the end of the narrative he is enshrined in texts of the nature of Prowse's as an historical marking point. After Confederation he reflects: 'I didn't have to write about others anymore. From now on others would write about me. I would make history, had made it. I no longer had to write it' (484).

Referencing infinite time is a particularly powerful way of figuring incommensurability – unlike Smallwood’s striating efforts, infinite time is more like Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth space-time. Instead of referencing points which break a journey, it foregrounds the ongoing nature of time and space. Yet Johnston’s wider approach does not deny the striated altogether (his mode is still the epic) – it references it by imagining origins, but making them unbounded ones. Like any temporo-spatialising method it must inevitably lead to elisions and oversights. What difficulties does Johnston’s reliance on time-eternal raise? How might these problems relate to questions of nation? That we are dealing here with national imaginaries is confirmed in Benedict Anderson’s statement that nations must appear to loom out of time immemorial (11).

The vehicles for time immemorial in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* are the physical landscape of Newfoundland, and its people. Indeed, the two are eventually conflated. Fielding is (appropriately, given Smallwood’s musings) the one to articulate them. Recalling watching a train pass by her cabin on the Bonavista line just after Confederation, its driver mouthing the words ‘*We won*’ (CUD 562) Fielding narrates the closing lines of *Colony*:

What did he imagine we had won? What, had he “lost,” would he have imagined he had lost?

I watched the train until it disappeared from view, the sound of the whistle receding. Something abiding, something prevailing, was restored.

I have often thought of that train hurtling down the Bonavista like the victory express. And all around it the northern night, the barrens, the bogs, the rocks and ponds and hills of Newfoundland. The Straits of Belle Isle, from the island side of which I have seen the coast of Labrador.

These things, finally, primarily, are Newfoundland.

From a mind divesting itself of images, those of the land would be the last to go.

We are a people on whose minds these images have been imprinted.

We are a people in whose bodies old sea-seeking rivers roar with blood. (CUD 562)

At the end of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* there is a retreat from the notion that people's actions in time – such as Smallwood's arduous trek down the rail-line, or his bringing about of Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada – make place. The train that hurtles down the Bonavista line on its linear path from one point to another (recalling for us Smallwood's journey down the same track) does not eventually take anyone anywhere. Instead the physical landscape is seen as the eternal source of Newfoundland's intrinsic Newfoundland-ness. This landscape is seen as beyond historical time. It simply is.

By connecting people who live in Newfoundland with a sense of this eternity ('We are a people in whose bodies old sea-seeking rivers roar with blood') white Newfoundlanders are made to appear immemorially indigenous. This notion is enforced in other ways at the conclusion of the text. In her last 'Field Day' column, Fielding recalls how she identified with Shawnawdithit 'the last Beothuk' (CUD 556) during her time in the sanatorium in St. John's. This explicit connection between the Beothuks and twentieth-century Newfoundlanders intensifies the notions of eternal time in operation here. Mary Dalton notes in her analysis of representations of Newfoundland's native inhabitants that the Beothuk are often 'emblems of the mystical, the timeless, somehow transcending disease, murder, starvation, freezing, the mundane and mortal, to inhabit the lakes and forests eternally' (138). The explicit reference to Shawnawdithit as the 'last' is also important. Terry Goldie further argues that 'The extinction of the Beothuks leaves no "native" contradiction' (*Fear and Temptation* 157) to white efforts to emplace themselves as indigenous. Goldie makes an explicit connection between representations of the Beothuks and the Tasmanian Aborigines (that I will return to in the next chapter) noting 'The Beothuk and Tasmanian Aborigine become a superior means of indigenization through their absence' (*Fear and Temptation* 158).

The reference to infinite time at the conclusion of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* elides the historically constructed nature of landscape, (and landscape, after all, is as Simon Schama argues 'the work of the mind. Its

scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock' (7)). It also problematically subordinates native history to a notion of the eternal (white) people of Newfoundland. Finally, it empties the concept of nation of any political connotations whatsoever. As Fielding states 'It doesn't matter to the mountains that we joined Confederation, nor to the bogs, the barrens, the rivers or the rocks' (*CUD* 560). By making the land itself figure time immemorial, by not linking it with any human acts at all (except to see the people as an unproblematic and eternal part of it), the nation is depoliticised.

Nations frequently do evoke infinite time, but they usually connect acts which have been performed by people who belong to them to a notion of the eternal. In Benedict Anderson's meditation on how ongoing time is connected with the nation he gives the example of the tomb of an unknown soldier as the basis for this figuration. The soldier figures a particular battle, a particularly seminal moment in a nation's history, at the same time as he invokes something infinite. Johnston's 'epic history' of Newfoundland is based, therefore, on a paradox. Despite the detail with which the text covers events which have taken place on Newfoundland's soil (through both the telling of the Smallwood story, and through Fielding's ironic *History of Newfoundland*) these events are not ultimately connected with that which is determined to be the 'essence' of Newfoundland itself – the land. At the conclusion of this epic tale of Newfoundland's past, the notion of history itself is elided.

Whose Past?

As I noted in my introduction to this Part, texts are inevitably bound up in the moment in which they are produced. The way in which *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* figures Newfoundland as eternal must itself be seen as an historical move. Because the land is uncoupled from history, it cannot be argued that the text is endeavouring by this strategy to ignite secessionist sentiment in contemporary Newfoundland. Rather, the evocation of Newfoundland as eternal is in consonance with postmodern demands for difference for its own sake.

The move to connect Newfoundland with the eternal land occurs at the end of the text.¹⁰ For the bulk of the narrative the emphasis is on the historico-political world of the island. The effect of this shift is to allow the memory of historico-political difference to stand in the reader's mind – at the same time as it is leached of its significance. It is Newfoundland's history which is in fact the 'image' the reader retains, at the same time as he or she is being asked to dismiss its importance. Historical difference is evoked, and then transcended by Newfoundland as eternal.

Other elements of the text entrench the importance of history, before it is dismissed. In the entry from Fielding's journal which opens the novel, Fielding, whilst ostensibly addressing Smallwood, provides a picture of St.

¹⁰ There are brief precursors of this move, such as Smallwood's view of the island as he leaves for New York. But it is not until the end of the text that the concept is really foregrounded.

John's during the years she and Smallwood were growing up. Her account is rich in details Smallwood would already know:

Goats wandered about at will the way cats in cities do today. If they lingered long enough in one neighbourhood, they were designated "lost" and were "claimed" by someone. But it was a rare goat who would stand for being tethered, so they more or less remained common property. Everyone milked them. (CUD 4)

This passage is almost pedagogical, it supplies a surfeit of historical information in a context in which it is not needed: Fielding is addressing Smallwood. It hints at the authorial presence behind the text and at Johnston's wider goal of encompassing Newfoundland in an 'epic' historiographic fiction himself. Further, this passage is strongly reminiscent of Horwood's opening to his biography of Joseph Smallwood.¹¹ Both refer to similar aspects of St. John's. 'Animals were everywhere' (CUD 4), Fielding tells us, 'Horses were everywhere' (9), says Horwood. Both refer to the street sweepers. Fielding tells us:

I was afraid of the crossing sweepers, boys wielding birch brooms who hung around intersections for people to cross the streets. They walked backwards in front of my father and me, heads down, furiously sweeping the dust or snow, clearing a path for us. My father, once we reached the other side, would give the sweeper a penny, sometimes more, depending on how poor he looked. (CUD 4)

¹¹ This coincidence is particularly striking because, as Richard Gwyn notes in his biography of Smallwood, Horwood was a journalist intent on deflating Smallwood with the vigour of Fielding. Is Johnston drawing a subtle connection here between them?

Horwood describes how:

Underfoot, St. John's pedestrians sometimes had the benefit of a stone crosswalk, permitting dry-shod and dust-free travel from one street corner to another, assisted by the crossing sweeper-boys with brooms who were rewarded with copper coins dropped into grimy palms by wealthy citizens in top hats or bowlers, carrying gold-headed or ivory-headed walking canes, their ankles sheathed in spats. (10)

As an historical fiction Johnston's text is in dialogue with others who engage with the texts of the past. Sometimes, as in the case of Horwood's biography, this is not acknowledged; at others, as in the epigraphs to the sections taken from Prowse's *History*, it is. The main effect of this intertextuality is to situate Johnston's fiction within a community of writing about Newfoundland, and to make it part of a conversation about the place. This effect is accentuated by the novel's focus upon a contemporary historical figure. To this end it is unsurprising that former Newfoundlanders Rex Murphy and Sandra Gwyn have taken issue with Johnston's portrayal of Smallwood. As Murphy puts it: 'An author is free to combine and invent as he or she chooses. Just so. But a reader is also free to feel a disappointment if the original is within reach of memory and experience and the created version is less persuasive, or compelling, or present' (*Globe and Mail* D15).

Yet Johnston does not want, ultimately, to participate in this dialogue. The move at the end of his novel indicates this, and he has said it elsewhere in

different terms, too. In a rejoinder to the comments of critics including Sandra Gwyn and Rex Murphy, published in *The Globe and Mail*, he argued that '*The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is a dramatic rendering of the spirit of a people and a place' ('Truth vs Fiction' A14) and took issue with critical responses. Rather, he argued it is 'A work of art that [expresses] a felt, emotional truth' (A14). These claims seem to echo, in a different register, the novel's emphasis on Newfoundland's eternal nature. In other words, both in and outside of *Colony* readers are asked to read it on one hand as epic history but at the same time to read it as 'pure' Art. Unsurprisingly, Johnston has been far happier with (positive) American responses to the text. He attributes them to the fact that Americans 'have no preconceptions about Smallwood and the question of Newfoundland's entry to Confederation' (*National Post* D8).

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams asks the reader to read Newfoundland simultaneously as a place that is differentiated in great historical detail, and, ultimately, and eternally, beyond history. Difference is created for its own sake: in the end, history is not a dialogue, but local colour in the name of 'Art'. Newfoundland becomes a post-Fordist commodity to be consumed in the global market.¹²

I want now to turn to another text which 'walks around' Newfoundland, and makes reference to eternal time, too. Patrick Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails*,

¹² Little wonder that E. Annie Proulx provides the back-cover endorsement for the Vintage edition of *Colony*. She praises Johnston for evoking a Newfoundland that is 'vivid and sharp'.

however, approaches the island and its past very differently to Johnston's novel.

On the Shore

The walks depicted in *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *Gaff Topsails* are of quite different orders. The protagonist of Wayne Johnston's text ranges widely across Newfoundland, undertaking journeys long in distance and duration. By contrast, the characters in *Gaff Topsails* do not venture much beyond the confines of the outport in which they live, and their excursions are brief. Linda Hutcheon suggests that postmodern historical fiction shows an affinity for cinematic and photographic modes (47); unlike the epic *Colony*, *Gaff Topsails* recalls the latter. Whilst the central narrative of Johnston's novel sweeps through decades of Newfoundland's history and takes the reader around and outside the island, Kavanagh's is focused on the events of a single day in a single location: space and time are figured intensively, rather than extensively.

A notion of eternal time is important to both novels – albeit in very different ways. *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* eventually subordinates the significance of the historical act of walking that Smallwood performs, and the political act of Confederation that he initiates, to a sense of Newfoundland's eternal essence: the novel figures the island's terrain and people as interconnected and unchanging. By contrast, Kavanagh's walkers

are figured from the outset as moving through a temporo-spatial zone that seems 'eternal'. Crucially, though, the novel hints that the time/space its characters inhabit is on the verge of coming to an end. The 'eternal' is an historically limited temporal mode in Kavanagh's text.

At every turn we are asked to read the world with which *Gaff Topsails* presents us as self-contained: and, consequently, the eternal as limited. Kavanagh has said he deliberately did not name the location of his novel, because: 'I wanted to convey the idea of a place that is changing or that is about to change [...] the notion of a place back there somewhere in another time' (*Sunday Telegram* 13). Instead of showing us the changes that are looming, his book focuses entirely on the moment just before they take place. Most of the narrative is confined to the events of 24 June 1948, the Feast of St. John the Baptist and the anniversary of Cabot's discovery of Newfoundland.¹³ Importantly, the date also has a resonance that is never directly referred to in the text – it is located between the two referenda that decided Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada. The significance of this coincidence is confirmed in oblique references throughout the novel. Hestia, one of the few first-person narrators, implies that politicians have recently been calling (GT 341) and mentions listening to the Barrelman (GT 389), a radio program Smallwood broadcasted (in reality, prior to 1948) from St. John's. Yet despite the subtlety of such details, the historical and

¹³ Although the date is never directly given, it is decipherable from the date on Lukey Dwyer's gravestone – 1947 – and Michael's reference to Lukey's drowning 'last summer' (38).

political effects of Newfoundland's union with Canada are given far more weight by *Gaff Topsails* than *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*. In the former, Confederation signifies the end of an era, and the demise of a notion of time and space as unchanging.

Eternal Travellers

The inhabitants of the unnamed outport upon which *Gaff Topsails* focuses can sometimes hear the far-off sound of trains 'deep up in the country' (GT 7), but few have travelled beyond the bounds of their own parish, let alone seen the tracks Smallwood walks along. So isolated are they that a recently arrived priest becomes 'the first foreigner ever to cross the doorstep' (GT 345) of some of the houses. At a symbolic level the eerie noise of the train reverberates as a disconcerting harbinger of progress, a symptom of the changes about to alter irrevocably patterns of existence which have persisted through centuries. But the people in this novel assimilate the distant sound of a locomotive within their established frames of reference: it recalls 'the lament of the Boo Darby suffering in beastly solitude somewhere in the wilderness' (GT 140).

In accordance with their isolation, the walks undertaken by the characters in *Gaff Topsails* are circumscribed. The figures in this text do not venture far from home, although they do explore paths and places with which they are unfamiliar. The spatial trajectories of Michael, Mary, Father MacMurrough,

Kevin, and Johnny the Light do not differ greatly, and all converge at a village bonfire to celebrate the Feast of St. John the Baptist at the conclusion of the novel. In contrast to Joe Smallwood's epic and well-publicised trek across the whole island, Kavanagh's narrative revolves around subjects engaged in private and circuitous journeys in a small area. By focusing on six walkers whose paths are interwoven, rather than a solitary one (or a conflicting binary pair) the emphasis on the small-scale is increased. Crucially, the limited spatial terrain that the characters cover does not downplay the significance of their walks – it simply gives them a concentrated, rather than dispersed quality. Each moment of every pedestrian experience is covered in microscopic detail. Particular attention is also paid to the characters' internal ramblings as they walk. The novel gives a modernist-style emphasis to the detailed workings of private thought – often through a stream-of-consciousness narrative. During Kevin Barron's walk, for instance, we are presented with his tumbling thoughts about who or what might be pursuing him."

In contrast to Smallwood, the walkers in *Gaff Topsails* are not uncomfortable traversing the zone where sea meets land. The adolescent Michael Barron spends most of the day off-shore, and with two friends explores an iceberg still within sight of their outport home; Mary, like her soon-to-be lover Michael, has just finished school and she walks along Gallows Beach and

¹⁴ Joyce's *Ulysses* is an especially important inter-text to *Gaff Topsails*, perhaps unsurprisingly considering Kavanagh worked on translating the work into Chinese whilst he was writing his novel (Clark, *TickleAce* 111). In addition to the emphasis Kavanagh gives to interior states of consciousness, and his refusal to present an overt plot, he makes Discovery Day a kind of Bloomsday.

up to the lighthouse; Kevin, Michael's sanctimonious younger brother, takes a coastal path from Gelden, a nearby outport; the suicidal Father MacMurrough and the physically and mentally scarred Johnny also make forays to the landwash. The littoral that the characters traverse is not a zone of tension in *Gaff Topsails* – for the sea is unquestionably the dominant element, as the novel's epigraph, 'We are as near to heaven by sea as by land' (GT 4) suggests.¹⁵ Smooth space saturates every aspect of life in Kavanagh's outport (including the characters' stream-of-consciousness thought processes) because the 'steady come and go of the tidewater speaks the pledge of [...] eternal constancy' (GT 141).

As well as being the terrain of the characters' explorations, the cyclical ebb and flow of the tide on the littoral reverberates through the text's formal structure, and the patterns of its language. The narrator's eye constantly moves from one character to another, giving a wave-like motion to the narrative, and the language of the sea pervades the book. We see Michael, for instance, '[shovel] the widowed oar in the soupy wash astern. Like pond scum the slush smothers the surface of the ice-cove so thoroughly that it dampens to mere swells the offshore chop that veers around the corner' (GT 208). Kavanagh's lexicon is biased in favour of words, like those of the sea, which reflect the particular circumstances of the characters' lives.

Adrian Fowler notes that the words enshrining experiences in the place have become so well-known that they:

¹⁵ Kevin Major's *Gaffer* also makes the sea a crucial smooth space. Major's protagonist dives into the water in order to access different, jumbled moments in Newfoundland's history. Rather than saturating life on land, however, in the world of *Gaffer* those on shore do not pay enough attention to the ocean.

are hardly separable any more from the experience itself. When Michael Barron and his buddies imagine themselves to be swilers and rogues and Mary fantasizes about being a princess rudely carried off by a coarse pirate, they are not just exercising their imaginations – they are embracing the collective memory of their community and preparing for adulthood in terms of its narratives. (Review 104)¹⁶

Whilst events may be focused around a single day, the past continually washes into the present in *Gaff Topsails*: indeed the two are imbricated. The terrain the characters walk (unlike Smallwood's trek along the railway) is shot through with stories of the past – mythical and otherwise. 'All her life' (GT 300) Mary has heard tales of Gallows Beach, but has never been there. When she finally reaches it the story of a nun's hanging exists in the present through the cipher of her imagination: 'Perhaps it was that gnarled spruce high up there – she pictures them slinging the cord over the trunk and pushing the madwoman into the abyss' (GT 300). In a move characteristic of the text, the past is shown to persist in the repetition of patterns of behaviour and experience, too. On the same walk, Mary encounters a present-day nun fleeing the convent in a state of distress.

¹⁶ E. Russell Smith says of Kavanagh's language: 'Like Annie Proulx in *The Shipping News* (but more authentically and convincingly) he has given his characters the diction and vocabulary of the Newfoundland outports' (*Pottersfield Portfolio* 84).

Mary recalls the nun's hanging because she is on the beach where it took place, but the past is not always spatially anchored in this way. The sounds of his brother ringing the church bells on shore, for instance:

remind Michael Barron of the dorymen, the ones who were caught out in the fog and were drawn home by those very bells – through the night the people took turns pulling the rope. Or of the old schooner masters who could navigate the darkness by listening for the echo of the ship's own danger-bell bouncing back to them off the cliffs. Or of the disaster of 1914, when the freezing sealers, miles from their home vessel, gained hope after hearing the ship's gong. (*GT* 15)

Although Michael's initial recollections are spatially inspired ('those very bells'), he digresses to reflect on other stories. Sometimes the past is neither temporally nor spatially located, but is simply a force. As Kevin Barron hurries along the path back to the village he is petrified that someone, or something is following him. Dismissing the more prosaic possibilities of a fox, or one of the bullies from his school, Kevin is assailed by fears that faeries, the devil, a stranger, a pirate, the Boo Darby, or even 'the last of the Beothics' (*GT* 323) may be about to attack him.

The parallel narrative of Tomas Croft is used by Kavanagh to extend the notion that time washes back on itself repeatedly in the location on which he focuses, by allowing him to present connections between past and

present that the characters are not consciously aware of at all.¹⁷ The story of the outport's original, piratical 'founder', is inserted in the midst of the present-day characters' traversals of the place. Croft's journey is reported to have occurred 'a decade before the voyage of the Genoan' (GT 96). Rather than highlight an oversight of Newfoundland's history, as Mark Kurlansky does in *Cod* when he provides historical evidence for voyages to Newfoundland prior to Cabot's in 1497, Kavanagh is interested in presenting an avowedly mythical tale.

The Irish boy Tomas Croft is an unintentional stowaway on an English fishing vessel called the *Trinitie*. His journey to the New World is a brutal, but also magical (mermaids and sea-monsters are encountered) voyage, during which Croft must evade the sailors who wish to heave him overboard. After jumping ship in a deserted cove in Newfoundland, Croft subsists in solitude on the land's bounty for years until the English come to claim it. Abducting the wife of one of the admirals, he fathers a brood of daughters who he eventually marries off to renegade men from up and down the shore. Croft comes to preside over a lawless clan who wreck and plunder whenever the opportunity presents itself. Later in his life, though, he returns to the Catholic faith into which he was inducted as a boy in Ireland, and commands his people to change their ways. 'Tomas Croft's name disappears with him. After a generation the man is forgotten' (GT 139), but his legacy still affects the lives of those who make their home in

¹⁷ The language of water, the sea, invites a critical vocabulary tied to the smooth, as well.

the cove in 1948:

They still dream the dreams they did in the forgotten days of Tomas Croft. Their tongues speak the same polyglot of English and Irish and thieves' Latin. Ashore, their scythes mow the meadows with the same sway and swing as did the scythes of their forebears. Afloat, their oars ply the waters with the same steady stroke. In the modern century, all these rhythms echo the pattern that they echoed in the time of Tomas Croft – the touch of the sea upon the land. (*GT* 140)

The characters will also light a bonfire on Discovery Day, unknowingly continuing a tradition with its genesis in the fires Croft once lit around the cove in an endeavour to scare off the British. The significance of physical objects they use every day, such as Father MacMurrough's blackthorn walking stick, and Hestia's rocking chair, which once belonged to Croft and his clan, will also remain oblique to them.

The story of Tomas Croft, as well as the characters' recollections of events beyond the bounds of their home, serve as a means for Kavanagh to reference historical moments outside of the day on which the narrative focuses. Always, though, in Kavanagh's novel fact and fiction are blended in ways that insist on the mythical, rather than 'real', implications of events. The English boats Tomas Croft sees arrive in his cove include the 'Mathew', Cabot's ship, but also Sir Humphrey Gilbert's 'Golden Hind', which actually arrived in St. John's several years later. Spatial descriptions

similarly confuse mapped locations in Newfoundland space. The cove is described as being both near the Isle-aux-Morts and the Gaff Topsails, located in fact at opposite ends of the island.

Gaff Topsails's treatment of the past means that the novel does not invite the kinds of comparisons with recorded history that Johnston's text does; as Adrian Fowler puts it, 'the whole tenor of this narrative is in the direction of allegory' (Review 103). The central orientation of *Gaff Topsails* is centripetal rather than centrifugal and the novel relies more heavily on intra- rather than inter-textual references, through the repetition of events and details in its tightly woven text.

In *Gaff Topsails* Kavanagh creates a mythical island in which time 'eternally' circles back on itself. But he hints that the world its inhabitants know is about to end. In the novel's closing lines, as the bonfire flickers out at the tag-end of Discovery Day, Newfoundland's national anthem is sung – but to no avail in warding off the coming change:

The ragged band that is left cuddles up to the fire. No more
fuel remains to be thrown on, and the flames are fading.

A voice sings:

When sun-rays crown

Thy pine-clad hills

And summer spreads her hand ...

Other voices one by one take up the anthem.

By the time the verse is finished the people crouch close
within the cocoon of light and heat. A chill shivers their backs.
Something cold lurks behind them in the dark, something terrible and
dangerous. (GT 427)

Island Time

I have already suggested that Johnston's pleasure at his American readers' reception of his text as 'pure' fiction is problematic because for much of its narrative *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* asks to be read as a view on history with political implications for Newfoundland today. *Gaff Topsails*, on the other hand, consistently encourages a reading of its imagined world as mythic. By using the historico-political moment of Confederation to demarcate the 'eternal' as smooth-space-time, Kavanagh cannot be accused of making politically charged claims about an enduring contemporary Newfoundland 'nation' either.¹⁸ Yet Kavanagh's text is still commodifiable as a representation of 'a world of difference' (to use James Overton's phrase). The crucial distinction is that difference in *Gaff Topsails* is secured in the past, rather than brought forward into the present. The reader of the novel walks around an island lost in time.

¹⁸ This move means that it also avoids the kind of depoliticised quasi-mythic narratives that Howard Norman's *The Bird Artist* (1994) and Tom Gilling's *The Sooterkin* (1999) present. These texts both offer imaginative and engaging stories, but there is no imperative for the Newfoundland and Tasmanian settings they re-figure other than that they find them amenable to conjuring strangeness. As the narrator of the *Sooterkin* constructs things – in Tasmania 'we may discover nature's strangeness at its source' (38). Julia Leigh's *The Hunter* (1999) presents an even more serious problem in that it conjurs Tasmania as different and strange, but it does not distance its construction by using mythic elements at all.

Chapter 6

Walking Races

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams and *Gaff Topsails* both incorporate journeys by foot into their preoccupation with the moment of Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada. In *The Savage Crows* and *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* walking itself constitutes the key point of historical interest and narrative attention. The fictions of Robert Drewe and Mudrooroo reimagine the expeditions undertaken by George Augustus Robinson, Truganini, Wooreddy, and their various black and white companions, to 'conciliate' Tasmania's Aborigines in the early nineteenth-century. They are not alone in their focus. The travels of these figures recur repeatedly in contemporary writing. Brian Castro's *Drift* and Nancy Cato and Vivienne Rae Ellis's *Queen Trucanini*, for instance, also refer to them.¹

The journeys of Robinson and the Aborigines, and their consequences, have proved compelling material for contemporary writers because they represent such a stark and complex chapter in the tragedy that is the history of white/black relations in Australia. As the texts of Mudrooroo and Drewe highlight, the 'mission' was an unusual experiment, and one with tragic consequences. Although a less overtly aggressive undertaking than other colonial initiatives in the Black War, which took eighty-nine European and 150 Aboriginal lives during martial law between November 1828 and January 1832 (Ryan, *Aboriginal Tasmanians* 113), the expeditions to find

¹ Albeit in ways diametrically opposed to each other. Castro's book is highly experimental in form, and whilst Robinson makes an appearance, Truganini is tellingly absent. Castro wants, as Damien Barlow suggests, to 'subvert Truganini as an "emblem of extinction" and [...] articulate subjugated Pallawah identities and epistemologies' [no page]. By contrast, Nancy Cato and Vivienne Rae Ellis's book places Truganini at the centre, and presents her problematically: 'Fated to outlive all her countrymen, to be a living fossil as the only remnant of her ancient Island race, she was to become famous as the last of the Tasmanians' (2).

tribes living in the unsettled areas of Tasmania had catastrophic results. Once found, the Aborigines were relocated to the Bass Strait islands. Decimated by homesickness and white illnesses, by 1847 only 47 remained alive at the settlement at Wybalenna (Ryan, *Aboriginal Tasmanians* 203). Truganini's death in 1876 was purported to signify the extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines, and the closure of 'a chapter in colonial history' (Reynolds, *Fate* 201). Not only, however, did an Aboriginal community persist in Tasmania, the Tasmanian Aborigines maintained a hold of mythic proportions on Australian imaginations.²

The modality of walking around allows for the representation of intense clashes between walking styles. The 'Friendly Mission' as it is reimagined by both Drewe, a white Australian, and Mudrooroo, an Aboriginal-identified writer, involves a collision between radically disjunctive, and often racially differentiated, conceptions of Tasmanian space. The white and Aboriginal characters may walk the same paths as they proceed on their expeditions of 'conciliation' in these texts, but their notions of where they are and what they are doing diverge. In giving their accounts of black and white walking this kind of complexity, both authors rewrite the canonical (non-fictional) renditions of the journeys contained in George Augustus Robinson's journals. Robinson left behind voluminous diaries and correspondence detailing his travels in Tasmania, and N.J.B. Plomley's *Friendly Mission: The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834* made some of this material more widely available in edited form when it was published in 1966. Both Drewe and Mudrooroo have clearly made use of it. Drewe refers the reader to Plomley's text in the opening pages of his novel as a source of additional information about Robinson's travels: at some points his descriptions of events seem taken

² The community has persisted but, as Lyndall Ryan argues, it has suffered 'the enormous cost of near-extinction as a people and a continuing denial of their identity in the present' (257).

almost exactly from Robinson. 'Got benighted', Robinson tells us in his journal (*Friendly Mission* 58), 'Got benighted' says Drewe's Robinson (SC 52). Mudrooroo's text does not offer a formal acknowledgement of any of Robinson's writing – in either edited or unedited form, but Mudrooroo has acknowledged his use of Plomley's edition elsewhere (see Shoemaker, *Black Words* 146).

Both Mudrooroo and Drewe use their license as fiction writers to insert other voices and perspectives into the interstices of Robinson's text. *The Savage Crows* and *Dr Wooreddy* exploit the instability of Robinson's text in both its original and edited forms. In his Introduction Plomley describes Robinson's journals as 'slipshod, too wordy and too concerned with trivia' (3) and bemoans, among other things, their lack of punctuation, their illegibility and confused dating. Plomley himself complicates the original material through his opinionated approach – even he cannot help turning the diaries into a narrative, casting Robinson as 'our hero' in his description of the man's life prior to the missions of conciliation (11).

Drewe makes a fictionalised version of Robinson's journal a parallel, rather than exclusive, narrative in *The Savage Crows*, and highlights ironies in his Robinson's discourse. Mudrooroo, by contrast, reimagines the expeditions from the viewpoint of the Aboriginal figures involved, making loud the voices concealed in Robinson's writing. *Dr Wooreddy* can be read as a direct riposte to statements like the following contained in Robinson's journal: 'Had the greatest difficulty in keeping my natives quiet; frequently put my hand over their mouths to stop the sound of their voice' (*Friendly Mission* 163).

In this chapter I consider the different viewpoints *The Savage Crows* and *Dr Wooreddy* present, before going on to look more closely at the ways in which

they accommodate such differences. As in the case of the novels I treated in Chapter 5, we find the modality of walking around associated with issues of national space in these texts in complicated ways. Once more, too, we find transcendent categories of time invoked.

In the Present Past

In *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men*, leaving Tasmania is the necessary step to the protagonists' fulfilment. In *The Savage Crows* the opposite is true. The two central characters in Drewe's novel, George Augustus Robinson (located in historical time) and Stephen Crisp (located in the contemporary moment), are both figured as making personal progress – not necessarily of the most honourable kinds – within Tasmanian space. Robinson discovers purpose in his work with the Tasmanian Aborigines, and acquires personal wealth and kudos from it. Looking back on his experiences from the comfort and security of a pleasant old age in Bath, he writes that Lady Franklin, wife of the former Governor of Tasmania, has told him '(with the secretive air of a *confidante*) that I may yet be honoured by H.M. for my many explorations and benevolence among the aboriginals' (SC 220). Stephen Crisp's Tasmanian experiences have psychological, rather than pecuniary rewards. Crisp, who lives in Sydney, becomes obsessed with writing about the Tasmanian Aborigines. He feels that 'He had to put everything – past, present, friends, strangers, the whole obtuse yet complicated place – into perspective. It was very likely that what he was beginning to refer to as his 'thesis' was at the heart of it. It might say it all' (SC 9). When he finally travels to Cat Face Island, to meet the Aborigines still mutton-birding in Bass Strait, he thinks: '*you may be the link in it all, the whole business, the bridge between the past and the longed-for tranquil future*' (SC 248). Leaving the island a day later, he feels it was 'worth the trip' (SC 264).

The journeys of the nineteenth-century Robinson and the twentieth-century Crisp are juxtaposed throughout the novel. Rather than comparing the walking styles of characters who exist in the same historical moment it thus becomes necessary here to look across time. Although Crisp only travels to Tasmania at the conclusion of the text, he walks constantly around Sydney, as he thinks about his 'thesis', and recalls trips made to other corners of Australia, and Papua New Guinea. Stephen Crisp's walks frame Robinson's in that we are only introduced to Robinson through Crisp's interest in him. It is several chapters before the excerpts from 'The Savage Crows', the novel by Robinson that Crisp has purportedly found in the Archives, come to be juxtaposed into the text without any contextualising from Crisp. But Robinson's first-person narrative also has the power to influence our reading of Crisp's story. When the twentieth-century protagonist travels to Cat Face, for example, we recall Robinson's interactions with the Tasmanian Aborigines over a century before. Do Robinson and Crisp, we have to ask, actually walk and think in the same way? Is Crisp a post-colonial or colonial walker? I want now to examine their walking practices in turn.

Missionary Walking – Travels with G.A. Robinson

George Augustus Robinson tells his own story of his travels in Tasmania, but Drewe constructs his text in such a way as to allow other perspectives to filter through Robinson's words. Robinson is infuriated, for instance, with John Batman's slur that he is a 'pompous martinet' (SC 197), but because he also tells us that the major from whom he learns of the slander only responds 'thoughtfully' to his passionate refutations, the reader is encouraged to suspect that Batman may be right. In this circuitous way we

build a context for Robinson's travels, and are able to situate his walking practices in contrast to other alternatives.

Robinson's expeditions, as we learn from his reported conversations with others and his witnessing of the murder of the Toogee tribe at Cape Grim, take place against calls for the complete genocide of the Aborigines.³ They are also pitted against plans for other, less extreme, ways of removing them from the settled districts of the island. Robinson contrasts his expeditions of conciliation with what he sees as the misguided attempts to drive the Aborigines onto a peninsula in southern Tasmania through an operation called the Black Line. He reproduces within his 'book' Governor Arthur's proclamation on the subject so we learn that the aim of the Black Line is to take control of space through a walk of a very different nature to Robinson's. Conceived as a battle operation, the soldiers and settlers who participate in it have specific orders from a commander, are equipped with weapons (although they are instructed not to use them unless absolutely necessary) and follow a fixed itinerary within a set time frame.

Robinson is sceptical about the idea of the Line from the moment he hears of it, and also worried that his own efforts will be upstaged. He is jubilant when he learns second-hand from the whites he encounters during his journeys that the line has been a failure – only a boy and an old man are captured. The Aborigines he meets provide him with eye-witness accounts from their own perspective. Woreter-lette-larn-ne tells how he and others slipped back and forth inside the line, and how the soldiers stretched out for miles, firing their muskets frequently, but seemed 'scared they will find us' (SC 179). Woolyay describes the parodic victory dance her tribe performed

³ The Cape Grim Massacre actually occurred in 1827, before the historical Robinson set out on his journeys (Ryan, *Aboriginal Tasmanians* 135). Mudrooroo and Castro refer to it too, although they do not have Robinson as witness.

after eluding the line, and shows Robinson the cache of weapons they seized from the whites. The lack of direct accounts from the white participants in the Line, juxtaposed with the lively Aboriginal testimonies, enforces the sense of the machine-like and mindless nature of the operation.

Whilst Robinson's relief at the Line's failure is selfishly motivated, from the various sources of evidence that he provides the term 'the Black Line' does appear an oxymoron. The misguided nature of the operation is contained in the language used to describe it: the Black Line is never 'Black', nor a line. The Aborigines elude the soldiers effortlessly, their tracks criss-crossing rather than ever conforming to the linearity of a militaristic march.

However, whilst the term proves contradictory in relation to the movements of the Aborigines, it is more instructive as a way of conceiving of a style of walking and of writing. When its racial connotations are removed, the term the 'Black Line' also suggests an undeviating ink line on a page, or a map. The line is a representation, a mark at one remove from the actual terrain it constructs. Here again the term contains its failure because the Tasmanian landscape is anything but linear.

The failure of the Black Line contextualises Robinson's undertaking. It suggests that walking styles need to be adapted to the terrain in which they are deployed, and that the recently arrived (the Black Line occurs only 30 years after settlement) white colonists are not able or willing to do this. Unable to really *see* the terrain they travel through they shoot at trees and possums, and even each other. Within the context of the failure of the Black Line and of the proven riskiness of venturing into a country they have trouble reading, Robinson's sheer survival seems extraordinary.

Unlike the walkers of the Black Line, Robinson is open to new ways of negotiating space. Rather than adhering to a predetermined route and

schedule, with the help of his Aboriginal guides he responds to signs and events as they occur. Colonists more in favour of exterminating the Aborigines, or driving them onto the Tasman Peninsula, call this 'traipsing about' (SC 135). Robinson relies heavily on the way Truganini, Wooreddy, and his other guides decipher generic signals to which Robinson is blind – for example, they recognise bones piled in heaps as sacred and not to be disturbed. They can also read more transient signs – such as the recent tracks of the tribes they are seeking. The only Aboriginal method of navigation which Robinson is impatient with is Manna-largenner's practice of consulting his 'devil' (SC 208) and taking direction from the spasmodic twitches of his body, but even then he follows the route Manna-largenner suggests.

Robinson's survival is based on more complex grounds than pure reliance on his Aboriginal guides. During the expedition to conciliate the Toogee, for example, he finds himself alone on two occasions. On the first, Robinson tells us: 'My people left me, black and white together, and I was alone in the wilderness. During the night the creatures of the bush made sport of my situation' (SC 106). He is initially dispirited and uneasy on the second occasion too:

A small sand-tunnelling creature scabbled away from me beneath a bush. The marks of its nails remained in the sand. Thuddings and booming reverberated from the earth: the foot poundings of kangaroo and wallaby. I felt brown and yellow eyes upon me. (SC 127)

Like the walkers of the Black Line, then, Robinson finds the bush a strange and alien place full of hazards which are difficult to identify and fears which are difficult to overcome.

Unlike the walkers of the Black Line, however, Robinson walks as part of a *mission*. His stated aim is religious, as well as political. Robinson may well have instructions from the Governor, and he is unquestionably motivated by personal ambition as well, but he conceives of his walk using the discourse of religion. He ruminates on the second occasion he is left alone: 'My own eyes were almost closed from the angry pustules on my eyelids, boils covered my body [. . .] Was the Lord humbling me for placing too much dependence on others?' (SC 127). As soon as Robinson considers the possibility that God might be preparing him to act alone, the space he occupies is transformed from one of threat to one of promise: 'The day was dawning fine, the sun warming. Small parrots flashed in the bushes' (SC 127). The religious discourse Robinson uses is not always sustained but it is enough to motivate him at crucial junctures. Soon after his revelation that he may have been relying on others too much, he decides to travel through the bush to find the Toogee by himself: 'I was now alone again but the hope of meeting the Toogee buoyed my spirits. There was no time for eating or resting' (SC 128).

Robinson's ability to find his way through the bush, let alone locate the Toogee, is astonishing. Robinson is never presented consulting a map of any kind, nor, when he walks alone, does he have enough skill to read the land in the detailed way the Aborigines do, beyond noticing when Aboriginal tracks exist, and knowing to keep a look out for signs of campfires. Robinson seems to be guided primarily by a combination of rash instinct and religious zeal. Indeed he gets into the most difficulty when he is consciously premeditated in his approach, and when this approach employs European rationalism and anthropocentrism. After he finds the Toogee, who welcome him to their campfire, he decides 'I would use my knowledge of the nature and function of the human mind on them. This time I would be the first away, before they could depart' (SC 128) as a

means to induce them to stay with him. This initially seems to work but when Robinson (still alone) encounters the Toogee again the next day, in a pre-arranged rendezvous, they flee without recognising him. Robinson's failure has horrific results when, soon after, the tribe is massacred by the white shepherds at Cape Grim.

Robinson is successful as a walker when he engages in improvisation, rather than reflection. The best example of this is when he dresses the Aborigines he sends to Macquarie Harbour in red coats in order to make them look like British soldiers and so keep them safe from attack. Of Robinson's pragmatic expedient Captain Briggs says that it 'insults us all' (SC 136), but it does mean that the Aborigines arrive safely. This willingness to improvise also protects Robinson from perhaps the greatest physical hazard to white colonial walkers of all – dissolution of his sense of self. During the first expedition to Port Davey Robinson's physical appearance changes dramatically: 'the cutaneous infection flamed and chafed along my limbs. My clothes by this time were completely dismantled, my trousers torn off above the knees. I opened the ends of two wheatmeal bags and bound them around my legs with kurrajong bark' (SC 129). In appearance Robinson is becoming native, but in terms of his sense of self nothing has changed. Drewe's Robinson bears little resemblance to Patrick White's Voss. A kind of simple-mindedness means he is not prone to self-reflection. Robinson is immune to those European ways of thinking which bring others in this kind of space unstuck, because he does not think much at all.

Whilst Robinson may survive his expeditions, and go on to a contented retirement in England, those he 'captures' have a less pleasant fate. *The Savage Crows* does not dwell in the same detail as *Dr Wooreddy* on the impact of the friendly mission on the Aborigines. This is partly because the early Robinson makes a better foil for the ambiguous Stephen, for as Drewe

has said in an interview 'at least in the beginning he had a vision, went with it, and prevailed against great physical odds' (Baker 91). However, the novel does highlight the fates of the bodies of the 'last' Aborigines, Billy Lanne and Truganini, in order to signal the brutal consequences of the colonial interactions between white and black. Truganini is 'exhumed, tidied up, lacquered and stapled to the museum wall' (SC 238).

Walking and Watching

Although Robinson's eventual perfidy in exploiting the Tasmanian Aborigines and then abandoning them is suggested in *The Savage Crows*, Crisp's relationship is more ambiguous, as contrasting his and Robinson's walking practices reveals. Robinson's walks are extended expeditions, Crisp's are brief, disconnected forays. Whilst the terrain of Robinson's travels is the wilderness, most of Crisp's walks take place in urban Australia. The dangers to Robinson during his expeditions are clear. The threats he faces are obvious physical ones: he might starve, be speared, fall off a mountain or suffer some other kind of mishap. Stephen does not walk through a terrain unexplored by white Australians, nor travel during what is effectively a time of war, yet his travels are not without their dangers. Everywhere he looks those around him are dying in senseless and unpredictable ways. In a list that goes on for two pages, Stephen presents 'a rough chart' (SC 232) of the violent deaths met by his friends and acquaintances, most of whom are the victim of freak accidents. Stephen's walk is contextualised by a culture in which meaning seems to have vanished. Deaths appear purposeless, journeys haphazard.

This difference is behind the most important contrast between the walking of Robinson and Crisp. Whilst Robinson is an active walker with specific

goals, Crisp walks to observe the actions of those around him. Crisp is interested, in a somewhat unfocused way, in understanding himself and his culture, rather than in *acting* in the way that Robinson does. This is not to say, however, that Stephen's role is a neutral or invisible one. Even a foray to view a murder site just around the corner from where he lives makes him conspicuous. As soon as Stephen rounds the corner into the appropriate street his heart begins 'hammering in his chest' (SC 183) and he is overcome by a feeling of indefinable guilt. His attempt to 'affect [. . .] the casual air of the *boulevardier*' (SC 183) comes undone when he strolls into the end of a cul de sac and has to double back in front of the scene of the crime. He is later questioned by the police – who also think that he is behaving in a guilty (which they read as suspicious) way.

Stephen becomes a walker/observer as a result of his personal circumstances – which are another source of guilt. His situation has much in common with Will Wiseman's from *The Night Season*, which I discussed in Chapter 3. Like Will, he is recently separated from his wife and young daughter, and has just left his job for a life of semi-poverty and aimless observation. Although he shares with Smallwood an obsession with the past, and a desire to understand it, his approach is more unfocused. He certainly has no obvious desire to make history either, and the banality of the world he moves in – his mother's last words are a reminder to take the baked beans off the stove, his father's are sent from a cruise for 'seniors' – would seem misguided anyway.

The most important of Stephen's journeys of observation is his 'colonial odyssey' (SC 239) to Tasmania. Stephen does not attempt to re-walk Robinson's paths; apart from a few hours in Launceston airport, he does not visit mainland Tasmania at all. Instead, he acts as an ethnographer of the present. Here the role of watcher becomes a self-legitimizing one. By

describing himself as a researcher, Stephen is able to gain access to the world of the Straitsmen. But the unfocused (and self-absorbed) nature of Stephen's observation is made clear when the Blue Plum, the leader of the Aborigines and thus the 'one who communicates' (SC 254) has to remind him 'sharply' (SC 252) to take out his notebook to record something the Plum wants observed. Stephen's drunken, late night walk on Cat Face Island shows just how foreign the Aborigines' world is to him, even though he feels they may be the key to his 'longed-for tranquil future' (SC 248). Drunk on hospital brandy, and panicking that the Straitsmen are luring ships onto the rocky coast during the storm which has flared up, he flees the shed in which the mutton-birders live and, narrowly avoiding falling into the cess pit behind it, he stumbles into mutton-bird holes, 'slither[s] and fall[s]', up the hill' (SC 259). Earlier in the evening Stephen had begun to lose all sense of place: 'the women had turned on the transistor radio, picked up faint Dixieland jazz from the mainland. *Which mainland? Which country? Planet even?*' (SC 258), and this confusion is even more intense during his walk when he becomes unable even to 'define the sea from the land or the sky from the sea' (SC 260).

The morning after, however, Stephen has everything back in perspective. Indeed his disorientation is found to have been cathartic. Strolling towards the mutton-birders 'lounging' on the shore he feels 'not exactly happy but more disburdened, slowing his stride to one of relaxation' (SC 262). Why, though, is not clear. Bruce Bennett claims that the final chapter of *The Savage Crows* is 'brilliantly executed' (10) because it retains a sense of ambivalence, but I concur with Randolph Stow's concern that:

The weakness of this extremely interesting book shows up when one asks of *what* he [Crisp] has been relieved, and how. Is the extermination of Tasmanian aborigines less atrocious because their

few remaining descendants are making money out of it? Does the squalor and suspected criminality of those descendants' lives cancel the score? Or has Crisp merely lost his private middle-class suburban man's guilt on contact with people who are guilty of worse, and boast of it? (32)

By figuring the Straitsmen, Drewe avoids (in contrast to writers such as Vivienne Rae Ellis and Nancy Cato, and in more complex ways, Mudrooroo) suggesting the Tasmanian Aborigines are 'extinct'; he refrains from the practice Ian Anderson discerns of embellishing 'the historical figure of TRUGGERNANNA [. . .] with a potent discourse of extinction' (10). By having Stephen recall his travels in Queensland, Western Australia and Papua New Guinea, the problematic history of racial interaction in Tasmania is also prevented from seeming unique to it. In Perth, for instance, Stephen can tell his racist brother and his friends that 'It's not generally taught in schools that some pillars of pastoral society used to distribute poisoned flour to the blacks in their locality. And organize shooting parties like fox hunts on Sunday afternoons after a roast dinner' (SC 99). Through this strategy, Drewe avoids the kind of criticism Lyndall Ryan applies to other writers who suggest that 'by virtue of being an island, Tasmania was isolated from the rest of Australia when the disease of extermination attacked it' (3). As Ryan claims, 'Tasmania suffered the first and the mildest form of the disease which ravaged mainland Australia unchecked for the next hundred years' (3). But Stow's worries that 'a terrible historical event is being used as a metaphor for everyday discontents in a way which demeans the hideously abused Tasmanians, and is even slightly ludicrous in its disproportion' (32) are not unjustified.

The fate of the Tasmanian Aborigines, and the history of white/black relations on the island are over-burdened as a means of understanding

contemporary Australia's ills in *The Savage Crows*. Crisp's guilt is caused by many things – his relationships with women, his treatment of his child, the death of his parents, even, as we saw, walking down the street to view a murder scene. Whilst he and Robinson are implicitly linked by the novel's parallel structure, and by recurring themes like their common physical discomfort after associating with the Aborigines (Crisp's difficulties with ticks on Cat Face Island recalls Robinson's contraction of the 'cutaneous distemper' from the Toogee) his worries are not exclusively caused by the colonial history of his country. To make his visit to Tasmania the means of his cure, then, seems inappropriate, but concluding the novel in this way must also have been an irresistible temptation to Drewe.

In Chapter 3 I noted how the island is used as a way of freezing the past so that the protagonists can move on. In *The Savage Crows* a different, but related, figuration comes into play. Cat Face Island is able to act as a zone almost beyond time altogether. Its Aboriginal inhabitants are not trapped in the past, but neither are they really involved in the present or the future. They exist in a kind of parallel realm. The spatial metaphors are salutary here. On his drunken excursion, Crisp finds himself beyond place altogether. Despite its discomforts, the island is a kind of utopia, a place with no earthly location.

At World's End

Dr Wooreddy was published in 1983, well before Mudrooroo's identity as Aboriginal became a cause for speculation. In 1996 the *Australian* published an article claiming Mudrooroo was of African-American rather than Aboriginal descent, opening up vociferous and often complex debate about whether this meant he should no longer be considered Aboriginal. As

Terry Goldie recently said 'The discussion [about Mudrooroo's identity] will continue. At the very least, however, it should be accepted that Mudrooroo is not some self-serving imposter but someone who is caught in the midst of various problems of identification' ('Who is Mudrooroo?' 1).

In Part 1, I suggested that the relationship constructed beyond the boundaries of a novel between an author and his or her identity influences the readings of place available within the text. The debate about Mudrooroo's identity, unresolved as it remains, adds a sense of instability to any reading of his work. This instability is particularly interesting in relation to a text like *Dr Wooreddy* which is unequivocal in presenting an Aboriginal point of view on the history it re-presents. This is a point to which I will return later.

In *Dr Wooreddy*, as in *The Savage Crows*, distinct modes of walking are connected with Robinson, and the Aborigines who walk with him. The text does not, however, present a Crisp-like figure to walk around the contemporary nation or write about the past. Whilst *The Savage Crows* chiefly employs the historical and contemporary optics of white Australians, Mudrooroo recasts events from an Aboriginal perspective. The apocalyptic vision of the ending of the Tasmanian Aboriginal world and its people, combined with the novel's sustained project of writing history from the (reconstructed) Tasmanian Aboriginal viewpoint, make a figure like Crisp an impossibility within the text; the world could not be presented as ending with such finality if a contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal character was situated as a viewpoint from present-day Australia. Instead, the novel's guiding perspective is that of an unnamed third-person narrator who sees mainly through Wooreddy's eyes.

Despite the absence of a contemporary character's point of view, several factors locate this narrator as a present-day translator of events of the past. Occasionally, for example, the characters are presented thinking in language belonging to twentieth-century psychological and sociological discourses: 'Wooreddy knew that a man and woman came together to form a basic social unit' (DWP 14), and 'They had had a good relationship but not as deep as it could have been' (DWP 27). Or sometimes, as in the detailed documenting of Wooreddy's building of a catamaran, the narrator's interest appears ethnographic, or even pedagogical: the informing sensibility assuming a contemporary readership unfamiliar with Wooreddy's actions.

Crucially, however, the narrator is disembodied. He/she possesses an eye able to range over the past, and also a distinctive voice, characterised by irony, to relate what he/she sees through the perspectives of the characters. But the narrator has no body in the text; the narrator does not walk. This lack of an embodied narrator (especially in the twentieth-century context in which the tale is told) creates the sense of a more unequivocal view of the past, because it is not tempered by a delineated subject's perspective which might lessen the sense of omniscience. It also complicates the text's central argument that the Tasmanian Aboriginal world ended completely because this contemporary-sounding voice appears capable of reconstructing it, suggesting that cultural knowledge was not completely obliterated.

Other important structural differences between *The Savage Crows* and *Dr Wooreddy* provide contrasting contexts for the walking which the two novels present. The historical period reimagined in *The Savage Crows* focuses most closely on Robinson's Aboriginal mission on Bruny Island and his expeditions around the Tasmanian mainland. By contrast Mudrooroo's text presents pre-invasion life focused through the experiences of the Bruny Island Aborigines, the Bruny Island Mission, the expeditions, life on

Flinders Island, and the experiences of some of the Tasmanian Aborigines who go with Robinson to Port Phillip Bay when Robinson takes up his post as Protector of Aborigines there. The book's six-part structure presents each of these time/space periods (roughly) in succession, with the expedition material being divided into two sections: journeys through unsettled and settled districts. Traversing a broader terrain inevitably leads to new experiences of walking. The greater sweep of the novel allows for the presentation of profound shifts in walking styles in each section in a way not available to Drewe in *The Savage Crows*.

Aboriginal Walking

Mudrooroo reduces the number of Aborigines who walked with the historical Robinson to a core of several emblematic figures. On Robinson's first mission Plomley estimates he had about 12 Aboriginal people with him (111). Mudrooroo's text focuses on four: Wooreddy, Trugernanna, Umarrah and Dray. Each of these characters has a particular way of walking. Trugernanna, for example, is presented as choosing to walk more closely with Robinson than the other Aborigines, keeping up with his pace, rather than setting her own. Umarrah, by contrast, is more independent. Delineating these different Aboriginal walking styles is an important part of Mudrooroo's project of demonstrating the complexity of the Aboriginal positions articulated in response to white invasion. It is also a way of refuting the historical Robinson's dismissive comment that all blacks are 'alike' (*Friendly Mission* 176; *DWP* 99).

Wooreddy's perspective, however, is the central one. Because the text positions him as the Aborigine who understands best, in a philosophical sense, what colonisation really means, his way of walking merits the closest

attention. I want to focus here on the specific shifts Wooreddy's walking style undergoes in the respective sections of the narrative.

In the opening scene of the novel we see the child Wooreddy 'drifting' (DWP 1) and 'leaping and bounding along the beach like a kangaroo' (DWP 3). Secure in the knowledge that he 'belonged to Bruny Island: two craggy fists of land connected by a thin brown wrist' (DWP 1), Wooreddy is free to move and play as he wishes. The interchangeability of animal and human, as well as animate and inanimate attributes in this description (Wooreddy's bounding like a kangaroo, the land as fists) produces space as an active force, rather than a backdrop to events, and highlights the interconnectedness of people and their surroundings. Wooreddy's carefree movement is brought to an abrupt halt, however, when he lands on 'something slimy, something eerily cold and not of the earth' (DWP 3), at the same time as a boat (although Wooreddy does not recognise it as such) carrying the white invaders emerges from the 'dangerous' (DWP 1) sea.

As well as briefly evoking, through Wooreddy's pleasure-filled walking, an idyllic pre-invasion world to stand in contrast to what follows, the opening pages of the novel establish that Wooreddy's walks will situate him as an observer of the invaders of his world and the progress of their invasion. Although the role of witness is unsought, Wooreddy is an engaged observer, validating the seriousness of events he observes by the seriousness of his attempts to make sense of what he sees. His positioning in this role also neatly inverts the gaze the historical Robinson assumed for himself in his journal. Here the critical eye is turned away from the Aborigines and back onto the Europeans.

Wooreddy's ease of walking is determined first and foremost by his relationship with the land he walks upon. Wooreddy decides to accompany Robinson to the south-west because he has:

concluded that he had to leave his homeland forever. The unity between man and land had been severed by the agents of *Ria Warrawah* and when he walked he felt he was stepping on the ashes of the dead. His feet itched and shrank from the earth where once his veins had drawn sustenance. (DWP 49)

This kind of physical awareness of a reciprocal connection between bodies and places suggests Wooreddy's walking is a kind of walking *in*, rather than a walking over. Wooreddy's way of walking does not negate what Paul Carter calls 'the charge of the lie of the land' ('Bridgeheads' 62).

Mudrooroo's text argues strongly that the Aborigines' desire to walk with Robinson is a strategic decision. Umarrah wishes to return to his own people and uses the first stage of the walk – through country he is unfamiliar with – as a way of doing this. From Wooreddy's perspective Robinson initially appears as a fellow walker. He thinks that they can both help each other. Wooreddy thinks he can find in Robinson an ally against the changing times. The way in which Robinson walks soon reveals the futility of this hope. Wooreddy

tested out the relationship by making a gesture and then walking off into the bush. He was happy to find the ghost following, but his happiness disappeared when the ghost marched past him and took the lead. Robinson was defining their relationship from the beginning. (DWP 31)

Faced with Robinson's assumption of leadership Wooreddy adopts a more tactical (in the de Certeauian sense) style of walking. During their journeys through the south-west Wooreddy cannily lets Robinson maintain the impression of leadership, but at each juncture Wooreddy stage-manages events. Thus he contacts the south-west people and tells them how to approach Robinson, he 'mis-reads' signs obvious to him but not to Robinson, and he refrains from criticism when Robinson fails to take 'the proper route' (*DWP* 66).

The text suggests here that it is the Aborigines who directed Robinson's expeditions, not Robinson. They are able to do this because they understand the kind of walking the land requires, and they can read the tracks of other walkers through it. Both Robinson and his Aboriginal guides later look back at this time on the move as a golden period. Wooreddy recalls 'Robinson and their travels together. Those had been the good days. Plenty of food and women, of visiting new places and seeing new things' (*DWP* 185). Wooreddy only has this thought once he is on the move again in Port Phillip. Whilst on Flinders Island he is incapable of even remembering happiness.

At the opening of the Flinders Island chapter we again see Wooreddy alone in island space, as we had on Bruny Island. Instead of a child wandering happily in an environment in which everything makes sense we see an alienated, stationary man:

Wooreddy looked away from the filth and across a bare paddock to the distant inland hills. Perhaps he would go there? He took a few steps in one direction, stopped, took a few more, then stopped in confusion. He was in exactly the same spot. He had nothing to do, or even to think for that matter. (*DWP* 131)

Confinement on Flinders Island reduces Wooreddy's walking to a shuffle. Robinson's conviction that the Aborigines' 'wicked wandering has been the cause of [their] suffering' (DWP 147), which the narrator suggests is primarily motivated by his self-interested desire to maintain control over them, sees him inflict a stringent regime of spatial and temporal discipline. The Aborigines are not gaoled in the way the convicts are but neither are they free.

The hypocrisy of Robinson's characterisation of the Aborigines as 'wicked' wanderers and his desire to turn them into settlers is emphasised in *Dr Wooreddy* through Robinson's own boredom and illness during his sedentary time on Flinders Island and his dream of reassuming his 'roaming life' (DWP 133). Relevant here is Stephen Muecke's comment in *Reading the Country* that 'One has to bear in mind that a migrating class of European people came a vast distance, completely unsettling themselves, to arrive in Australia and call the locals "nomads"' (15). Furthermore Wooreddy's conviction that the whole settlement should be moved 'For everything smelt of too long an occupancy' (DWP 132) is eminently practical within the context of the frightening rate at which people are dying at Wybalenna, and disproves the suggestion that the Aborigines 'wander' aimlessly. The Aborigines know that places heal when left alone for a while.

The shifting meaning of the island grounds of Wooreddy's experience is important in *Dr Wooreddy*. In Chapter 3 we saw that in *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* the figure of the island was used as a way of delineating the self as a separate entity, and of making it possible to leave Tasmanian space. The reverse applies in *Dr Wooreddy* – Wooreddy is whole when his island space is not delineated as separate. In the opening scene of the novel

the boat of the white invaders which Wooreddy sees approaching the land appears to him as 'a small island which floated a travesty of the firm earth' (DWP 3) and his terrifying vision is that 'One day, sooner rather than later, the land would begin to fragment into smaller and smaller pieces [. . .] Then the pieces holding the last survivors of the human race would be towed out to sea' (DWP 4). A vision which is realised on Flinders Island. When the link is broken between the island space and a cosmological perspective which connects the island to everywhere else, the island becomes a fragment of space devoid of meaning, and walking becomes impeded as a result. Wooreddy may not have any less physical area to move through on Flinders Island than he did on Bruny Island, but his conception of where he is makes the island a prison, rather than a window on the cosmos. Wooreddy no longer moves through a universe of meaning, he simply inhabits a fragment of land.

Being on the move again eventually proves disastrous for Wooreddy, however. Escaping Flinders Island for Port Phillip and being again in a place where Aboriginal people are 'whole and living their own way of life' (DWP 174), offers no respite from the impact of white incursions on Aboriginal land. The visit culminates in Umarrah's execution and the return of the now 'senile' Wooreddy, along with Trugernanna and Dray, to Van Diemen's Land.

This final chapter of *Dr Wooreddy* offers a paradigm for the way a visitor to a place might walk through that land and engage with its indigenous inhabitants. The contrast with Robinson's approach to Tasmania is profound. Arriving in the Port Phillip district with Robinson, the Van Diemen's Land Aborigines first participate in a formal ceremony requesting permission to walk the land belonging to another people. Wooreddy then travels through the country with Waau in a relationship of reciprocity and

respect; listening to Waau's stories of the creation of the land, and honouring its sacred places. Wooreddy is even able to turn his presence in the land, and the lack of his literal tracks upon it, to Waau's advantage by offering to perform a revenge killing for him. Wooreddy suggests that the unfamiliarity of his tracks will make it hard to detect him as the killer.

This respect is not without its difficulties for Wooreddy. The murders lead to trouble, but Wooreddy's travels with Waau also expose him to a cosmology which challenges his own. The collision between his beliefs about the evil nature of the sea and those of Waau, which view the sea as a source of power, brings about a crisis for Wooreddy, followed by the realisation that the process of the ending of his own world is almost complete. Walking, for Wooreddy, culminates in a turning away from the earth and turning towards the sky; dreaming of walking its safe tracks, instead of those of the ruined earth.

Robinson Walking

Mudrooroo's text is structured around reversing the binary oppositions which Abdul JanMohamed has suggested constitute the central trope of imperialism: the manichean allegory. This allegory relies upon 'oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object' (JanMohamed 63). Thus the text pits the walking style of the Aboriginal characters directly against that of the white characters. The kind of physical awareness and reciprocal connection between bodies and places which I noted as a feature of Wooreddy's walking style is one Robinson is never depicted as

experiencing. The different forms of white walking (Robinson, the Black Line, the convicts) are presented as essentially the same.

Dr Wooreddy does not suggest, however, that these binaries are shifting linguistic constructions. Jodie Brown argues that Mudrooroo's 'subversion of ideological structures by a series of simple reversals of black/white attitudes [. . .] could be seen to be a partial betrayal of Aboriginality through complicity with the other culture's way of thinking, feeling and speaking' (75). The Aborigines' view of space is not just an alternative, produced in structural opposition to the white view, or vice versa, it is THE right way of understanding the space, at least whilst the link between man and earth is still whole. Thus when Robinson desecrates or ignores sacred places he falls ill. 'Dray circled around the sacred area and met him on the far side. She did not tell him that he had trespassed and would have to pay the price' (DWP 88). Soon after, Robinson is afflicted with a hideous skin disease (in the Plomley diary, and in *The Savage Crows* the skin disease is attributed by Robinson to sleeping with Aborigines infected with 'the cutaneous disorder').

The figure of Robinson walking through *Dr Wooreddy* verges on caricature. He trips and stumbles, but most notably he rushes everywhere, often (or so it seems to his Aboriginal companions) without purpose. Robert Drewe's Robinson is presented as moving quickly and thoughtlessly, too, but because he tells his own story of walking, caricature is not available as a mode of representation. Robinson's speed of moving in *Dr Wooreddy* is depicted as motivated by his desire for the other. Robinson's desires are always unattainable because they involve an idealised *image* of the other, as well as a desire to fulfill an image of himself in relation to them. Desire can drive Robinson restlessly towards, as well as restlessly away from a goal. On Bruny Island, for example, he attempts to distance himself from

Trugernanna after feeling an overwhelming sexual desire for her. Robinson acts on his urgent 'need to put space between desire and the object of desire' (DWP 41) and, calling Wooreddy to accompany him, he 'raced off at a fast trot into the undergrowth' (DWP 41).

Part of Robinson's walking practice is to record his experiences at the close of a day's travelling. The Aboriginal characters in *Dr Wooreddy* are faintly puzzled by Robinson's writing, but not particularly interested in it. Because the novel is told primarily from Wooreddy's point of view we can see Robinson writing in this text and the artificiality and antisocial nature of the practice is made apparent. When writing, Robinson becomes disconnected from his surroundings and his companions. Whilst in the south-west the Aborigines are able to sit around the camp and discuss their interpretation of the day's events whilst 'Meeter Rob-in-un [. . .] sat against one wall making the endless lines of marks on the soft white bark' (DWP 68). Robinson's solitary and silent activity is in stark contrast to the Aborigines' shared practice of verbal meaning-making. It is also in contrast to the way in which their meanings are embodied ones. Robinson cannot walk and write at the same time but Wooreddy and Waau inhabit and move through space which is a text. Robinson's writing always puts walking into the past tense.

Given his desire to *appear* a certain kind of walker – a desire he partially satisfies by inscribing himself in this way – it is unsurprising that Robinson's 'greatest triumph' (DWP 155) is actually a walk down a city street, rather than a walk through the wilderness.⁴ Sedentary and bored on Flinders Island Robinson recalls the time when 'at the head of the last of the Van Diemen's Land savages, he had marched through the streets of

⁴ In his consciousness of his appearance as walker, Robinson recalls Smallwood. Walking, for them, is spectacle.

Hobarton in a grand parade. Everyone loved a parade, he most of all' (DWP 155). The elements of spectacle in this event are exaggerated in the text – Robinson appears in a quasi-naval-style uniform and walks with 'his little white dog bounding at his feet' (DWP 155). By contrast, the Aborigines 'came on with spears and waddies, in their primeval condition, truly a terrible sight [. . .] White women looked and delicately shuddered at some half-naked black man, then cast their eyes to their saviour' (DWP 155).

Re-writing Mudrooroo

Dr Wooreddy argues that prior to the white invasion, and even during the first years following it, the space now conceived as Tasmania existed in its 'true' form. The indigenous people who inhabited it belonged to and understood this space in all its truth. Their style of walking in the novel, as I have argued above, reflected this in its respectfulness of the correct ways of progressing through the land.

By contrast, the European invaders' way of walking, directed as it is by discursive constructions from elsewhere, is blind to the land itself. Through Wooreddy's experience in Port Phillip, the text argues that walking can be a powerfully transformative space for the subject. But the inflexibility of the notion of subjectivity possessed by the invaders means that instead of transforming themselves they destroy their new surroundings. The only moment of even partially successful walking that the Aborigines and Europeans perform together in *Dr Wooreddy* occurs during the first expedition to the unsettled regions where the Aborigines are able to guide the unknowing Robinson in the right directions.

The consequences of the European inability to be changed by place are cataclysmic for the Aborigines; their world is wiped out. The text's closing paragraph pinpoints the moment the Aboriginal world vanishes as coinciding with Wooreddy's death and burial on a remote Bass Strait island. With the breaking of the connection between people and the earth in Tasmania, and the impossibility of the Tasmanian Aborigines finding a way to exist on the Australian mainland, the novel suggests Wooreddy has nowhere else to go. The childless Trugernanna and Dray remain, but they are returning to an island of incarceration, a place of Aboriginal hopelessness and death. Furthermore, it is Wooreddy, all along, who has been shown to be the person who understands the true nature of 'the times'.

Mudrooroo's textual formulation of Wooreddy's death as the end of the world raises questions about his *own* way of walking/writing history. *Doctor Wooreddy* seems to perpetuate another kind of extinction on the Tasmanian Aborigines from the Robinson/white European induced kind – both by the same cause – obliteration of specificity for maintenance of the whole. Wooreddy's death is not presented as final in an abstract sense. The spark of light which Trugernanna and Dray see shoot up towards the evening star from Wooreddy's grave recalls Wooreddy's dream in Port Phillip of being lifted above the earth to a place in the sky 'beyond the harshness' (DWP 195), a transcendental realm in which he persists in some form. Wooreddy's death also leads to his incorporation in another sense, too. Just before the flash of light Dray and Trugernanna watch as 'The yellow setting sun broke through the black clouds to streak rays of light upon the beach. It coloured the sea red' (DWP 207). This implicit reference to the Aboriginal flag places Wooreddy's death within the context of a national and contemporary cause of resistance and endurance. The ways in which Wooreddy lives on, then, are transcendental and symbolic. His death is given meaning within schemes well beyond the boundaries of the island

from which he came. The persistence of a specifically Tasmanian Aboriginality, which Wooreddy represents during his life, is extinguished at his death.

The Tasmanian Aborigines are consumed in the national Aboriginal cause in *Dr Wooreddy*. The Port Phillip episode, and the use of iconography such as the Aboriginal flag, links their plight to that of mainland Aborigines. Adam Shoemaker reads Wooreddy's experiences in Port Phillip as implying the 'necessity for pan-Aboriginal communication in order to arrive at the unity behind diversity in contemporary Aboriginal affairs' (*Black Words* 154). Indeed, Lyndall Ryan's objection to texts implying that 'the disease of extermination' (3) struck only Tasmania cannot be levelled at the novel. Furthermore, Mudrooroo has suggested that he chose Tasmania as a microcosm of national Aboriginal problems: 'I picked Tasmania mainly because Tasmania was an island and, at that time, I thought my ego wasn't large enough or wide enough to encompass the whole of Australia. So I picked on Tasmania because you can walk around it and you can't get lost because you'll fall off the edge sooner or later' (Shoemaker, 'Quest' 42). However, the linkage with the mainland seems to go only one way. The novel allows for the possibility of Aboriginal tribes on the mainland persisting through European invasion, but it does not allow for a continuing Tasmanian Aboriginal community.⁵

Two events, both of which occurred several years after the publication of *Dr Wooreddy*, have retrospectively resituated Mudrooroo's novel in more promising ways. The publication of Mudrooroo's *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* in 1991 returned to a Tasmanian setting to examine Aboriginal survival, rather than extinction. As Helen Daniel puts it:

⁵ Despite the fact that Mudrooroo did gain permission from the Aboriginal community in Tasmania to write the story (Shoemaker, 'Quest' 42).

His 1991 novel, *Master of the Ghost Dreaming*, is a revisiting of his 1983 masterpiece, *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World*, in which Mudrooroo redirects the mythic energies of *Doctor Wooreddy*, not to mourning an ending but to celebrating a beginning. (DWP 44)

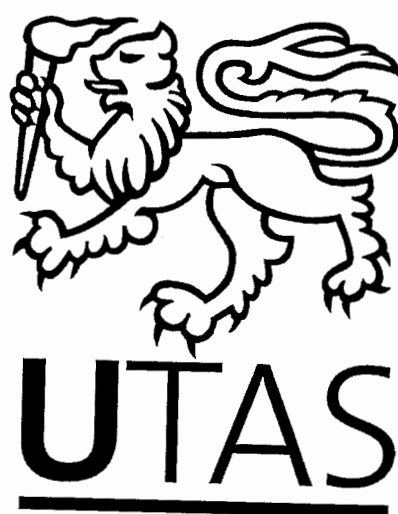
The novel also differs in form. Mudrooroo has stated that in *Master of the Ghost Dreaming* he was endeavouring to use what he calls 'maban reality', a form 'akin to magic realism' (*Indigenous Literature* 96). Place, in a geographical sense, is less specified in the novel, and there is a move beyond the inversion of European binary oppositions to the presentation of an Aboriginal-centred epistemology.

The second mitigating factor is the controversy surrounding Mudrooroo's own identity, one complicated by the fact that 'over the years Mudrooroo has become the arbitrator of what is and what is not the authentic style that an Aboriginal person uses when telling a story in the written form' (Dixon, Little and Little 5).

In Part 1 we saw the fictional realm of the *bildungsroman* overlap with that of autobiography in the construction of place. Place appeared in these texts as a ground beyond fictional/non-fictional distinctions. Ironically the destabilisation of Mudrooroo's identity opens *Dr Wooreddy* up again in positive ways. The text's insistence on black and white binaries within Tasmanian space is diffused by its author's own uncertain status.

Part 3

Coming Home



Part 3

Introductory

In Parts 1 and 2 of this thesis I argued that the modalities of leaving and walking around are present in contemporary writing which imagines both Tasmania and Newfoundland. But I also noted some important differences in the ways they are deployed in relation to the respective locations. I contended, for instance, that figures in leaving narratives are more reluctant to depart Newfoundland than Tasmania, and that concepts of nation serve different purposes in texts about walking around each place. In Chapters 7 and 8 I turn to another modality that is utilised in near identical fashion in writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland. So similar are stories premised on homecoming that in Part 3 I am able to juxtapose narratives about the two locations more directly than in either Part 1 or Part 2.

I argue that the close parallels between tales about coming home to Newfoundland and Tasmania can be explained by their shared engagement with the nexus between the local and the global. E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* (1993), Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide* (1994) and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1997), and Bernice Morgan's *Waiting for Time* (1994) all note the effects globalisation has had upon non-metropolitan localities. Each stresses that moving back to Tasmania or Newfoundland at the end of the twentieth century was not an easy process.

For Quoyale, Aljaz, Sonja and Lav, the protagonists of the respective texts, coming home constitutes a movement against tides of out-migration, and finding employment is difficult. Poverty is rife in the islands to which they return; the transition from producing primary and secondary materials to creating tertiary ones, and the relocation of capital elsewhere, are depicted as having taken a heavy toll on both places. Lav, Sonja and Aljaz must all content themselves with irregular and poorly paid casual work, and Quoyale is presented as lucky to have found something more permanent.

The local and global are important to *The Shipping News*, *Death of a River Guide*, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Waiting for Time* in terms of more than thematic preoccupations. In Part 3 of the thesis I argue that the remarkably similar shapes of their stories about homecoming indicate how the texts themselves are products of the 'glocalised' era on which they report. Not only do they figure the 'uniquely' local in globally standardised ways (hence the structural similarities of novels depicting two geographically distant places), their very obsession with bringing their characters 'home' is revealing.

Changes wrought during the postmodern era have left many people disoriented about their place in the world. As Fredric Jameson claims 'We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace' (*Postmodernism* 38). Taking the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles as an analogue for the difficulties we are presented with, he shows how it is

impossible to assimilate one's location within the building cognitively. The subject is never sure, he argues, exactly where he or she is, and few guide posts exist to help rectify the problem. Tellingly, the space of the hotel – a space of temporary and anonymous sojourns – is the antithesis of homespace. No wonder then that Mike Featherstone argues that:

the difficulty of handling increasing levels of cultural complexity, and the doubts and anxieties they often engender, are reasons why "localism" or the desire to return home, becomes an important theme – regardless of whether the home is real or imaginary, temporary, syncretized, or simulated, or whether it is manifest in a fascination with the sense of belonging, affiliation, and community attributed to the homes of others. (47)

Herb Wyile, Christian Riegel, Karen Overbye and Don Perkins claim that three aspects of postmodernism – its international sensibility, its emphasis on technological innovations, and its fostering of an homogenising global consumer culture (xiii) – are particularly important motivations for the desire to return home. By logical extension, homecoming must be equatable with going back to the local, the traditional and the unique. Tasmania and Newfoundland are associated with these qualities – not always in easy ways – in the texts I examine in the next two chapters.

The spatial paradigms these texts deploy highlight notions of the small-scale and the local. None of them foregrounds 'island-ness', for instance. The kind of map-like view of Tasmania presented in Part 1, the image of a piece of land surrounded by sea, is not accentuated within them. Even the extensive smooth-space of the sea is depicted as experienced in particularised ways. Quoye, in *The Shipping News*, becomes familiar with a very specific stretch of coastline – he learns the names of its very rocks. This emphasis on detailed views of space is appropriate because the transformations that these novels report are centred in Tasmania and Newfoundland. Neither needs to be conceptualised via over-arching terms like 'island', or 'nation' – which, as we saw in Parts 1 and 2, often are equated with an ultimate emphasis on the lives of those located outside of either place. The names 'Tasmania' and 'Newfoundland' are still employed, but they reference something quite different.

The Shipping News, *Death of a River Guide*, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Waiting for Time* also stress the persistence of traditions in the localities to which their protagonists return. The places they sketch may be affected by globalisation but the old ways have not been eradicated. In keeping with their desire to figure the past in the present, Flanagan's two novels and Morgan's *Waiting for Time* (which is itself a sequel to her earlier historical fiction *Random Passage*) all juxtapose scenes from recent and historical moments. Great attention is paid in all four texts to 'local colour'. The inhabitants of Tasmania and (even more markedly)

Newfoundland speak in local dialects and use obscure local sayings. They possess special skills and practices that have grown out of their long association with the terrains they inhabit. The characters who return soon acquire these traditions. This emphasis exists in tension with the fact that Sonja, Aljaz and Quoye are all born outside of Newfoundland or Tasmania, and Lav is taken away at such a young age that she recalls nothing of the place of her birth. In each instance at least one of these characters' parents was not originally from the island spaces. Sonja's parents are both from Slovenia, as is Aljaz's mother, Lav's mother is English and Quoye's mother's place of origin is never given. In other words, the sense that traditions in Tasmania and Newfoundland are long-established, exists in tension with the stated brevity of many of the characters' associations with the places.¹

In consonance with emphasis on the small-scale space of the locality, and its particularised imbrication with the global, novels which deploy the modality of homecoming foreground 'anonymous' subjects. Reimagined historical figures of national symbolic significance – Smallwood, Truganini, Robinson, Wooreddy – are conspicuously absent, even though three of these texts are historical fictions. Instead, the characters they present are a regional version of the city-dwelling apocryphal 'hero' de Certeau dedicates *The Practice of Everyday Life* to: 'the ordinary man' (although in these texts

¹ At issue here is James Clifford's theme (originally proposed in his article 'Traveling Cultures', and reproduced in his book *Routes*) that cultures have always 'traveled', but it serves us well to imagine otherwise.

'the ordinary woman' too) who wanders 'down below' in the streets of his city. Importantly, figures in the novels I examine here may be anonymous and unremarkable, but (like de Certeau's street-wanderers) they move in accordance with commonly held 'logics'.

In Chapter 7 I focus on the way these 'logics' are deployed in *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide*. In each text a hapless male character moves back to the terrain of his forebears. His return is the result of haphazard, rather than planned, circumstances. Once physically relocated, the protagonists of Proulx's and Flanagan's novels undergo a near identical 'process' of homecoming which brings them into contact with unsavoury aspects of the pasts of Newfoundland and Tasmania. Using a psychoanalytic model I detail in Chapter 7 how each text turns its unpromising hero into an authoritative father – in both a literal and a symbolic sense. At the conclusion of the novels, Quoye and Aljaz reposition the Law of the Father, and make the places to which they have returned habitable as home.

In Chapter 8 we find homecoming associated with motherhood, rather than fatherhood. In *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Waiting for Time* female protagonists return to Tasmania or Newfoundland after lengthy absences. Both islands have proved problematic locations for the characters' parents, but Sonja and Lav are eventually able to reclaim them as home. The process (and, again, it is a process) by which they do so involves 'giving

birth' to place. Both figures bear illegitimate (and unplanned) children. In Chapter 8 I pay particular attention to how the texts endeavour to reposition what has long been a problematic conjunction between notions of women and home.

The idea of home might be particularly appealing in the postmodern era, but going home is not easy for any of the protagonists I will be discussing in the next two chapters. Home has to be worked for, rather than assumed. But responses to these novels indicate the paradoxical position of Newfoundland and Tasmania in this period, and the complex role textual constructions play in this positioning. For whilst, as these texts highlight, Newfoundland and Tasmania were difficult places to come home to in the last years of the twentieth century, there proved to be a significant market for representations of these islands – including those contained in these novels.² The phenomenal success of *The Shipping News* puts it in a category apart from the other three texts. However, *all* of the fictions I consider in 'Taking the Waters' and 'Home Births' have found wide audiences.³

² Even to the paradoxical extent, as I noted in my Introduction that a desire for home might prompt a tourist visit to its imagined terrain.

³ Bernice Morgan's work is particularly popular in Germany, Flanagan's novels are both now available internationally (*Death of a River Guide* having been released in the United States in March 2001). With the exception of *Death of a River Guide* each of these texts has been, or is in the process of being, converted into the even more widely distributed and consumed medium of film.

Mike Featherstone's argument that the desire for home encompasses 'real or imaginary, temporary, syncretized, or simulated' (47) homes as well as 'a fascination with the sense of belonging, affiliation, and community attributed to the homes of others' (47) is proven in the responses to these texts. *The Shipping News*, *Death of a River Guide*, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Waiting for Time* reassure us that there are still havens from the disorienting effects of postmodernism, even if we ourselves only risk brief returns through reading or tourism. But in doing so each text is engaged in a risky undertaking. In *The Predicament of Culture* James Clifford rightly declares his suspicion of 'the symmetry of redemption' (12). As I argue in the following chapters, Proulx's, Flanagan's and Morgan's novels must bring their protagonists home in a way with which their readers can easily identify. They must also, however, find a way to avoid entrenching their characters and the places they return to in ultimately stereotypical ways.

Chapter 7

Taking the Waters

The modality of homecoming entails transformations of both subjects and spaces: homes must always be made, they can never be assumed. In *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide* outcast and solitary figures find communities, and metamorphose into people who belong somewhere. In a parallel movement, the initially discomforting and even repellent spaces they return to are reconceived as appealing. In this chapter I explore the textual intricacies of these processes of transformation, and their extra-textual consequences. I argue that whilst both Proulx's and Flanagan's novels attempt to reposition ideas of the unhomely and the homely by similar narratives, differences in the presentation of their stories lend them divergent ramifications. That these ramifications are not Tasmania- or Newfoundland-specific will become clear in the next chapter.

Finding home does not inevitably involve a process of return. Nikos Papastergiadis goes so far as to claim that within postmodernism 'The context for thinking about where we belong can no longer be defined according to a purely geographic notion of place and historical sense of connection' (1). Nonetheless, *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide* are premised on returns to geographically defined and historically connected places. The figures in these texts must go back to the sites of their own and/or their ancestors' (previously problematic) attempts to make a

home, and re-evaluate historical links with them, in order to evolve into people who belong.

Significantly, the movement back to the former site of home is only the beginning of the process of homecoming in *Death of a River Guide* and *The Shipping News*. The central narrative journeys in these novels occur only after the physical re-location has been made. This emphasis on following a protagonist's return with his evolution as a subject invokes the figurations of psychoanalysis. In these schemas the subject's confrontation with what has been repressed or forgotten leads him or her to formulate new structures for existing in the present. Accordingly, in this chapter I refer to theories of psychoanalysis. I pay particular attention to Julia Kristeva's thesis on abjection, and Sigmund Freud's notions of the *unheimlich*.

My foregrounding of Kristeva's and Freud's work does not constitute a radical departure from my earlier focus on the theories of Michel de Certeau. Ian Buchanan has argued that whilst the psychoanalytic aspect of de Certeau's thought has been overlooked, it is crucially important to his notions of spatiality (*De Certeau* 108). Buchanan claims that 'All spatial practice, de Certeau asserts, must be seen as a repetition – direct or indirect – of that primordial advent to spatiality, as we might now want to call it, namely [quoting de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*] "the child's differentiation from the mother's body. It is through that experience that the possibility of space and of localisation (a 'not everything') of the subject

is inaugurated''' (*De Certeau* 113). I want to take Buchanan's point a step further by arguing that the abject and the uncanny are particularly apt devices for initiating refigurations of space and place. Encounters with either phenomenon prompt the subject to return to a time prior to his or her 'differentiation from the mother's body'. The shock of this return forces a reconstitution of both subjectivity and surroundings. In the process, place is reconceived.

As Elizabeth Wright argues, 'The return of the repressed works at the levels of narration, plot and figuration' (131). My analysis of *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide* must consequently address a range of textual aspects. In what follows, I pay particular attention to the organising principles of *histoire* and *discours*. The *discours* of *Death of a River Guide* – the way in which its narrative is presented – diverges from that of *The Shipping News*. The former jump-cuts between several strands of stories as Aljaz, drowning on the Franklin River in south-west Tasmania, experiences jumbled and epiphanic visions of the recent and distant pasts. By contrast, *The Shipping News* presents a linear narrative. Although each of the text's thirty-nine short chapters is also chopped into short scenes separated by varying temporal gaps, the story progresses inexorably through a year of Quoye's life. Later in this chapter I will be examining how these, and other, differences contextualise the processes of homecoming Quoye and Aljaz experience. First, however, I want to focus on the overwhelming similarities in *histoire* – in story – between the novels.

Father's Stories

In both *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide* the death of his father is the chief motivation behind the protagonist's resolve to return to Newfoundland or Tasmania.¹ The centrality of the father's demise in each text recalls Lacan's argument that the 'identification with the imago of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy' (5) is the dialectic linking the 'I' to socially elaborated situations. In both Proulx's and Flanagan's novels, the death of the father signals that a cultural order has ended, and that, consequently, a new way of emplacing subject and space might begin to be formulated.²

But what kind of cultural order, what way of experiencing place, has come

¹ Two other deaths influence Quoye's decision to leave Mockingburg, New York; those of his unnamed mother (who, cancer-ridden, commits suicide with his father), and of his unfaithful wife, Petal. But it is the father's demise that is most significant. Quoye's mother's voice is completely absent from the text – his father speaks for her instead. Petal, by contrast, is vividly realised, but she shares the language of the father. Her feminine name is grotesquely inappropriate, as she well realises: 'Don't call me "Pet." Bad enough to have a stupid name like Petal. They should have named me something like "Iron" or "Spike"' (SN 20).

² It is thus appropriate that the end of this law, symbolised by the fathers' deaths, should prompt a journeying back to the time/space in which the law was devised, as the characters search for new ways of reconstituting themselves and their senses of the world. This itinerary is given added power by the fact that travelling per se can invoke a similar regression. Frances Bartkowski in her *Travelers, Immigrants, Inmates: Essays in Estrangement* likens the experience of journeying with that of returning to a childhood state – of not recognising limits and boundaries, and of being excluded from language. For Aljaz and Quoye, journeying back to territories which they do not really know is the necessary precursor to learning a new way of operating.

to an end? Although the two fathers are located differently in relation to 'home' in the respective novels – Quoyale's lives in Mockingburg, whilst Aljaz's is in Tasmania – the central tenets of their laws are the same. Both share a reliance on the language of evasion, and the use of strategic silences. The central narrative that Guy Quoyale, signed by the novel's narrator in the first part of the novel simply as 'the father', reiterates to his son is the stock immigrant's tale of the self-made man, and one which belittles Quoyale:

You'll have to make your own way. I had to make my own way in a tough world ever since I came to this country. Nobody ever gave me nothing [. . .] I sweated and worked, wheeled barrows of sand for the stonemason, went without so you and your brother could have advantages, not that you've done much with your chances. (SN 19)

This specific passage contains the father's final words to Quoyale, belligerently spoken onto Quoyale's answering machine. The message is cut short by the end of the tape but its abbreviation does nothing to obscure its theme. It is appropriately recorded in a format able to be replayed endlessly, and without changes in nuance. The other strategy employed by Quoyale's father is silence. Upon the subject of his Newfoundland past Guy relates nothing but the blandest recollections. It falls to his aunt to begin inducting Quoyale into the world that has been repressed – a world that she will face again when she travels with him back to Newfoundland. Repeatedly raped

by Guy as a child, Agnis Hamm knows all too well the devastating effects of strategic silence.

Until around the time of Guy's death Quoye is inculcated in his father's language. He relies on 'greeting card sentiments' (SN 20) in articulating his feelings for Petal; an adherence to empty, hackneyed words, and one which prevents him from viewing her unfaithfulness as the betrayal the Aunt instantly recognises. He, too, is often silent. Unlike Guy's silences, Quoye's are rooted in insecurity and shyness. They are passive, rather than active silences, but they have the same effect of obstructing his connections with others.

Aljaz's relationship with his father is closer than Quoye's to Guy and, as a child, he does learn some of his father's stories. Unlike Guy's, Harry's stories are rich in detail, myriad and circuitous: 'Just when you thought you had heard them all there was a new story, but of course that always led back to the old ones' (DRG 92). Harry uses a colloquial language and his stories are intricately spatialised: 'Beyond them paddocks there, back where the Ben begins to rise up there, that's where the cave that Neville Thurley and your grandfather lived in for two winters [is]' (DRG 91). But after the death of Aljaz's mother the tales dry up and the two drift irrevocably into silence. Aljaz never learns from Harry the most crucial stories of all: those telling of his family's Aboriginal and convict origins. His mother's friend, Maria Magdalena Svevo, plays a similar narrative role to the Aunt of *The*

Shipping News in being the first to introduce Aljaz to the repressed stories of the past: 'I wonder whether it is my place to tell you things that your father should have told you when he was still alive. And I think, If I don't, who will?' (DRG 247). Until this point Aljaz has expressed little interest in the past. He shares his father's emotional evasiveness and mimics his silence.

It is appropriate within the context of the narrative of *Death of a River Guide* that Aljaz has at least some meaningful stories about Tasmania from his father. Quoye leaves Mockingburg for Newfoundland to make a 'fresh start' (SN 27) and put his failed family relationships behind him, but Aljaz returns to Tasmania in an effort to reach Harry, and construct some new kind of dialogue with him, before Harry dies. Unfortunately for Aljaz, the time and space separating him from his father are too great, in practical and metaphorical terms. Harry is dead before Aljaz returns from Western Australia, and a kind of tragic yearning fills the gap between father and son— a longing completely absent in *The Shipping News*.

On Dejection

The narratives of Quoye's and Aljaz's lives during the 'reign of the father', are compressed. This is despite the fact that in 'real' time they take significantly longer than the tales of their homecomings. This temporal

compression is accompanied by a sense of spatial emptiness. Before returning to Tasmania Aljaz inhabits horizontal, unmarked spaces: the sea, on which he works on a fishing trawler, and the wheatfields of Western Australia, located in a part of the country 'that remained flat and, to those who did not understand its subtleties, featureless for many hundreds of miles' (*DRG* 219). Quoyale's spaces are the urban wastelands of Mockingburg, a place unmarked by names and stories where he 'bought groceries at the A&B Grocery; got his gas at the D&G Convenience; took the car to the R&R Garage' (*SN* 11). Within these landscapes Quoyale and Aljaz approach the state of dejection. They are never comfortable within their fathers' reigns.

Kristeva characterises the deject as one who 'strays instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing,' and 'the one by whom the abject exists' (*Powers* 8). Both Quoyale and Aljaz are lost and unmoored within the empty spaces they inhabit. Quoyale's thoughts are described as churning like 'a heaving sludge of ice under fog where air blurred into water, where liquid was solid, where solids dissolved, where the sky froze and light and dark muddled' (*SN* 3). Aljaz drifts through 'endless casual jobs, the small towns and the big suburbs and the endless roads and the flushing airports, an inventory of despair' (*DRG* 269). Their bodies reflect their states.

Elizabeth Grosz, in her commentary upon Kristeva's work describes abjection as 'the underside of a stable subjective identity, an abyss at the borders of the subject's existence, a hole into which the subject may fall when its identity is put into question' (*Sexual Subversions* 72). The abject is

thus invoked when the subject is recalled to his or her inescapable corporeality. Neither Quoye nor Aljaz has the 'clean and proper' body which is the marker of having overcome abjection. Quoye's bulk, and Aljaz's darkness and 'stumpiness' mark them out.

But the abject is also redeeming. The more the deject strays 'the more he is saved' (Kristeva, *Powers* 8), and so whilst Aljaz and Quoye wander in their dejected states they also offer the glimmer of something transformative: the ability to remake themselves, and those around them. Quoye's friend Partridge observes in Quoye 'something like a reflection of light from a distant hubcap, a scintillation that meant there was, in Quoye's life, the chance of some brilliance' (SN 31). Couta Ho, whose initial attraction to Aljaz is instantaneous, is overcome when they meet again years later by 'an overwhelming feeling of falling into a void when she saw Aljaz' (DRG 268). The transformative potential the characters seem to possess will be realised after the deaths of their fathers and their returns to regional space.³ In Tasmania and Newfoundland they will undergo a series of experiences which will see them encounter the uncanny and abject directly (rather than only offering flashes of insight to others) and prompt them to devise new ways of viewing themselves and their surroundings.

³ Their fathers, too, had inhabited these terrains. They however, had been closed to the possibility of change. Their silences had precluded it.

Turning and Returning

In his 1919 essay 'The Uncanny', Freud ponders the relationship between the *heimlich* (homely) and the *unheimlich* (unhomely). He is curious to discern 'what this common core is which allows us to distinguish as "uncanny" certain things which lie within the field of what is frightening' (339). Freud suggests that 'the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (340). In other words, the *heimlich* and *unheimlich* are interwoven. He also distinguishes two different varieties of uncanny experiences, suggesting: 'an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed' (372). Freud acknowledges that 'these two classes of uncanny experience are not always sharply distinguishable' (372).

The teleology implicit in the first instance of the uncanny, that of infantile complexes, is one of continual movement between past and present. The subject moves from childhood to adulthood and so, in one sense, moves through and beyond the immediate, primary experience of these complexes, but they are still always present in the sense that it is possible to experience emotional effects by being reminded of them at *any* stage in life. In the second class of uncanny experiences the movement is a linear one – albeit briefly interrupted by temporary regressions until the experience has been

properly 'surmounted' (358). Freud equates this progression with the movement beyond a 'primitive' state (363).

The first kind of uncanny, with its eternal returns, is close to the other psychoanalytic term I use in this chapter, the abject. Kristeva insists in *Powers of Horror* that the abject is a different kind of phenomenon from the uncanny: 'Essentially different from "uncanniness," more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory' (5). Yet, in the same work, she also suggests that the abject is related to the uncanny, that it is 'A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome' (*Powers* 2). The common ground to both of these definitions is Kristeva's argument that the abject belongs to the time before the unconscious has been constructed; it is so archaic that it cannot even produce the refigured symbolisations of the unconscious. Like the uncanny, then, it involves a movement back, but Freud's uncanny returns us to a later moment of repression; one after the unconscious has been formed.

Kristeva sees this process of confronting the abject as painful but ultimately regenerative:

The abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgments. It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away – it assigns it a source in the non-ego, drive, and death (of the ego). It is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, of new significance. (*Powers* 15)

Freud does not comment directly on the transformative power of the first kind of uncanniness, although he does, through his concept of 'surmounting', in relation to the second. Implicit, though, is the suggestion that the subject must find some way of managing and understanding encounters with both kinds of the *unheimlich*, if he or she is not to fall into madness, as does the character of Hoffman's tale *The Sandman* which Freud refers to in his essay.

Freud's uncanny composed of infantile complexes and Kristeva's abject persist. The subject is not always prey to uncanny or abject experiences but, sporadically, he or she will undergo them. The concepts both involve the collapse of the subject's present under the weight of the abandoned past. Any sense of coherence and stability is challenged by the revelation that culture is a fragile construct. I want to stress here, then, that the two concepts invoke a similar movement, and follow Kristeva's definition of the relationship between the abject and the uncanny which suggests that their difference is one of degree rather than type. The abject is ultimately a

more radical and confronting experience of (Freud's first type of) uncanniness.

Unsettled Subjects

In *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide* the spaces of Newfoundland and Tasmania offer a range of subjects (not just Aljaz and Quoye) abundant opportunities for disturbing encounters: few, however, are transformed by them. Harry's and Guy's strategies of silence and evasion make more sense as we learn about the difficult territories from which they came. Those newly arriving, returning after a long absence, or making temporary, touristic forays into the spaces are especially vulnerable, however, to feeling unsettled. When Aljaz's Slovenian mother first arrives in Hobart she finds it a terrifying prospect:

The town looked crabbed and cramped [. . .] yet it seemed open to something that Sonja had closed her mind to many years before. The town was obviously not old, only a hundred or so years, yet in the streets they walked down from the ship Sonja could smell something much older. (DRG 144)

Agnis Hamm, Quoye's aunt, is equally disconcerted at her first sight of Newfoundland in fifty years as her ferry approaches Port aux Basques. She

ponders 'which had changed the most, place or self? It was a strong place. She shuddered' (SN 34).

This emphasis on the widespread experience of feeling unsettled by Tasmania and Newfoundland seems to suggest that the novels are following the well-established traditions of figuring the islands as dark and strange places in which the subject is ill at ease. Jim Davidson, Amanda Lohrey and Gregory Young have all commented on the prevalence of the gothic narrative in depictions of Tasmania; a narrative which, as Davidson suggests, figures 'extremity in personality as well as in uncompromising landscapes' ('Tasmanian Gothic' 322). Newfoundland has also been figured as a discomfiting space. The genre of the uncanny fairy tale, for instance, is long-entrenched. Barbara Rieti's book *Strange Terrain: The Fairy World of Newfoundland* comments upon it at length.

The Shipping News and *Death of a River Guide* are different, however, in that they emphasise that it is possible, if the strange is confronted fully, to be transformed by it in a positive way. The novels go so far as to imply that the uncanny and the abject are crucial to the idea of achieving a fulfilling 'settlement' in a place – because, as I have just noted in my discussion of Freud and Kristeva, they are potentially transformative. In *Death of a River Guide* and *The Shipping News* two particularly important means by which the abject and the uncanny are made present to the characters are the natural world and reminders of the distant past.

Mother Nature

The natural world is central to experiences of uncanniness and abjection, and so ultimately to homecoming, in Proulx's and Flanagan's texts.⁴ The confrontations Quoye and Aljaz have with nature are accentuated by the fact that neither returns to an 'ancestral home' after the death of his father. The houses they come back to are uninhabited and dilapidated. Although Quoye and Agnis make efforts to renovate the old house on Quoye's Point, nature literally disposes of it – unmooring it from its rock during a wild storm and sending it crashing into the sea. Nature thus takes primacy over the house; the characters must learn ways of being at home outside, as well as inside.

As Jennifer Livett suggests in relation to *The Shipping News*, and it could be argued just as easily in connection with *Death of a River Guide*, 'There is no possibility [in this novel] of choosing to ignore nature, or of admiring only its gentler seasonal beauties and its more picturesque effects' (52).

Nature in both texts is a force to be reckoned with. Proulx and Flanagan enforce this sense at the level of narrative action by positing a natural world continually overflowing the boundaries of conventional representations.

⁴ Richard Flanagan, interviewed after the publication of *Death of a River Guide*, professed his belief in the importance of nature and its potentially redemptive qualities, stating: 'I think the good thing about the natural world is that it forces us to face up to things within ourselves that aren't always that comforting or pleasant' ('Intimations' 90). Through representations of uncanny and abject encounters, his novel reflects this philosophy.

The 'punters' in *Death of a River Guide*, for example, find the Franklin 'irreducible to a camera shot' (DRG 20). More importantly, though, Proulx and Flanagan use the language and structures of the texts *themselves* to create a sense of excess and strangeness. The natural world is often figured in these novels via impressions and pulsations, rather than rational language – Sonja's terror, in the quotation I just presented above, for example, is articulated in sensual terms, via 'the smell of the receding tide, the smell of salt and drying kelp' (DRG 144).

The most important element of the natural world in both texts, as their titles as well as *The Shipping News's* nautical rope motifs accentuate, is water. This emphasis has quite different consequences than if mountains or fire, for example, had been accentuated.⁵ Christopher Connery, in his article 'The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary' notes that 'there is scarcely a piece of Western writing on the ocean' (292) that does not identify

⁵ *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide* present different types of water: sea water in the former and river water in the second. Gaston Bachelard, in *Water and Dreams*, insists on differences between these two kinds of water on the basis of their different relations to story-telling. He argues that inland waters are pure waters, waters intimately known by the people who live alongside them, and possessed of a material essence accessible to those who dream on their banks. The sea, by contrast, 'gives tales before giving dreams' (152). Bachelard believes that instead of encountering the sea individually and intimately, our primary knowledge of it comes from travellers returned from the ocean.

This distinction does not seem apparent in these novels. For Quoye and Aljaz, and their forebears, water has been a place of *work*, rather than reverie – be it the 'pure' water of the river, or the 'impure' water of the sea. It is through learning about water, the histories and foibles of the particular pieces of water that they encounter, and the ways of working with it in a practical sense that Quoye and Aljaz learn how to 'live' with it.

The similarities between the way river water and sea water are treated in these novels reveals some difficulties with Bachelard's arguments – most importantly the bourgeois, individualistic sensibility which underlies them.

water with the maternal, and *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide* do indeed make this connection. The link is established from the first page of *Death of a River Guide* when Aljaz notes that he is about to depart the world 'not dissimilarly' (DRG 1) to the way he arrived in it. In *The Shipping News* the sea is often 'milky', and we are told that whilst 'In Wyoming they name girls Skye. In Newfoundland it's Wavey' (SN 122). Most importantly, a specific instantiation of the maternal, the maternal *abject*, is associated with water in both texts. Kristeva argues that the experience of abjection can be crucially connected with the maternal because it takes the subject back to the time before even the processes of identification with the father, which will separate him or her from the mother, begin. The maternal abject, then, must figure as a persistent presence, always threatening, and sometimes succeeding in destroying subjectivity.

Water in these two novels more than fulfils these criteria. Even if the characters do not always appear conscious of it, water is the context for all the encounters and experiences of the texts. In *The Shipping News* the camera-eye of the narrator continually moves between the action of the characters and the backdrop of their surroundings. As the Aunt and Quoye and his children wake from their night of camping their backdrop is 'A roll of cloud on the edge of the sea and the black and white waves like a grim tweed' (SN 49). As Quoye finishes his lunch and prepares to return to work he is in the presence of 'The long horizon, the lunging, clotted sea like

a swinging door opening, closing, opening' (SN 159). In *Death of a River Guide* with its myriad narratives the connecting thread is always the river itself. Aljaz returns from his visions to comment upon his present circumstances jammed in the rocks of the Franklin.

Not only a persistent force, water is also at times directly dangerous and consuming. In each text water claims a succession of lives. Indeed, Howard Norman in his review of *The Shipping News* comments that by the end of the book 'it seems triumph enough that neither Quoye nor Wavey has drowned' ('In Killick-Claw' 13). In *Death of a River Guide* Aljaz is only the latest in a line of travellers on the Franklin to become snagged in its rocks. Aljaz himself, of course, drowns and Quoye nearly does (sequences I want to look more closely at in a moment). But it is not death itself, the ultimate extinction of subjectivity, which serves to associate water with the abject (or, less violent, uncanny) in these texts. More significant is the emphasis on the fates of bodies in water.

Water in these texts pulverises and dissolves bodies. Corpses (such as that of Wavey's husband in *The Shipping News*, or Derek in *Death of a River Guide*) are sometimes never found or, as in the instance of Herman Melville's body in the Atlantic, and the drowned kayakers on the Franklin, they sometimes wash up in unexpected places. The association of water with corpses, especially considering this element of surprise, is particularly abject. Kristeva suggests that the corpse is 'the most sickening of wastes, [it]

is a border that has encroached upon everything' (*Powers* 3). In these novels water creates, conceals and relocates corpses. For water to destroy bodies in this way is particularly disturbing because water is also, in another guise, an element of purification – one crucial to the literal creation of a 'clean and proper body'.

Water Stories

Those who dwell in the watery worlds of these novels must devise ways of managing the fact that they inhabit places likely to confront them on a regular basis with experiences that invoke the collapse of linear time, and the dissolution of subjectivities. Different characters embody various strategies for deflecting the emotions that water, as maternal abject, inspires. The river guides view 'the ditch' as a 'joke', whilst the 'punters' whom they take down the river try to arrest their growing unease in this 'weird alien environment' by seeing it as wilderness calendars, or as familiar in other ways – its rocks as resembling faces, for instance (*DRG* 20). The tourists in *The Shipping News* keep a safe distance – parking by the edge of the sea and staring at it for hours in a fashion that evokes the mesmerised sea-watchers in the opening pages of Melville's *Moby Dick*. But the approach the novels endorse most strongly involves the surrendering of the subject to the natural world – as Aljaz and Quoye are forced to do.

Both Aljaz and Quoyale are literally thrown into the medium of the maternal abject. Aljaz becomes trapped in the Franklin after slipping down a rock face and Quoyale nearly drowns when his poorly-made boat capsizes. These experiences are depicted as evincing shock and horror in the characters, as befits contact with the abject. Their immersions prompt the collapse of Aljaz's and Quoyale's coherence as selves – still, at these points, divesting themselves of the laws of the father – as they lose 'rational' consciousness and surrender to the forces of flow and current. The narration of *Death of a River Guide* shifts between first- and third-person modes to reflect Aljaz's fragmentation, and in *The Shipping News* Quoyale is presented as convinced that the red ice-chest he is clinging to as a kind of floatation device is filled with hot coals that are keeping him warm and preserving his life.

Kristeva argues that the dissolution of the self by the abject creates a space for the development of new structures of subjectivity. After his immersion Aljaz experiences a series of disjointed 'visions' of the past; visions that he is convinced the river itself is showing him. The explicit reference in the text to this method of insight is instructive. Because the vision is associated with grandeur and breadth, the novel's foregrounding of visionary experience re-situates the supposedly unspectacular lives of Aljaz and his forbears as vitally significant. There is also something unsummoned about a vision – it is granted, rather than chosen. Thus through the visions presented by the river, Aljaz confronts all that has been repressed and

forgotten in his family's past. The silences of his father are shattered as Aljaz experiences, and learns the value of, vociferousness.

Rather than being directly revelatory, Quoye's experience of near-drowning is important within a process of his gradual acquisition of stories and practices which will allow him to travel across the water more safely. The sea around Killick-Claw is intimately known by the poor who make, or formerly made, their living upon it – indeed an uncanny bond is formed to the extent that, for example, Jack Buggit 'just knows' when someone is drowning. Returning home from Gaze Island, Billy Pretty names each rock and tells its stories as he negotiates his way back to the mainland. Billy's tales are not those of 'away'; they emerge from long-standing personal and communal experience of a specific place. So intimate is the Newfoundlanders' knowledge of the sea that they have produced a language for it. Quoye realises, after his immersion, that these languages and stories are ones he must learn. They will replace the generalities of his father's stories with rich detail. Accordingly he begins working with Alvin Yark on building his boat.

The price for being 'pulverised' by water in these novels is an openness to a range of stories for reconstituting the self, stories which will allow the characters to come home. The tourist figures in these texts, by contrast, do not open themselves in this way to the abject, and so could never find

home in these spaces. Aljaz and Quoyale, having been 'opened up' by water, do learn.

Uneasy Histories

Up to this point I have been suggesting that the natural world appears as (and instigates the transformative work of), a persistent abject/uncanny in the two novels. History is another important, and related, prompt of abject and uncanny circumstances in the texts: important, because the past histories of both Newfoundland and Tasmania are seen as deeply disturbing, and related because the natural world inevitably contextualised the difficult lives lived in them, and is also the backdrop for the revelation of past secrets to Quoyale and Aljaz.

As in the case of the natural world, there are some ways of dealing with difficult histories which the novels reject. Harry's and Guy's silences are the most firmly dismissed; however, other methods are presented as problematic, too. In *Death of a River Guide* Aljaz is uncomfortable with the stories of incest and imbecility that the tourists he is taking down the Franklin want to hear:

The punters greeted the stories with nervous laughter and nods and shakes of the head, meant to convey bewilderment at such horror, but

which was rather them affirming that Tasmania was as they had always conceived it in their ignorance, a grotesque Gothic horrorland.
(DRG 132)

In *The Shipping News* Jack Buggit rejects a similar displacement onto Newfoundland. Quoye's new employer at the Gammy Bird is quick to stress that he will not tolerate the stock tales depicting Newfoundlanders as strange and inbred: 'I'm not no joke, Quoye, and I don't never want to hear jokes about Newfoundland or Newfoundlanders. Keep it in mind. I hates a Newfie joke' (SN 69). The stories that Jack's paper relates – of sexual abuse, car wrecks and other disturbing occurrences – may not be jokes but like those that the guides tell the tourists on the Franklin they do create the impression that the island is somehow *unheimlich*.

When Quoye meets Cousin Nolan, the last remnant of the old-style Quoyes – the incestuous rapers and pillagers for whom Omaloore Bay has been somewhat unkindly named – he is given 'a view of his own mountainous chin, here a somewhat bony shelf choked with white bristle', and realises with shock and horror 'what he had sprung from' (SN 264). Quoye's reaction is the typical one of the subject confronted with the abject, but it is intensified here by the recognition of his own physical resemblance to Nolan. Quoye undergoes the kind of uncanny experience Freud describes as being prompted by meeting one's double. After his initial reaction, however, this encounter with the abject instigates a positive

transformation in Quoyale. Through Nolan he confronts the past, learning the long repressed secret of his father's rape of his aunt. He also finds the source of the disturbing twists of knotted rope strewn around his house, and so is able to see these charms as pathetic, rather than threatening.

At the end of the encounter Nolan remains unchanged – his madness and his resemblance to Quoyale persist – but his power to produce a sense of horror in Quoyale is defused. Quoyale takes control of his cousin's welfare, arranging for him to be accommodated in St. John's, where he later visits him. This action is important because it signals that the abject can be accommodated within the bounds of community. Nolan is taken in, rather than cast out. In the process history is transformed from dark and threatening, to manageable.

A similar process of confrontation, shock, revelation and then acceptance occurs to Aljaz in *Death of a River Guide* after he recognises his resemblance to the cannibalistic convict Ned Quade. Aljaz's vision of a face 'scarred with the pox, the round head almost shaven so that its red hairs appear as jagged points over the scalp, like so many rusty needles' (DRG 148) causes him to exclaim in shock: 'My hair! My red hair!' (DRG 148). Aljaz's revelation is not much use in a practical sense (he is, after all, drowning) but, as in Quoyale's case, it leads him to understand and accept the forces that have determined who he is, and the trauma which results from *not* confronting the past. As in *The Shipping News*, the instigator of the abject

remains unchanged – nothing is done to gloss over Ned Quade’s cannibalism, but the figure is incorporated into, rather than rejected from, the notion of home. On the wharf at the end of the novel Aljaz sees Ned Quade participating in the family barbeque, suggestively waving a drumstick of indeterminate origin.⁶

Aljaz’s and Quoyale’s confrontations with the uncanny past have two particularly important effects. Firstly, they help contextualise the characters as ‘embodied’ subjects. The seemingly disparate features and characteristics making up their physical selves are given meaning, and so cease to be evidence of a dejected state. Secondly, they expose the limitations of the stock stories of incestuous and imbecilic characters which have been told about both Tasmania and Newfoundland. Frameworks which can incorporate, rather than serve to repress, the difficult past are shown to be more effective ways of conjuring place.

Surmounting the Past

To this point I have been addressing persistent kinds of experiences, those invoking the abject, or the infantile complexes present in Freud’s first type

⁶ Importantly, there *is* one historical figure who remains absent from Aljaz’s family reunion. The unnamed sealer, from whom Aljaz inherits his ‘sharp blue eyes’ (*DRG* 313), is not mentioned in this scene. This is despite the fact that Aljaz has seen the moment at which his Aboriginal great-great-great-grandmother, ‘Black Pearl’, is raped by the sealer as the ‘genesis of all that I am’ (*DRG* 316). This is an elision I will return to in my conclusion to this chapter.

of uncanny. In both instances the past (either in the form of nature, or history) is confronted and new ways of living with it are devised. These ways allow the subject to be 'homely' by working to honour and respect the past, rather than repress or reject it. I want to turn now to Freud's second version of the uncanny, that arising when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed. These are perhaps the most striking evidence in support of my argument that in these texts homecoming is only achieved by accepting the strangeness of the past.

One of the instances of this class of uncanny that Freud identifies, and which is experienced by both Aljaz and Quoye, is the experience of confusing animate and inanimate entities. In *Death of a River Guide* Aljaz observes, through his visions, the occasion on which the walls appeared to weep blood at the funeral of his great-grandmother Eileen:

the most miraculous sight was that of the large crucifix behind the altar. At first a small amount of blood had merely – and, it had seemed, solemnly and respectfully – run onto Our Saviour's nailed right hand [. . .] But then, as the storm grew wilder, the blood spilled over His head and flooded over His body [. . .] the blood gave to the previously inert figure a most immediate and horrifying sense of physical agony. Sobs of shock and fear ran through the mourners and a few scurried along the aisles and left, too frightened to stay. (DRG 60)

In *The Shipping News* the key instance of the seemingly inanimate being re-animated is Jack Buggit's return to life as he lies, supposedly drowned, in a coffin at his own wake. Quoye, and a crowd of Jack's family and friends are present as Jack regains consciousness:

A cough like an old engine starting up. Mrs. Buggit [. . .] gripped Dennis's arm. Her throat frozen, eyes like wooden drawer knobs. Wavey seized Bunny away. Dennis it was who shouted.

"Dad's come back to life!"

And lurched to help his father get his shoulders out of the coffin's wedge. A roar and screaming. Some stumbled back, some surged forward. Quoye pushed from the kitchen. (SN 333)

In both instances practical explanations are given for the seeming, in *Death of a River Guide*, and the actual, in *The Shipping News*, re-animation of the inanimate. In the former we are told that the incomplete restoration of the church roof had caused red paint to cascade down the interior walls. And in the latter we learn that the coldness of the sea slowed Jack's heart to an imperceptible beat, thus allowing him to survive, whilst appearing dead (uncannily – Aljaz gives a similar explanation for the lengthiness of his drowning in *Death of a River Guide*).

But in both cases, too, the uncanny elements of the story are allowed to persist. The narrator in *The Shipping News*, despite the practical

explanation given, continues to refer to Jack's revival as a 'resurrection'. Aljaz, too, continues to describe the incident in the church as the occasion on which 'the walls wept blood', even though he knows that this is not what actually occurred. He comments that this response has been a collective one 'The story of roof repairmen, immediately prior to an unexpected storm, abandoning wet red paint [. . .] had little chance against a miracle (DRG 60). The true story goes 'astray, languished and soon was heard no more, for none wanted to know it' (DRG 61).

Freud suggests that when we surmount feelings of uncanniness through use of our rational faculties two things happen simultaneously. Firstly, we are no longer able to *see* the previously uncanny circumstance (Freud claims he himself rarely experiences the phenomenon). Secondly, we proceed from a primitive to a more civilised state. By disputing the first effect – insisting, for example, that the walls weep both blood and paint – *Death of a River Guide* and *The Shipping News* also upset the notion that explaining unsettling experiences away necessarily results in the achievement of a more civilised state. These novels want to hold time past (the primitive) alongside time present (the civilised). Coming home for Aljaz and Quoye involves existing in a world in which rational discourse is not privileged as the route to knowledge.

Persistent Places

The journeys of Aljaz and Quoyale in *Death of a River Guide* and *The Shipping News* begin with the deaths of their fathers. Their subsequent relocation to regional space (where the abject and the uncanny challenge their entrenched notions) prompts them to develop new ways of conceiving of the world, and of themselves. Most importantly, it allows them to find home. Quoyale's homecoming culminates in his marriage to Wavey Prowse and their binding into a family his children, Bunny and Sunshine, and Wavey's child, Herold. Aljaz's, paradoxically, occurs with his death. In keeping with *Death of a River Guide's* magic realist strategies, after leaving his inert body pinned in the rocks of the Franklin Aljaz's spirit journeys to Strahan where he finds 'his home and his people' (325). On the wharf he spies a raggle-taggle cast of his deceased forebears – and his lost daughter Jemma – enjoying a celebratory barbeque. Both stories thus end with a confirmation of Quoyale and Aljaz as fathers themselves. By the end of *The Shipping News* not only his own daughters, but Wavey's child Herold, too, is calling Quoyale Dad. *Death of a River Guide* concludes with Aljaz being re-united with his daughter Jemma.

Of Endings and Beginnings

Kristeva, in her essay on abjection, and Freud in his definition of a persistent class of *unheimlich* experience, both suggest that we cannot banish the abject or the uncanny once and for all. Because the languages and structures we devise (such as those of place) are always provisional, abjection and uncanniness will continually compel us to reshape them. Kristeva's and Freud's concepts provide a productive, albeit unsettling, account of selfhood (and the places selves make), by seeing the self as constantly in need of work and constantly, too, needing to renegotiate a relationship with the past.

In their book *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation* Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs embrace uncanniness as 'a productively unstable dynamic' (24), and connect it explicitly with the experience of postcolonialism, whereby the categories of 'settler' and 'unsettled' are continually in question. They resist Kristeva's own later attempt in *Strangers to Ourselves* to 'wish "improper" anxieties away' (Gelder and Jacobs 27) and, whilst they acknowledge that the reactions evoked by the uncanny are sometimes negative – boundaries may be erected rather than destroyed in response to uncanny strangeness (one thinks again of Harry and Guy) – they insist that 'even so, activation

persists, and it is this persistence to which our book pays tribute' (xvi).⁷ In light of these persuasive arguments the question thus arises: do *Death of a River Guide* and *The Shipping News* embrace the persistent activating functions of uncanniness and abjection?

Both Proulx's and Flanagan's novels valorise the productive effects of uncanniness, and its more violent cousin the abject, in the process of presenting the homecomings of their protagonists. Through their encounters with these forces, Aljaz and Quoye are 'activated' and transformed. Furthermore, as I have argued above, the novels choose to present the uncanny and the abject as persistent – most strikingly, perhaps, in suggesting that the types of uncanny which are supposed, in Freud's schema, to be 'surmounted', should in fact be retained. What is known of old and long familiar is acknowledged and taken in; that which seems strange is embraced. But are the uncanny and the abject really figured as persisting in an *activating* sense beyond the experiences of Quoye and Aljaz? Or are they deprived of their violent and unsettling properties and turned into 'local colour'? To answer this question it is necessary to move beyond the level of *histoire* in the novels to consider that of *discours*.

In *The Shipping News* there is a fundamental contradiction in the presentation of uncanniness and abjection. At a stylistic level, the novel

⁷ *Strangers to Ourselves* was published several years after *Powers of Horror*. Kristeva does not refer within it to abjection.

employs linguistic and poetic formations which are in consonance with the uncanny and the abject. Clipped, fragmented sentences, for instance, dislodge linear time:

Dennis in a fan of raw stumps and Quoye had to shout above the chain saw's racketing idle. He said his house was missing. And they were up the road for the track through slumping drifts, past the Capsize Cove turnoff. Gravel showing through. Past the glove factory. Whiskey jacks there, anyway. The smell of resin and exhaust. Trickle of melt water. (SN 321)

In this passage the movement of the two men through space is set against observations which focus on detail. The effect is to endorse glimpses, flashes, sensual rather than rational experience.

The accretion of details in other passages has a similar effect.

Water may be older than light, diamonds crack in hot goat's blood, mountaintops give off cold fire, forests appear in mid-ocean, it may happen that a crab is caught with the shadow of a hand on its back, that the wind be imprisoned in a bit of knotted string. (SN 336)

Furthermore, the continual layering of descriptions in this excerpt creates a sense of excess, of the spilling over of the bounds of constraining structures.

The effect is so pronounced that the objects named are somehow dissolved. We seem to be dealing here with the sublime which, as Kristeva notes, is closely related to the abject:

The abject is edged with the sublime. It is not the same moment on the journey, but the same subject and speech bring them into being. For the sublime has no object either. When the starry sky, a vista of open seas or a stained glass window shedding purple beams fascinate me, there is a cluster of meaning, of colors, of words, of caresses, there are light touches, scents, sighs, cadences that arise, shroud me, carry me away, and sweep me beyond the things that I see, hear, or think. The 'sublime' object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory. (*Powers* 11)

Crucially, though, the final sentence of the novel, which comes immediately at the end of the passage of 'sublime' description from *The Shipping News* that I just quoted, reads 'And it may be that love sometimes occurs without pain or misery' (SN 337). At this vital moment of closure we are shifted into the linguistic register of the romantic mode, with its reliance upon the trajectory of 'happy ever after'. The promise of closure, however, is completely antithetical to the process of repeated transformation implicit in the abject and uncanny; it privileges completion and stability instead.

The conclusion of *The Shipping News* thus retroactively dilutes the impact of the novel's uncanny and abject stylistics, and of Quoye's process of homecoming. As Natasha Walter suggests, 'the clash of her [Proulx's] difficult rhythms and easy emotions makes for a bumpy, but finally reassuring read' (22). At the end of the text Quoye, the main focus of abject and uncanny experience throughout the text, is irrevocably beyond it. Married to Wavey, he is no longer the unsettled 'deject', open to transformative experience.⁸ Home is no longer fundamentally unhomey.

The ending of *Death of a River Guide* has quite different implications. Like Quoye, Aljaz no longer experiences uncanniness or abjection at the text's close, but for the paradoxical reason that he *himself* is now a potential instigator of these states. At the conclusion of the central narrative strand of *Death of a River Guide*, in which Aljaz's demise on the Franklin is chronicled, Aljaz becomes that ultimate symbol of the uncanny and abject: a dead body. Journeying into the 'blueness of death' (SN 318), Aljaz watches (and narrates) as Search and Rescue workers try to remove his body from the Franklin:

⁸ This change is reflected in an embodied way, too. A scene near the novel's close presents Quoye studying himself in a mirror. Instead of appearing repulsively obese and ungainly, as he had before, 'the effect was more of strength [. . .]. He guessed he was at some prime physical point' (SN 327). This change is important in a symbolic sense because Quoye's abject body had figured as an embodiment of place. Quoye's huge chin and bulky body (the legacy of the 'marauding' Quoyes) have been signs of the very histories which have made developing a home in Newfoundland problematic. Quoye (and Newfoundland) now possess a 'clean and proper body'.

They talk about the difficulty of getting the body out, of other awful jobs where drowned bodies are so decomposed that the flesh parts like mush when they grasp them and they are left holding nothing but an arm or leg bone. They nervously joke about cutting the body out with knives (DRG 319)

But a sense of the abject/uncanny is also retained at the end of the novel by way of its structure. Whilst *The Shipping News* invokes the abject and uncanny at a stylistic level by emphasising fragmented sentences and truncated images, *Death of a River Guide* suggests it at the larger scale of narrative structure. The text presents intersecting tales in circular and meandering fashion; catering perfectly to the notion of eternal return. In the course of Aljaz's visions, stories are broken off, resumed unexpectedly, and sometimes blur. The returns to these tangled narratives are not linear (even the central one of Aljaz's drowning begins in the middle), and truth is experienced in flashes of feeling and insight.⁹ The final pages of *Death of a River Guide* work to unite the different stories the novel presents, but the emphasis upon cycles and circles – the sense of a structure that is always moving backwards and forwards at the same time – is retained. On the wharf at Strahan Aljaz sees in 'his home and his people' (DRG 325) central characters from his kaleidoscopic visions. The image of his ancestors celebrating on the wharf dramatically translates structure into content. In

⁹ *Death of a River Guide*'s approach is in keeping with Walter Benjamin's suggestion that 'To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger' (*Theses* 257).

this scene figures from different moments in history all occupy a kind of eternal present. The meandering paths of narrative converge, but maintain their individual integrity, within this moment.

Both *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide* deploy the modality of homecoming. Each novel re-animates regional pasts and regional landscapes by evoking the abject and the uncanny: both reconceive of Tasmania and Newfoundland as places in which it is possible to make rewarding homes. But by safely anchoring the disturbing uniqueness of Newfoundland's nature and history (a uniqueness it has so effectively constructed) at the conclusion of its narrative, Proulx's novel retreats to a touristic representation of the island. Difference becomes commodity, not animating force for change.

The conclusion of *The Shipping News* helps explain why the book prompted such an explosion in Newfoundland's tourist industry. The novel ends by depicting the place as safe and settled. Not surprisingly, no primary moment of (un)settlement disturbs the romance. Rarely does the reader glimpse the ghosts of the Beothuk, although once whilst walking near his house on the point, Quoye spies a tower: 'Thrice the height of a man, the stones encrusted with lichens. Built a long time ago. Perhaps by the ancient Beothuks, extinct now, slain for sport by bored whalers and cod killers' (SN 208). But Quoye walks on. *Death of a River Guide*, on the other hand, centres the figure most evocative of the unsettling colonial past

at the conclusion of its narrative. Black Pearl 'walks right through that whole mob, until she is at the hub of them all, and everyone radiates out like spokes on a bicycle wheel from where she stands' (DRG 325) – the white sealer who brutalised and raped her is conspicuously absent and so unable to impede her progress. *The Shipping News*, by reducing the Beothuks' presence to a ruined tower, and then allowing Quoye to pass it as he might any tourist site, again shies away from the abject and the uncanny. If, as Gelder and Jacobs have argued, an encounter with the uncanny is inevitable within postcolonial societies, Proulx, in her determination not to unsettle her readers has ironically reinscribed for them the strategic silence Quoye had to break before he effected his homecoming. The story of Guy's rape of Agnis Hamm has at last been told, that devastating silence filled, but there is no room in *The Shipping News* for a story like Black Pearl's.

Chapter 8

Home Births

In the previous chapter I argued that the homecomings of Aljaz and Quoye involve a process which commences only after they return to the lands of their forebears. I also demonstrated that encounters with the abject and the uncanny are central to this process. By returning to Tasmania and Newfoundland and undergoing a series of unsettling experiences, Aljaz and Quoye are able to make homes for themselves in regional space. The apotheosis of their homecomings is strikingly signified by the endorsement each receives in the role of Father (with all the Lacanian import of this term) near the close of the texts.

In this chapter I again examine novels whose protagonists undergo a transformation after returning to Newfoundland and Tasmania. As befits their engagement with the modality of homecoming, *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* share with *Death of a River Guide* and *The Shipping News* the premise that returning to the time-spaces of the past can prompt the shifts in subjectivity (and conceptions of Tasmania and Newfoundland) necessary for coming home in the present. However, unlike the texts I considered in Chapter 7, *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* highlight female, not male, subjectivities.

Morgan's and Flanagan's novels possess astonishingly similar narratives. In each text a woman approaching middle age abandons a secure life in the metropolis to return to the regional area with which she and her family have historical associations. Upon returning, both Lav and Sonja discard the trappings of their city-personae, discover the secrets of their families' histories and become single mothers. Yet, as in the case of *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide*, we will find that the similar narratives of *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* do not preclude their production of quite different implications for constructions of Tasmania and Newfoundland.

Because of their focus on female subjectivities, the issues I wish to address in relation to *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* are differently focused to those employed in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 centres on the ways in which the novels construct and relate the terms 'women' and 'home'. Analysing the conjunction between these terms is pressing because, as we have seen in Parts 1 and 2, the modalities of both leaving and walking around consistently foreground the stories of male subjects. A move towards the presentation of female subjectivities in the contexts of Tasmania and Newfoundland is thus worthy of close scrutiny. Furthermore, cultural connections between 'women' and 'home' have a long history of presenting problems, so this change is not automatically

positive.¹ Theories of psychoanalysis (especially Kristeva's work on motherhood) are useful in addressing these issues as they relate to *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Waiting for Time*, and I refer to them in the course of this chapter. But I foreground other, more broadly based, feminist work, too.

In their introduction to *The Sex of Architecture* Diana Agrest, Patricia Conway and Leslie Kanes Weisman suggest the necessity of re-thinking 'some long-suspect "truths"' regarding women and space:

that man builds and woman inhabits; that man is outside and woman is inside; that man is public and woman is private; that nature, in both its kindest and its cruelest aspects, is female and culture, the ultimate triumph over nature, is male [. . .] other gender-based assumptions [associate] men with economic production, wage earning, and the city, and women with consumption, non-wage earning domestic labor, and the home. (11)

¹ *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* are not the only novels centred on female subjectivities which deploy the modality of homecoming, although their common emphasis on the maternal body, and on a movement from metropole to region, distinguishes them from other women-centred narratives. Tasmanian writer Heather Rose's *White Heart* does not return its female protagonist to live in Tasmania permanently, but the text relies upon her coming to terms with her Tasmanian past before she can begin to make a home. Donna Morrissey's *Kit's Law* (1999), M.T. Dohaney's diptych, *The Corrigan Women* (1988) and *To Scatter Stones* (1992), as well as Bill Gough's *Maud's House* (1984) are all concerned with female homecomings in the context of Newfoundland. Because women are typically depicted as remaining in place (hence their absence from the modalities of leaving and walking around) several of these novels enact 'homecoming' on the spot: it becomes a process associated with gaining rightful possession of a literal house in the same location. Only Tess Corrigan in *To Scatter Stones* moves from city to outport.

I want to explore feminist responses to these 'truths' in some detail now, in order to construct a frame for considering the texts. Firstly, however, I want to flag that several of the conjunctions between women and space that Agrest, Conway and Weisman identify have particular relevance to fictions about Tasmania and Newfoundland – for the islands themselves are often, and to their detriment, associated with similar terms.

The homecoming of women to terrains typically conceived of as natural, non-metropolitan, unproductive, and outside the stream of global affairs has the potential to entrench long-held stereotypes of both the subjects and the spaces. From a more optimistic standpoint, however, this pairing might also present an opportunity. In the context of just one of the conjunctions the editors of *The Sex of Architecture* cite, that of women and nature, Val Plumwood argues that 'a critical ecological feminism in which women consciously position themselves with nature' (21) offers potential. Furthermore, presenting the histories of both women and these regional spaces at centre stage could help highlight the problems both have experienced and redress past silences.

This chapter will argue that the key to assessing conjunctions between Tasmania, Newfoundland and female subjectivities in *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* is whether the novels construct 'women' and 'home' in flexible and fluid ways. This does not, as we shall see, necessarily mean that they have to abandon connections between

women (and for instance) nature, entirely – but they will have to resituate and ‘reanimate’ them should they choose not to.²

Nomadic Subjects

In response to the long-held binary oppositions connecting women with mainly confined and stable spaces, including the traditional home, some feminist theorists have argued for a politics privileging a nomadic female subject. Dorren Massey, for example, suggests that in the face of such constructions ‘one gender-disturbing message might be – in terms of both identity and space – keep moving!’ (8); Rosi Braidotti, in *Nomadic Subjects*, presents a vision of ‘female feminist subjectivity in a nomadic mode’ (1).³ The unsettling effects of postmodernism can be of particular interest to feminists interested in such projects.⁴ Braidotti argues that:

Given [the] new historical trend toward “trans”-national mobility, it is imperative for critical theorists and cultural critics to rethink their situation and their practices within this scheme [. . .] My task is to

² In de Certeauian terms, the question is whether the texts present figurations operative at the levels of both strategy – ‘assum[ing] a place that can be circumscribed as proper’ (*Practice* xix) – and tactics – ‘insinuat[ing] itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety’ (xix).

³ The nomad is a very different figure to the exile – the construction I examined in Chapter 1, when looking at the male subjectivities constructed in texts including *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men*. The exile sees himself as unique and individual – the feminist nomad, by contrast, is explicitly situated in culture.

⁴ Although not without reservations: Elspeth Probyn, for example, suggests that postmodernist arguments need to be watched ‘for holes that could swallow feminism’ (178).

attempt to define a transmobile materialist theory of feminist subjectivity that is committed to working within the parameters of the postmodern predicament, without romanticizing it but also without nostalgia for an allegedly more wholesome past. (2)

Braidotti's 'political fiction' (4) of a feminist nomadism is worthy of detailed analysis because it raises a number of issues relevant to my discussion of Flanagan's and Morgan's novels. Engaging with the work of Deleuze and Guattari, but departing from it too, Braidotti suggests that nomadism is inflected differently according to each subject's particular location (through, for example, axes including race or age) but it is primarily 'a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity' (22). Braidotti also insists that 'as an intellectual style, nomadism consists not so much in being homeless, as in being capable of recreating your home everywhere. The nomad carries her/his essential belongings with her/him wherever s/he goes and can recreate a home base anywhere' (16). She does not, however, elaborate what one's 'essential belongings' might be, after 'fixity' has been abandoned.

Braidotti's exegesis on nomadism – as intellectual style, and as embodied experience – challenges the entrenched binaries that Agrest, Conway and Weisman identify. But although *Nomadic Subjects* endeavours to expose the 'limitations of a logocentric approach' (3) its vision is more relevant to some female subjects than others. The book privileges particular kinds of

spaces – the city, most notably, is presented as a site of possibility and liberation. The prime aesthetic examples of the nomadic mode Braidotti provides are all metropolitan: New York performance artist Laurie Anderson's work, Martha Rosler's 1990 installation at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, Barbara Krueger's billboards 'strategically set up in huge intersections at the center of the metropolises of the Western world' (19), Jenny Holzer's electronic panels that 'flash right across the advertisement-infested skyline of our cities' (19). Braidotti's predilection for the city is presented as in line with her 'special affection for places of transit [. . .]. In-between zones where all ties are suspended and time stretched to a sort of continuous present. Oases of nobelonging, spaces of detachment' (18).

In addition to its city bias, Braidotti's nomadism also has an implicit class bias. Although she describes the nomad as 'usually beyond classification, a sort of classless unit' (22), her figuration supposes the opportunity to *choose* or, more bluntly, *afford* nomadism. This difficulty is most apparent in Braidotti's autobiographical comments in the text: the points at which she uses her own experience to provide a lived example of nomadic subjectivity (a strategy she explains as born of the desire to avoid exoticising the nomad as 'other'). Braidotti clearly has choices about her geographic locations: she has, for example, the means to write her book in such diverse locations as 'Jyvaskula in central Finland, Melbourne in South-Western Australia, Verona in Northern Italy, Utrecht in central Netherlands and so on' (18).

She also occupies the socially privileged position of the intellectual, with the academic training to develop a mobile 'critical consciousness' (5). 'Homelessness' – geographic and theoretical – is for Braidotti 'a chosen condition' (17).⁵

Not all contemporary feminists are interested in elaborating nomadic modes of subjectivity and space in attempting to overturn past oppressions. In *Questions of Travel*, Caren Kaplan expresses a disbelief 'that we are all rootless, existentially adrift, and limitlessly mobile' (26). Black feminists, writing out of a history in which home has often been 'fragile and [. . .] transitional [. . .] a makeshift shed, a small bit of earth where one rests [. . .] always subject to violation and destruction' (hooks 47), have been particularly unwilling to embrace nomadic modes (Rose 53). bell hooks, in her essay 'homeplace: a site of resistance', suggests that black women of her mother's generation took the conventional role 'that sexism assigned' (44) and transformed home-making into a positive, politically empowering practice. By constructing a site in which black people 'could strive to be subjects not objects' (42) these women adopted a stance against 'global white suppression' (46). hooks sees the stance as crucial because 'when a people no longer have the space to construct homeplace, we cannot build a meaningful community of resistance' (47). She despairs of contemporary

⁵I should clarify here that I am not raising these difficulties with Braidotti's work in order to discount the possibility of theorising nomadism, or to deny the urgency of re-thinking the concepts Braidotti addresses. Rather, I wish to indicate that dispensing with traditional configurations of women and space can lead to new problems, and to suggest that spatial theories often have particular biases inherent within them.

black women's focus on the connection between the home and consumerism and suggests that black women need to renew their political commitment to homeplace.

hooks's ideas about homeplace come out of a particular experience of racial oppression but her suggestion that home can be re-visioned by women in politically empowering ways has broad relevance. Keeping on the move is not *necessarily* the most effective answer – initially disabling notions of home may prove flexible enough to be recast – what is most important is the circumstances which the subject responds to. Furthermore, being situated may increase the possibility of constructing a site of resistance, with results just as effective as those of the 'guerilla tactics' of the nomad.

The common factor in both hooks's and Braidotti's approaches is their shared sense that contemporary subjects need to respond to the cultural and economic shifts that have taken place in the postmodern era – one suggests returning to a resituated notion of the traditional home, the other wishes to abandon it altogether. *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* share this concern. But what particular historico-political circumstances do they address? What sorts of female subjectivities and spaces do they figure in response? Where are they situated in regard to nomadism with its potential to undo traditional logocentric configurations, but also its dangers of privileging life in the city, and eliding economic factors? How might they be appear in the light of a notion of 'homeplace'?

Home Over the Generations

Waiting for Time and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* figure a variety of relationships between women and home, over the course of several generations. This sweep of time is highly significant because it places the experiences of the central presences in the respective books – Lav and Sonja – within a more complex framework. Their presentation needs to be considered in light of those of women who come before them, and as creating a context, in turn, for those who follow. The relationship in each text between the central protagonist and her mother is particularly revealing of how these novels ultimately see women and home.

In the well-established conjunction between ‘women’ and ‘home’ the specific role in which women are most repeatedly cast is that of *mother*. Freud calls the womb our first home and suggests ‘There is a joking saying that “Love is home-sickness”; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: “this place is familiar to me, I’ve been here before”, we may interpret the place as being his mother’s genitals or her body’ (368). Freud’s statement does not adequately acknowledge the cultural constructedness of the connection between ‘mother’ and ‘home’, but it does indicate its flexibility. The ‘home’ with which the figure of the mother is associated can be as capacious as a

country. The different ways in which home is experienced are, as Nikos Papastergiadis notes, imbricated: 'The symbols and narratives of the nation can only resonate if they are admitted into the chamber of the home' (4).

Paradoxically, because mothers *have* long been associated with the notion 'home', one place a daughter might begin to look for ways of negotiating her own role within culture is to the mother she shares, or once shared, a home with. The connection between 'mother' and 'home' at the level of 'lived', private experience might be quite different to that portrayed in the wider culture, for, as de Certeau suggests, individuals systematically evoke tactics to evade the strategies imposed upon them. hooks's essay refers to just such an alliance between mothers and daughters. Women, she suggests, may be able to learn from their mothers an enabling, rather than constraining, way of inhabiting 'home'.

This promising kind of relationship is not open to either Sonja in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, or Lav in *Waiting for Time*. Both are daughters of women for whom home becomes a nightmare. Maria (Sonja's mother) and Charlotte (Lav's) abandon rather than re-work 'homeplace'. Both ultimately close their children out of the solitary journeys they embark on. Maria literally leaves the infant Sonja alone inside their rudimentary house in Butler's Gorge, and Charlotte is emotionally absent from her daughter. Although they do not persist with the notion of

homeplace, neither Maria nor Charlotte is figured as a nomadic subject instead.

Maria Buloh's fate is left unclear for most of the narrative of *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and there is the suggestion, especially in Umberto Picotti's taunts to Sonja, as well as in Sonja's own futile letter-writing to her mother, that she is indeed alive and wandering somewhere. But the reader finally learns at the conclusion of the novel that Maria hanged herself in the forest at Butler's Gorge the night she left Sonja behind. Whether Sonja had also known this all along is never made clear. Maria is a kind of absent presence in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*. She powerfully influences all the characters, but we barely see her. The mystery of her disappearance is an important source of narrative tension and the lack of her 'physical' presence means that she is manifest in other ways. Kay Schaeffer argues in *Women and the Bush* that the absent female figure in Australian writing often reappears as the land itself. This is indeed the displacement that occurs here. Rather than learning from Maria how to negotiate home, Sonja, as we shall see, forms a relationship with a specific mother/land instead. 'Sonja was thinking how she hated her mother at that moment because her mother would not let her be calm even on the mountain. She was also thinking how at that moment she hated the mountain' (SHC 177). As Anne McClintock suggests such a connection is problematic because 'linked symbolically to the land, women are relegated to a realm beyond history' (31).

Morgan's Charlotte is a mysterious figure too, but because she is physically locatable – she is present for Lav's childhood and lives in the same city for much of Lav's adulthood – the enigma she presents is of a different order. Lav's mother maintains the façade of home, but she rejects its principles – although in less dramatic or self-destructive fashion than Maria. Although she occupies the same space as Lav whilst her daughter is growing up, she is emotionally cold. When she can, she keeps on the move – she marries Lav's father to escape England, flees Newfoundland as soon as she is able, re-locates to downtown Ottawa after her second husband's death, and then to California several years after that. The spaces Charlotte creates around her are not nurturing, or even personal. Lav thinks the apartment her mother occupies for four years possesses the 'clean, uncluttered look of a hotel suite' (WT 14) – Lav is only ever invited in once. Yet Charlotte could not be described as nomadic in Braidotti's construction of the term. Her changing identity relies as much on the names she acquires through the patriarchal institution of marriage – Lottie Andrews, Charlotte Rosenberg, Charlotte Carbrillo – as on her own movements.

The homes that Maria and Charlotte leave behind in Australia and Canada are not the first ones they flee. Both women are migrants from a Europe torn apart by the Second World War: Maria is a refugee from Slovenia where she has watched as her father was shot by the SS and has herself been raped; Charlotte is an English war-bride. Indeed it is the impossibility of

making a home in the new world, after the destruction of the hope of making one in the old, which leads to their final abandonment of the concept. As Charlotte bitterly reflects on Newfoundland 'I thought it would be heaven – *it wasn't!*' (WT 18). Maria's suicide follows her vain attempts to have Sonja speak English in the hope she and her family might create a new life in a new place. But part of the horror of Butler's Gorge is that its stark appearance brings back 'all too painful memories' (SHC 4). Maria and Charlotte abandon the notion of home because twice (first, in the destruction of their European homes, and then in the failed promise of the new worlds of Tasmania and Newfoundland) it abandons them. Neither, as a result of the traumas of these abandonments, is able to teach her daughter a fulfilling way of inhabiting space.

Lav's and Sonja's fathers are presented as having just as much difficulty with the notion of home as their mothers do. They experience this problem at a personal level, as neither is able to create a home in a practical sense in the absence of their wives, either by taking on the role themselves, or finding another wife to do so.⁶ But, even more importantly, the breakdown of Bojan's and David's connection with the possibility of home is explicitly

⁶ Bojan Buloh leaves Sonja with a succession of unloving families before taking her to live with him in a string of grim 'wog-flats' (SHC 146) in which he physically abuses her; David Andrews, his sanity broken by the war, has to be cared for by his own parents after his return from Europe. Indeed, David Andrews is in many ways more of an absent maternal, than paternal figure. This impression is enforced by the gentleness Alf comments on David having possessed, and his insanity means he relinquishes possession of the Law of the Father. This impression is also enforced by the fact that the lengthy narrative of historical life on the Cape introduced in Part 2 of *Waiting for Time* (which bisects Lav's story told in Parts 1 and 3) focuses on the lives of the Andrews women and extends the mainly female-focused narrative of Morgan's earlier novel, *Random Passage*.

connected with a wider breakdown of home at the level of nation – even if this is not obvious to everyone in their societies.

Bojan Buloh 'did not believe in words like Nation' (*SHC* 182), yet his display of emotion at the naturalisation ceremony held the day after his wife's body is discovered is interpreted by the Australians conducting the ceremony as evidence:

the weeping migrant was overcome with happiness on the occasion of this great day. To battle the embarrassment the politician shared with the officials at this untoward – though, he knew, for their race characteristic – display of emotion, the politician felt encouraged to extend his speech. (*SHC* 44)

David Andrews's homecoming creates a similar confusion. Lav's cousin Alf Andrews recounts the scene to her:

"The teacher marched us all down to meet the boat. All of us – a dozen or so youngster [sic] holdin' little Union Jacks lined up on the wharf. We started to sing some song – 'There'll Always Be An England' – or some such stunned thing. Then we saw what he was like."

Standing at the top of the gangplank David Andrews had looked the same – a tall red-headed sailor in the tight Navy jacket and flared

trousers. But then he started down, falling over himself, shaking with fear, being held up. It had taken forever. When he got ashore everyone could see the simple-mindedness in his face. Flags and song forgotten, the children stood in a silent line watching the young man being led away from the wharf. (IWT 213)

These scenes involving the breakdown of a male figure in a public context signal that the established order as it is experienced privately (by women) and publicly (by men) is completely disrupted for the generation containing Lav's and Sonja's parents. Whilst this could be a promising development, one opening up the possibility of new figurations of subjects and spaces, it is not depicted as having beneficial effects for those who directly experience it. Lav's father and Sonja's parents each fall into a form of oblivion in the wake of the destruction of the master narratives effected by the Second World War. One chooses suicide, another alcoholism, a third falls into insanity. Charlotte, whilst a cunning survivor in many respects, is also dissociated from those around her.

As a result of the parents' breakdowns the places that should be home – Newfoundland and Tasmania – are instead the backdrops to recurrent nightmares. They are experienced through a kind of malign superimposition: Maria sees Butler's Gorge as a concentration camp, hell is contained for Bojan in the open mouth of a Tasmanian tiger, David shakes with fear as he returns 'home' to Newfoundland. For these characters,

distant places are present in nearby ones in incoherent and unsettling ways. In *Living in a New Country* Paul Carter claims that 'Any orientation to the new environment depends initially on finding resemblances between it and the home left behind' (2) and this seems to apply in these texts even when the place left behind has become hell, rather than home. Because she ends her life in the Tasmanian forest, her dead body finally found suspended from a gum tree, Maria re-locates the 'cancer' (SHC 394) of Europe most strikingly of all.

What fate can be imagined for the children of those for whom making a home, in either the old or new world, is so utterly impossible? And for whom homelessness, for that matter, proves even more problematic?

City Limits

Both *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Waiting for Time* shift back and forth between different moments in time. At the commencement of the narratives constituting time-present in each novel, Sonja and Lav are both apparently contented city-dwellers; they seem to have found happiness in Sydney and Ottawa, respectively. The characters' fictional lives appear to give credence to Rosi Braidotti's implicit selection of the city as the most promising space for the postmodern female subject, and to endorse Elizabeth Wilson's suggestion that 'urban life, however fraught with

difficulty' offers far more to women than 'rural life or suburban domesticity' (10). Sonja believes 'You are your dreams, which is why Sydney – that sly city of alluring promise – is the place for me' (SHC 23). Lav, moving through Ottawa feels 'confident, exhilarated [sic], thinks how pleasant it is to walk in a modern city – especially on a day such as this – one filled with sunshine, with racing white clouds that are reflected a thousand times in the glass facades of buildings' (WT 12), not least of all because 'These days Lav lives happily in the present' (WT 13).

The stories of their parents' experiences might be seen (of necessity retrospectively, given that time-present in the novels opens in the city) as contextualising Lav's and Sonja's independent and present-focused city lives as positive achievements. Sonja's life, in particular, might appear 'as good as, actually far better than she felt she had a right ever to expect' (SHC 76). But the metropolis is discounted as a place in which it is possible for the characters to achieve fulfilment. This rejection at the level of *histoire* is compounded at the level of *discours*. The city, in antithesis to the leaving narratives we encountered in Part 1, is positioned as the point from which the narrative trajectories of *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Waiting for Time* unfold, the space prompting narrative departures, not conclusions. Yet why can't the city be enough?

The answer to this question lies in the historical context in which the city is figured in *Waiting for Time* or *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*. Whilst

the collapse of modernism's metanarratives in the Second World War frames the experiences of Maria, Bojan, Charlotte and David, late capitalism is the backdrop to Lav's and Sonja's. To make their lives in the metropolises Sonja and Lav participate, as both producers and consumers, in an economic system shown to be deeply problematic, especially for the regional spaces to which they will eventually return. Cities, in these texts, are figured as consuming other times and other places, and both novels (like *The Shipping News* and *Death of a River Guide*) share a commitment to the idea that history – no matter how problematic – needs to be appropriately acknowledged in the present.

As producers, both Lav and Sonja manipulate images and data in their city-work: Sonja assists in the production of television programs, Lav, a government employed scientist, produces politically inflected reports. The ideological problems of their careers are exposed when they come in contact with documents of their own families' pasts. Sonja has to flee the editing room when she views footage of her father (maniacally working on the building of a dam) being re-worked for a documentary, Lav begins to neglect her job once her research assistant brings the Ellsworth Journal to her attention. The journal provides historical maritime data, but Lav's ancestors have also written the stories of their lives in its margins. In both cases their work requires them to give no credence to the context of what they produce – the images and data are caught up in other schemes, which

ignore their origins. The material has become simulacra, and it is this Lav and Sonja are figured as reacting against.

Lav and Sonja are also committed consumers during their times in the metropolis – particularly of purchasable beauty. In Ottawa, Lav regularly visits 'The Beauty Boutique, a spa located in a mall directly below the DFO building. Each Tuesday and Friday she would leave the office early, have a swim, a sauna. Then, wearing a snow-white robe monogrammed B.B., she would have her nails, hair and face done' (*WT* 37). Sonja buys 'good clothes, jewellery' (*SHC* 76) and, seeing herself in a mirror just after her arrival in Tasmania perceives a woman 'elegant in what was almost office attire' (*SHC* 18), with padded shoulders and blonde-tipped hair. The texts construct such consumption as problematic by a number of means.

Firstly, purchasable beauty is presented as concealing the body's history. Rather than offering opportunities to transform or play with notions of identity, make-up and fashionable clothes are depicted in these texts as masks which prevent recognition. Upon their return to the regions Lav and Sonja both are mis-identified as 'mainlanders'. Simultaneous with the removal of the made-up faces of the professional women (a process I will look at more closely in a moment) the corporeal markings of the past identifying them with regional spaces – their resemblances to their relatives still living there – begin to become apparent.

Feminist critics, like Elizabeth Grosz (in *Volatile Bodies*) and Judith Butler (in *Gender Trouble*), who challenge the notion of a sex (nature)/gender (culture) divide suggest that 'natural' bodies, (for example, 'sexed' as opposed to 'gendered' bodies) are socially constructed. By implication, the body in its 'natural' state can thus be read as a cultural signifier, an indicator of specific social meanings in the same way as the 'beautified' body. Within this optic it becomes possible to interpret the movements away from purchasable beauty in *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* as progressions rather than as regressions; Lav's and Sonja's 'natural' bodies can be read as cultural statements, not as returns to some 'pure' realm of corporeality uncorrupted by cultural meanings – their 'natural' bodies are just as performative as their 'beautified' ones.

In contesting Lav's and Sonja's consumption of services and products which alter their 'natural' appearances the texts acknowledge and then challenge the argument that:

The city is one of the crucial factors in the social production of (sexed) corporeality; the built environment provides the context and coordinates for most contemporary Western and, today, Eastern forms of the body, even for rural bodies insofar as the twentieth century defines the countryside, "the rural", as the underside or raw material of urban development. (Grosz, 'Bodies-Cities' 43)

Rather than being 'raw materials' Lav's and Sonja's pre-metropolitan bodies are shown to already be situated in networks of meaning. Returning to the regions allows for the traces of the past which already mark them to be recognised and acknowledged. For Lav these traces are genetic – she discovers that she is a 'dark' Andrews, rather than a 'red' Andrews. Inadvertently arriving in Bonavista Bay on the day of her distant relation Rachel's wake and burial she spies Rachel's nose first, above the border of the coffin, and realises that it is identical in shape to her own. Furthermore, Lav's and Sonja's 'natural' bodies are antithetical to the requirements of capital; firstly, because the women no longer participate in the kinds of corporeal adornment acceptable within the working world (their roles in networks of production change), and secondly, because they cease to be such voracious consumers. Lav, in particular, has been shown to be inculcated into an endless regime of up-keep of her body. Both *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* are keen to stress that urban-based consumption practices can be circumvented.⁷

Lav's and Sonja's movements from city to region are antithetical to late capitalism's reliance on regional spaces/bodies for the raw materials for urban-based progress. By reversing the typical direction of travel between

⁷ In the Newfoundland and the Tasmania of these texts people also 'make do' by inventively reworking materials at hand, rather than purchasing new items, and they perform tasks themselves, rather than hiring others to complete them. Bojan's Slovenian-style food is made from the Australian ingredients available, and he and Jiri eventually renovate Sonja's home themselves. Likewise, Lav will eventually learn 'to mix mashed potatoes with the flour in her bread dough, to pick up faltering television signals by stringing wires around the roof, to grow onion, celery and pale lettuce in the kitchen window, to make a tonic from kelp, wine from dandelion flowers, shoes from seal skin' (WT 229).

the two areas they make the city lead to the creation of the region, rather than vice versa. The characters' attainment of a sense of home in their new/old worlds can be interpreted as a rejection of the late capitalist system in which spaces are becoming increasingly indistinguishable, and economic imperatives are prioritised over other values.

Importantly, Sonja's and Lav's city sojourns are figured as essential precursors to their homecomings. As Susan Stanford Friedman suggests, 'roots' (home) and 'routes' (nomadism) acquire their meaning in relation to each other (151). Sonja's and Lav's parents' experiences validate their choices of city lives and, indeed, they will be able to prompt the 'homecomings' of those who do not leave and then return to regional space (most notably Sonja will assist Bojan) because they have spent time away. This direction of movement from city nomad to regional home-dweller means that the characters' phases of self-construction, their nomadism, is the necessary forerunner to their homecomings. This reworks the feminist characterisation of the city as the ultimate space of female freedom, providing an extra step to the movement: that is, region – city – region, rather than region – city.

Waiting for Time and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* do not idealise the return to regional space – they are frank, for instance, about the economic consequences of the decisions Sonja and Lav make. Both women abandon secure and reasonably well-paying employment for lives of casual, less well-

paid labour: Sonja scratches a living working behind a bar, and Lav relies on temporary contract work. But homeplace will figure as a 'site of resistance' in that the women refuse to figure their roles as producers and consumers of goods and services as those most central to them. They, of necessity, continue to engage with the economic system, but they begin to do so increasingly tactically. The culmination of this movement is the down-playing of labour associated with material production in favour of the labour of their own bodies through maternity.⁸

Having established that the city will not, ultimately, figure as home in these novels I want now to look closely at the process by which, after their returns to Tasmania and Newfoundland, Lav and Sonja find a fulfilling place in which to dwell. And to consider the problematic means by which they do so.

⁸ There are, however, difficulties in the novels' rejections of the city as a site for something other than nomadic subjectivity. *Waiting for Time* creates a less stringent binary between city and region by having Lav continue to travel between Ottawa and Newfoundland, and retain relationships in both places, for some time after her 'homecoming'. Lav's friend Zinnie, who is Ottawa-based, is depicted as someone who has made a home in the city, although even she eventually leaves to teach in a community in Northern Ontario. As Elizabeth McMahon has pointed out, the rejection of Sydney in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* is hasty and comprehensive ('Points of Origin' 98). There is no-one in the novel who is depicted as having constructed a home in the city, and Sonja is not shown as having contact with anyone from Sydney after she returns to Tasmania.

Bodywork

As in the cases of Aljaz and Quoye, the processes by which Lav and Sonja come home are strikingly embodied ones. But their experiences are differently situated. The centrality of the physical experiences Lav and Sonja undergo is compounded by the absence of their voices in the texts. Both women are largely silent heroines. Aside from some brief passages of first-person narration in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, Sonja does not speak in her own voice to the reader, nor, given her minor amount of reported speech, does she often speak directly to the other characters. Lav (Lavinia), named after the heroine from *Titus Andronicus* whose tongue is cut out, also says little. These silences are differently constituted, however, to Harry's and Guy's in *Death of a River Guide* and *The Shipping News*. The men's reticence is presented as a deliberate strategy – a choice. This is not the case with Lav and Sonja.

Lav's and Sonja's bodies will express what their voices do not, and often to their own surprise. Lav, on her first visit to St. John's, finds herself in tears one night: 'The sound of her weeping shocks her. She had thought herself content, pleased with her own company, with the fire and the book' (WT 41). Sonja's first desire to return to Tasmania is similarly striking in its physicality: 'Something had seized her like a cramp, had gathered her guts together and cast them downwards that fateful morning in Sydney only a

week before, something she at first only understood as a longing, curious and big and strange as the sky above' (SHC 17).

The most important way in which the female body is implicated in the process of homecoming, especially in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, is through its transformation into a maternal body. But before I consider this metamorphosis, I want to note briefly two important scenes in the process by which Lav and Sonja are shorn of their fashionable appearances (which I referred to above) and brought into uncomfortably direct contact with their 'homelands'. When Lav and Sonja first arrive back in Newfoundland and Tasmania they appear the antithesis of Quoye's and Aljaz's 'deject' selves. Discarding these appearances is sometimes traumatic and both protagonists undergo a violent encounter with the earth in the process. These disruptions are not unrelated to the more significant experience of bearing children, in that they coincide with Lav's and Sonja's pregnancies and contribute to the centrality of the focus upon their 'natural' bodies.

The scene involving Lav's first return to Cape Random, former home of her ancestors, is a salient one in this regard. It quickly becomes apparent that Lav's romantic notions of her return 'home' are not to be realised. The place she parks her car 'reeks of mindless vandalism, a kind of casual evil' (WT 202) and 'the expected rush of excitement does not come' (WT 203). Camped on the beach she wakes, terrified, in the middle of the night to find that her tent is being circled and charged by helmeted, and so faceless,

motorbike riders. With the Ellsworth Journal in her knapsack, she flees in panic. Pursued into the sand banks she becomes dirty and bruised, her trousers are torn and she loses a shoe as she claws at the ground. The narrator's comments seem to reflect a certain pleasure in the disruption of Lav's facade:

See her now, Lavinia Andrews, modern woman, art lover, peace-marcher, spa user, scientist, hiding from machines, hiding from monsters, hiding from memory. Here she lies, clothed in linen slacks, silk shirt, sweater, hand-knit – not by her hands but by the hands of some Peruvian peasant. (WT 207)

Like Lav, Sonja ruffles her polished exterior in order to give way to some force outside of herself which brings her into contact with the very earth. This force is not a literal one, like the riders in *Waiting for Time* but is strong nonetheless. Like Lav, Sonja hires a car and drives alone to the site of her family's former home. At Butler's Gorge, the place where she had spent her early childhood, and from where her mother had disappeared, Sonja finds herself 'scrabbling in the bush-covered peat in the middle of the rainforest' (SHC 33) to excavate the remains of a bramble-patterned teapot which she had smashed as a child when her mother died. Sonja claws at the earth with her 'elegant fingers' (SHC 33) until her hands become 'frantic and wild as though they were digging into a land within her own skull. As

she dug so, Sonja did not scream nor say a thing other than grunts and brief pants' (SHC 34).

In both scenes, earth – not the water Aljaz and Quoye encounter in their metamorphoses in *Death of a River Guide* and *The Shipping News* – is the key natural element with which Sonja and Lav come in contact. This medium is significantly different from water in that it does not provide the opportunity for full immersion – the women claw at its surface instead. Their own bodies, through the processes of pregnancy, will become maternal – Sonja and Lav do not need to be immersed in the maternal object. The land in which Sonja and Lav dig is that of their dead parents whom, as we shall see, they eventually re-place in the culminating gestures of their homecoming. Sonja excavates the site she associates with her mother, and Lav, soon after her traumatic experience, is shown her father's nearby grave.

Articulating Motherhood

Maternity plays a role in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Waiting for Time* similar to that of abjection in *Death of a River Guide* and *The Shipping News*. It is a key to coming home. Unsurprisingly, the two processes are related. As Elizabeth Grosz suggests, both involve:

the splitting, fusing, merging, fragmenting of a series of bodily processes outside the will or control of a subject. Woman, the woman-mother, does not find her femininity or identity as a woman affirmed in maternity but, rather, her corporeality, her animality, her position on the threshold between nature and culture. Her 'identity' as a subject is betrayed by pregnancy. (*Sexual Subversions* 79)

The consequences of these processes can, however, be quite different. Whilst for Quoye and Aljaz the experience of abjection prompts them to develop roles as fathers – in possession of the Law – this role is not necessarily open to Lav and Sonja. A woman's experience of having her own identity 'betrayed' during pregnancy may persist after her child's birth. Kristeva suggests that motherhood presents the problem of self-sacrifice: of 'becoming anonymous in order to pass on the social norm, which one might repudiate for one's own sake but within which *one must* include the child in order to educate it along the chain of generations' ('Stabat Mater' 183). Women, she suggests, are caught between their roles as individual, autonomous subjects, and their position as mothers, with an obligation to induct their children into the ways of the dominant culture. These problems are compounded by the fact that motherhood is perceived so ambivalently in contemporary societies. Kristeva notes that whilst the cult of the Virgin Mary is diminishing in importance, no new figurations of maternity of comparable power have emerged. Motherhood, she argues,

remains 'without a discourse' (184), and problematic symbolic functions still adhere to it.

In the light of these difficulties, we need to consider if Lav and Sonja are constructed as what Alison Weir calls 'subjects-in-process' (84): subjects posited as individuals *and* mothers. As 'subjects-in-process' Lav and Sonja would be given necessary complexity, and, by implication, the places to which they return would be, too. If their maternal role is over-emphasised both the women and their 'homes' will be frozen in stasis. As we shall see, Lav's (and Newfoundland's) position in *Waiting for Time* appears more promising than Sonja's (and Tasmania's) in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*.

The figurative power of the protagonists' maternal roles is substantial. The names of their children, and, in Sonja's case, the effect her child's birth has on her father, indicate that their experiences of motherhood are freighted with import. Lav names her child David Saul (the second name in honour of her Jewish stepfather) and the birth of Sonja's daughter – named for her lost mother, Maria – effects a reconciliation with Bojan.⁹ Through their naming, the children bring past and present together: the reverberations of the traumas and dislocations caused by the Second World War, the central factors causing the breakdown of Lav and Sonja's families (David

⁹ Significantly, the 'Father' at issue in both cases is from the generation prior to the protagonists' own. The fathers of both Lav's and Sonja's children are barely mentioned in the novels (thereby accentuating the importance of the women's maternal roles).

Andrews's shell shock and Charlotte's traumatic experiences as a war bride, Maria's suicide and Bojan's scarring), are finally redressed. Lav's and Sonja's maternal labours retroactively resituate Tasmania and Newfoundland as home. Consequently, do *Waiting for Time* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* foreground a local/regional version of the well-established (and problematic, because it reduces women to a symbolic function) phenomenon of connecting maternal woman and nation? As Giorgio Agamben notes in *Means Without End* the very word 'nation' is etymologically linked to 'native' and, as a result, to 'birth'.¹⁰ In the case of *Waiting for Time*, at least, there are important mitigating factors to such a reading.

Crucially, Lav's pregnancy is not foregrounded in Morgan's novel: we are simply informed on page 216 that 'in December [...] her son is born'. Furthermore, David Saul's childhood is only mentioned briefly, and a future is envisaged for Lav beyond his departure from home, albeit in a compressed narrative. As she grows older Lav becomes a painter – a creative outlet separate to the physical expression of having a child. Lav's maternal role is diluted still further when, in a brief scene set in a utopian 2024, she witnesses a seminal public moment – the return of the caplin:

¹⁰ It does not matter, ultimately, that Lav's and Sonja's children fail to conform to a pure 'national' type (the father of Sonja's daughter, for instance, is Kolo Amado: 'the issue of a short affair between a Timorese shopkeeper and an Albanian nurse' (*SHC* 102)), nor that they are the children of single mothers. Hybridity can still be figured within nation (or region in this case) according to Derrida. In 'Onto-Theology of National-Humanism (Prolegomena to a Hypothesis)', he argues that the true regionalist (/nationalist) is someone who can identify what is 'right' and 'life-giving', over what is 'dead' and un-original, irrespective of whether they actually physically belong to the region or not.

'Lav thinks, things do come back! Caplin first, then cod, then people' (WT 230).

Some critics have seen the brevity with which the story of Lav's later life is told as problematic. Libby Creelman notes that 'Lav's remaining years cover only a few pages and are presented to us almost in summary, so that I felt at first Morgan had shortchanged this character' (118). But in Parts 2 and 3 of the text Lav's experiences are explicitly and implicitly connected to those of a plethora of other women – her mother may be lost to her but figures like Selina and Zinnie emerge to fill the gap. The second section of *Waiting for Time* even extends these connections back through time, as we are presented with the stories of Lav's ancestors and their early years on the Cape.¹¹ Lav can diminish in centrality – without taking on an added symbolic burden, either – because her story has been broadened by the many and varied tales of other women with whom she has connections.

Sonja, by contrast, is more weighed down by her maternal role. With the exception of her mother's friend Helvi, no other female characters help dilute her centrality. As Elizabeth McMahon argues 'Knowledge of Sonja's social life, friendships, neighbours, would have contextualised the decisions

¹¹ And, consequently, links back to the stories of women presented in *Random Passage*.

she makes in the narrative, and granted her a complexity she lacks' ('Points of Origin' 99). Scenes involving Sonja's pregnancy, and the birth of her child, are also foregrounded in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*. The duration of her pregnancy even corresponds with the passing of 'time-present' in the novel. Maria's entry into the world is presented in particular detail: whilst Sonja endures the agonies of labour, memories of her mother's death are finally released. These memories effect a conclusion quite different to the vision of a revitalised Newfoundland with which Morgan ends *Waiting for Time*. In Flanagan's novel, no future is imagined for Sonja or for Tasmania. The final image is personal and private. Sonja returns to the original site of her childhood home at Butler's Gorge, and is last seen communing with the earth and her child at the place where she last saw her mother: 'And as she [Sonja] lay on the ground she would hold her child close and whisper her daughter's name. Her beautiful name. "Maria," she would say to the earth, "my Maria"' (SHC 424). At this crucial point in the novel, a female line, connected to each other across generations, is problematically bound back to the earth.

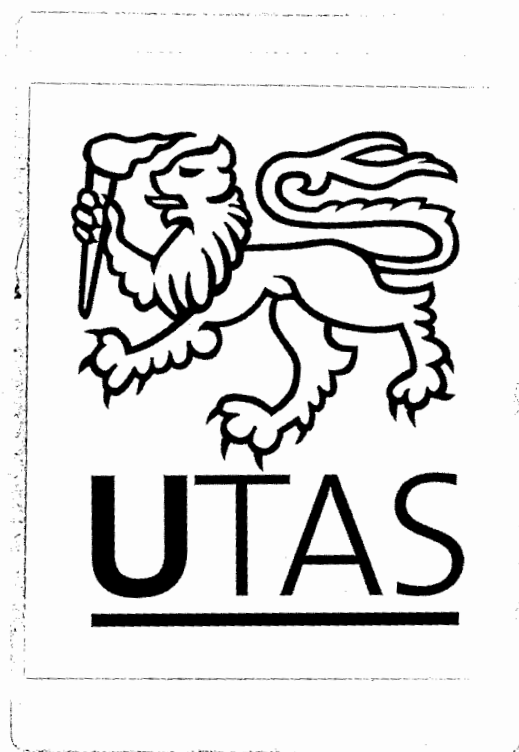
The differences in the texts' treatment of Lav's and Sonja's roles as maternal figures are encapsulated in a key symbol in each novel: the Ellsworth Journal, in *Waiting for Time*, and the bramble-patterned teapot in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*. These artefacts feature in the scenes I noted earlier as important in the removal of Lav's and Sonja's city-facades. They are foregrounded again at the culminating moments of the protagonists'

processes of homecoming. At the end of *Waiting for Time* Lav takes up the Ellsworth Journal to write her own life in the margins, as those before her had done. The journal is like a communal diary, so thick with script that on first viewing, Lav had only seen 'a tangle of words, words crossing and criss-crossing, words over words, unrelated words twining, trailing between lines, twisting around margins, like a garden gone wild' (WT 48).¹² The journal also presents a perfect image for a productive interchange between tactics and strategy. As Evelyn B. Tribble comments on marginalia: 'the margins and the texts proper [exist] in shifting relationships of authority; the margin [may] affirm, summarize, underwrite the main text, and so stabilize meaning; or it may assume a contestatory or parodic relationship to the text' (quoted in Legge: 64).

There is no equivalent to the Ellsworth Journal in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*. Immediately after Maria's birth Bojan visits Sonja to hand her the bramble-patterned teapot reconstituted from the shards she had extracted from the ground at Butler's Gorge. 'Finally together in one piece, once more complete' (SHC 416), the teapot denotes closure. That this closure effaces everything but Sonja's role as maternal signifier subject to the Law of the Father is made more evident by the way in which Bojan

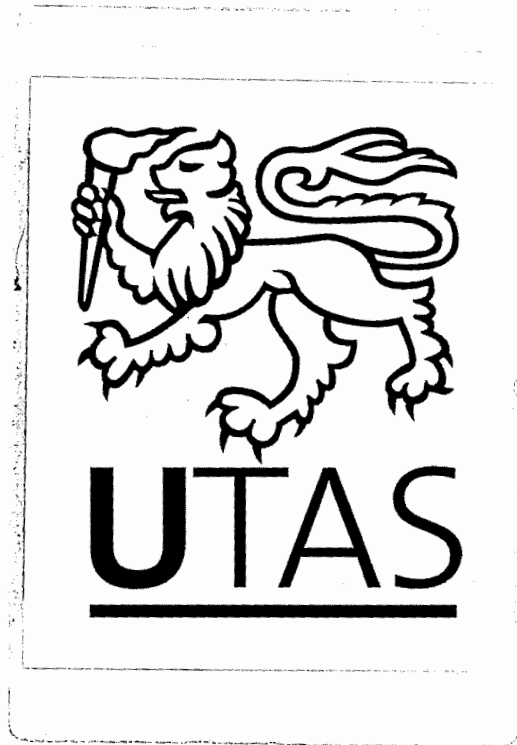
¹² Interestingly, the words with which Lav begins are those which inaugurated *Random Passage*, the prequel to *Waiting for Time*. In the process Lav, whose story has been narrated in the third person, is given the role of surrogate narrator of the earlier novel – in which she does not appear at all.

presents the object to her: 'He leant down, handed the repaired teapot over to Sonja, and she, as if in exchange, passed her daughter to him' (SHC 416).



Conclusion

Going Nowhere/Being Everywhere



Going Nowhere/Being Everywhere

In this thesis I have argued that contemporary fiction imagines both Tasmania and Newfoundland as distinct and unique locations. Using the journeys of central figures in recent texts as a prompt, I have identified the three modalities of emplacement – leaving, walking around, and coming home – by which it typically does so. Each modality, I have claimed, entails particular ways of presenting place and space, and of encoding genres and subjectivities. It also serves specific cultural purposes.

In Part 1 of the thesis I addressed narratives premised on leaving. Following Raymond Williams's definition of the residual as that which 'has been effectively formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present' (122), I claimed the modality of leaving is diminishing in importance in contemporary writing, but still has a cultural role to fulfil. Most appropriate to the fictional genre of the male *bildungsroman*, and the non-fictional form of the autobiography, stories of leaving are markedly absent in recent novels imagining Newfoundland. Autobiographical writing in both Newfoundland and Tasmania, however, still deploys them. In Chapter 4 I attributed the persistence of the leaving modality in autobiographical writing to its imbrication with contemporary notions of authorship. I argued that Wayne Johnston, Christopher Koch and Dennis Altman all situate themselves as 'leavers' in order to ensure

their status as writers. In my concluding comments to Part 1, I claimed that the modality of leaving presents fundamental problems for the writing of Tasmania and Newfoundland because it fixes place in particularly powerful ways, and yet relies upon the authorising subject's detachment from the terrain he entrenches.

In Part 2 I examined stories whose protagonists make significant journeys by foot across the terrains of Tasmania or Newfoundland. I contended that the modality of walking around recurs in texts devoted to the figuration of national imaginaries, and that novels which foreground it also evoke what Benedict Anderson calls the 'immemorial past' (11). In their desire to call this timeless time into play, stories about walking around tend to elide the historical and contemporary 'realities' of Tasmania or Newfoundland. In crucial respects the nation in question in these novels is at a remove from the foregrounded landscape. In *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *Gaff Topsails* the lost country of Newfoundland is actually the prime concern, and in *The Savage Crows* and *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* a 'mainland' Australian nation, to which Tasmania's connection is problematic, is of chief interest. In Part 2 I argued that texts which utilise the modality of walking around give lie to the proposition that the nation is of lessening significance as a spatial category in the postmodern era.

Walking around is one of the dominant modalities in contemporary fiction imagining Tasmania or Newfoundland – the other, I claimed, is ‘coming home’. In Part 3 I suggested that stories centred on homecoming present their protagonists’ returns to Tasmania or Newfoundland as brave moves undertaken in the face of a flow of population away from the regions. These texts, I argued, set out to reclaim unsettling features of the two terrains by immersing their figures in situations which prompt them to reconstruct their subjectivities in positive ways. Narratives of homecoming are deployed in strikingly similar ways in both Tasmania and Newfoundland – in Chapter 7 I gave detailed readings of stories about male subjects encountering the abject and the uncanny in the process of their returns; in Chapter 8, I focused on how bearing children helps two female subjects make homes in the islands. I contended in Part 3 that the modality of homecoming relies on what James Clifford calls ‘the symmetry of redemption’, and claimed that *Death of a River Guide* and *Waiting for Time* figure this symmetry without stereotyping their subjects and the terrains they return to, but *The Shipping News* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* are less successful. As the comparative work of this thesis reveals, the logical and paradoxical outcome of coincidences between writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland in this mode must be an

undermining of figurations of the places as unique.¹

The notion of Tasmania and Newfoundland as places apart – the belief giving rise to all three of the modalities of emplacement – seems to be under threat more generally, too. In a recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* entitled ‘Send in the Clones’, Maggie Alderson identifies several clichéd ‘micro-genres’ (*Metro* 4) in contemporary fiction. Foremost among them is the ‘Moody Maritime Novel’ (*Metro* 4) which she characterises as presenting ‘lots of brooding atmosphere [. . .] and slightly inbred people living in cold parts of Canada and the US North-West’ (*Metro* 4). Alderson cites *The Shipping News* as a prime example of the genre and, despite their antipodean location, the Tasmanian texts I have focused on could easily comply, too. The stereotyping of the ‘Moody Maritime’ novel is unfortunate in that it elides how the explosion in fictional representations of Tasmania and Newfoundland in recent years has had liberatory effects for both writers and readers. A confession such as Bernice Morgan’s that until recently it had not occurred to her that Newfoundland might be a fit subject for literature is unlikely to be heard again. But has the pendulum

¹ The structure of this thesis, by commencing with the residual category of stories of leaving (with their markedly different Tasmanian and Newfoundland incarnations), moving through the dominant modality of walking around (with more commonalities), and concluding with stories of homecoming (which resemble each other particularly strongly) implies that fictions about Tasmania and Newfoundland are increasingly convergent. It is important to reiterate that all three of these modalities exist concurrently; they do not proceed from one to the other in a linear fashion. This is best indicated by the fact that their publication dates overlap. The leaving narrative of *The Comfort of Men*, for instance, was published well after *The Savage Crows* (walking around) and around the time of *The Shipping News* (coming home).

swung too far in the opposite direction? If the predominant subjectivities and localities associated with the two islands have become ubiquitous to the point of cliché and over-commodification, what, if anything, might replace them?

Emerging Stories

I want to turn now to emergent strains in fiction about Tasmania and Newfoundland, to narratives encoding 'new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship' (Williams 123). Whilst, as Williams notes, it is 'exceptionally difficult to distinguish between those which are really elements of some new phase of the dominant culture (and in this sense 'species-specific') and those which are substantially alternative or oppositional to it: emergent in the strict sense, rather than merely novel' (123), my contention is that emergent writing about Tasmania and Newfoundland is characterised by its dismantling of the notion that the islands are places apart. Consequently, its figures no longer have need of travel, and its modality is 'going nowhere/being everywhere'. As one would expect of an emerging modality, fiction hinging on the concept of 'going nowhere/being everywhere' displays a more disparate range of characteristics than those of more established dominant and residual modes. I want to look briefly now at four instances of 'going nowhere/being everywhere'.

Paul Bowdring's *The Night Season*, which I addressed by way of contrast to *The Doubleman* and *The Comfort of Men* in Chapter 3, belongs to this modality. *The Night Season*, as I argued in Part 1, presents a world in which the global and the nation have completely infiltrated the local or regional. Place, as a result, is presented as having become so complex and so entrenched that subjects can only resort to brief de Certeauian tactical interventions in response. Even tactics, however, are about to be exhausted. The novel concludes, as I noted, with a looming, apocalyptic snowstorm. A blizzard which will finally white out subjects and spaces/places altogether. The most strikingly emergent quality of *The Night Season* is, paradoxically, this obliteration of the possibility of change. The text leaves us with a blank space/place, and so an invitation to start speculating how we might fill it in.

In his review of *The Night Season*, Kenneth J. Harvey links Bowdring's work with that of Lisa Moore, Carmelita McGrath and Michael Winter. These authors, he claims, write in ways constituting 'a refreshing shift in the focus of Newfoundland fiction' (D16). Moore, McGrath and Winter are all members of the Burning Rock Collective, a Newfoundland-based group of writers who have published two anthologies of short stories – *Extremities: Fiction from the Burning Rock* (1994), and *Heart's Larry Broke* (2000), as well as individual work. As Nicholas Rockel said of *Extremities* 'To The Burning Rock Collective's credit, its contributors do not write about dories, beachrocks, codfish and all things stereotypically Newfie [. . .]

Extremities' 10 writers show no interest in aiding and abetting a provincial image – however tempting the “climate” may be at the moment’ (D18). Lisa Moore’s *Degrees of Nakedness* (1995) is a particularly good example of the ‘going nowhere/being everywhere’ modality, too.

Like *The Night Season*, *Degrees of Nakedness* offers slivers of urban, late twentieth-century life in St. John’s, and deconstructs the centre/periphery divide.² Some of its stories are also set in Toronto, others in rural Newfoundland – but not in a way to highlight differences of a centre/periphery kind between these places. In stark contrast to Koch’s practice, for instance, of providing a situating paragraph orienting the reader to the uniqueness and isolation of the place being described, Moore’s stories provide details of life up close; not necessarily with the assumption the reader will know where they are, but with the presumption it does not matter: ‘I have this idea for an art exhibit. I want to get myself photographed all over town, nude. Sitting on a bench in Bannerman Park, reading the newspaper, riding my bike past the Salvation Army and Bowrings, sitting on the War Memorial with a take-out coffee’ (51). There is a confidence in Moore’s writing that the place about which she is writing matters as much as anywhere else.

² St. John’s and Hobart seem particularly well suited to de-constructing centre/periphery divides. Both are liminal places – the built and natural environments converge in each city. Whilst other novels I have addressed in this thesis also use them as settings, in the ‘going nowhere/being everywhere’ modality they have greater primacy.

The interlinked short stories in *Degrees of Nakedness* – throughout which the same characters appear, disappear and reappear – recall the episodic form of *The Night Season*. Both create a sense of intensity. But unlike the intensity of *Gaff Topsails*, which works towards unpacking the details of a coherent whole, Moore's book figures intensity so as to be able to figure fragments of lives in fragmented places. *Degrees of Nakedness* is not a modernist project.

Moore's characters, on the whole, unlike Bowdring's, get by. Their lives are also tactical as they negotiate blended families, little money and little work. No apocalyptic vision exists in *Degrees of Nakedness* to rival the ending of *The Night Season*, tactics, however, according to Moore, may well be sufficient after all.

On the other side of the world writers have also been challenging the notion of Tasmania as a place apart. Carmel Bird's *Bluebird Café* (1990) shares the common project with *The Night Season* and *Degrees of Nakedness* of dismantling the assumption that the territories upon which they focus are distinctly separated from elsewhere. Like stories using the modalities of leaving, walking around and coming home, *The Bluebird Cafe* presents gothic images of Tasmania. Much of the narrative is concerned with the disappearance of ten-year-old Lovelygod Mean, the midget product of an incestuous union between the twins Carillo and Bedrock Mean. The divide between Tasmania and places elsewhere is

implicit in Bedrock's comment that mainlanders refer to people who live on the island as the 'Tasmanians', 'As if we are actually a particular race' (55). But the novel also subverts the gothic events it touches on, and connects Tasmania with elsewhere. Lovelygod's name is given to her whilst her parents spend time on a hippie commune in America; Carillo goes on to found an Institute aimed at finding lost children in Los Angeles. Lovelygod's association with Tasmania is thus diluted. Tasmania's imbrication with the world is figured in other ways, too, most strikingly through 'Copperfield'. Of a popularity rivalling Disneyland, the tourist village recreates the abandoned north-west mining town on a suburban hillside, under a giant glass dome, in Launceston. But Copperfield is no tourist project imposed from elsewhere. The Bests (company name 'The Best People') who devise and run it, are Tasmanian born and bred.

The significance of leaving, walking around, coming home is mitigated in such a context, and the form dilutes it even further. There is no solitary protagonist whose journey we follow in particular detail, and narrators come and go. The *Bluebird Café's* unevenly divided sections, present material as diverse as a Japanese student's school project on the Lovelygod story, an article from a Los Angeles newspaper and a detailed reader's guide. The guide – with its glossary of terms, events, objects and people contained in the earlier narrative highlights that the novel itself is a kind of odd museum – an accretion of interesting but ultimately disparate things. Place, in consequence, is made more complex and less stable.

Prior to the publication of *The Bluebird Café*, Amanda Lohrey had already destabilised figurations of Tasmania in her 1984 novel *The Morality of Gentlemen* (1984). Using Brechtian methods of defamiliarisation she had re-envisioned the island. Lohrey is known as one of Australia's few writers of political fiction, and she has talked about her project in terms directly relevant to her depictions of Tasmania. Literature, she wrote in an essay entitled 'Politics in Fiction: Something Missing' (1988) 'is supposed to "transcend" public issues; to be about "fundamentals"; love, death and the family, and of course the landscape' (14). In calling for more 'politically informed fiction' (14), Lohrey's inclusion of 'the landscape' on a list of features that depoliticise is telling. It is not surprising that *The Morality of Gentlemen* treats place in a deliberately provocative way. Lohrey subscribes to the Brechtian paradigm of jolting her audience from a complacent absorption in the text, in order to challenge their familiar notions of the world in which they live.

The Morality of Gentlemen reconceives of the past. The novel focuses on the Hursey Case, an industrial dispute which took place on Tasmania's wharves in the 1950s. Despite its historical subject matter, the novel's estranging tactics are radical. Refusing to provide a stable narrative voice, or stable characters, the novel offers a putative first-person narrator who comes and goes. Sections of third-person narration range among points of view; lengthy quotations from sources such as newspaper articles and court

transcripts are presented without any informing point of view at all. The narrative's jumbled chronology, and the arbitrary emphasis given to some events over others (highly significant moments like the overturning of the Supreme Court's finding against the union are barely referenced), accentuate the reader's feeling of defamiliarisation still further.

In line with these defamiliarising tactics, location is not allowed to become place. For someone well acquainted with Hobart, wandering its streets in the fictional world of *The Morality of Gentlemen* is like moving about in a dream in which things are familiar and strange at the same time. The Parliament building is located opposite the wharves, just as it is in present-day Hobart, and yet the 'grand but incongruous marble columns' (10) have been grafted onto the stark Georgian sandstone of the building one sees from the street.

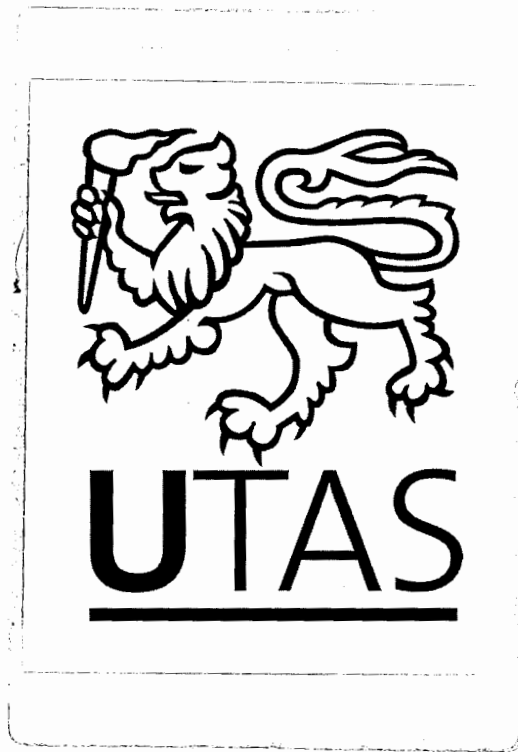
Crucially, *The Morality of Gentlemen* not only estranges Hobart, it estranges Tasmania's island-separateness, too. At no point are we given the sense that the action occurs at a geographical remove from mainland Australia. In the 1950s Hobart's port was still thriving and the fear of being marooned as a result of a disruption to shipping would have been great, but Tasmania's island status is never referred to. *The Morality of Gentlemen* ignores that primary marker of distinction, that key to so many cognitive maps which figure Tasmania as unlike anywhere else.

Reading on the Beach

The Night Season, *Degrees of Nakedness*, *The Bluebird Café* and *The Morality of Gentlemen* all display emergent characteristics. In these novels the importance of making significant journeys to, around, or from Tasmania or Newfoundland is downplayed. Unlike fictions in the modalities of leaving, walking around or coming home, the emergent modality of 'going nowhere/being everywhere' does not associate the islands with a sense of distinctiveness – indeed, Amanda Lohrey's work obliterates the island altogether.

It is too soon to determine whether the modality of 'going nowhere/being everywhere' will develop, or what its eventual contours might be if it does. At this point in time the only readerly and the only critical position possible is one which keeps my guiding metaphor of the littoral in mind. It is time to wait quietly on the beach again. As Greg Denning so perceptively reminds us, 'Voices from the beach are hard to hear', but, as I contended in my Prelude to this thesis, they never cease their whispering.

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List of Abbreviations

BM	<i>Baltimore's Mansion</i>
CG	<i>Crossing the Gap</i>
CM	<i>The Comfort of Men</i>
CUD	<i>The Colony of Unrequited Dreams</i>
D	<i>The Doubleman</i>
DG	<i>Defying Gravity</i>
DRG	<i>Death of a River Guide</i>
DWP	<i>Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World</i>
GT	<i>Gaff Topsails</i>
NS	<i>The Night Season</i>
SC	<i>The Savage Crows</i>
SHC	<i>The Sound of One Hand Clapping</i>
SN	<i>The Shipping News</i>
WT	<i>Waiting for Time</i>