

ALONG HIGHWAY 16:
A CREATIVE MEDITATION ON THE GEOGRAPHY OF NORTHWESTERN
BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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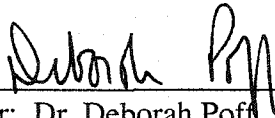
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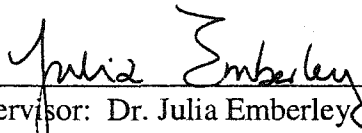
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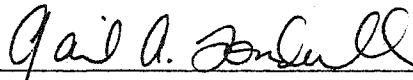
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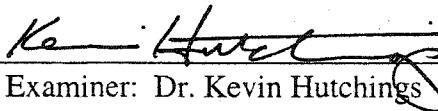
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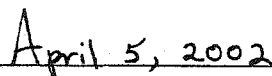


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Abstract

The objective of this project is two fold: to produce creatively informed geographic awareness of Northwestern BC and to address a shortage of creative geographic writing concerned with the rural and remote communities in Northwest British Columbia. Thus this thesis responds to the apparent gap between ongoing calls by geographers for the creation of artistic geographic knowledge and the lack of this creative geographic work being produced. The project is situated within the context of interdisciplinary studies and seeks to arrive at a thirdspace wherein new knowledge, real and imagined and more, is created. Strategies for achieving this synthesis of geographic and creative knowledge include situating creative practice in a theoretical and historical context, producing narratives about Northwestern British Columbia, and evaluating the processes involved in creative literary mapping.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Theresa Newhouse, without whom the landscapes of Northwest British Columbia would never have shone so brightly.

Opening

It was a fall day in 1982 when my father put on a suit. I remember the moment well. I was eight years old and my father in a suit was a rare sight. My mother helped him knot his tie and there was discussion of him making a flight on time. Phone calls ensued over the next three days, but because I was young, I did not pay much attention to what was being discussed. On the evening of the third day my father returned with the news that he had a job. My mother and father explained to me that we would be moving.

In an attempt to make sense of the move my parents showed me a map, pointing out a red dot in the lower left hand corner of British Columbia that represented where our house was then. Slowly my father traced the thin line leading from our red dot towards the top of the page. His finger paused at smaller dots along the way and he mentioned place names I had never heard of. His finger passed lakes and rivers, crossed bridges and zigzagged through mountain ranges. It never stopped in its climb towards the top of the page. Somewhere near the top his finger began to move towards the left again, this time towards the huge ocean with the word 'Pacific' etched onto its surface. His finger stopped for a moment at the edge of the ocean as he explained about the long ferry ride we would take to the islands where his new job was. We would ride in a boat bigger than our house, he explained, and we would move with our dogs and cats and my sister and everything we owned to those islands in the Pacific Ocean. Right here, he said, this is where your new school will be, and his finger circled a space as green as all the other coloured space on those two islands. Where is the red dot? I asked, and he answered that the town we were moving to was not big enough to merit a red dot, nor a dot of any

colour for that matter. My eyes fixed on the unmarked spot on a mapped landscape upon which my father's finger rested.

My movement to, and upbringing in, Northwest British Columbia has instilled within me a deep belief that the landscapes (both physical and cultural) of the region are knowable to a great degree through story. As a recounting of both real and imagined events, or as a history of individuals, groups, or institutions, story is not the sole method of understanding place; other methods of understanding place and region, including graphic representation, scholarly inquiry, or lived experience, are all understood methods of comprehending, and communicating about, place. Neither is story a method of knowing place that is exclusively relevant to those who have experienced the region being written about. In other words, story is a method of representing and communicating the physical and cultural landscapes of Northwest British Columbia to both insiders of, and outsiders to, the region. The narratives I have included in the project will be, I hope, equally relevant to those who have never set foot in Northwestern British Columbia as to those who may have never left the region. Having worked in logging camps and women's centres, truck stops and newspaper offices, classrooms and grocery stores, I have discovered that British Columbia's Northwest is in part understood, and indeed part created, through tale and anecdote, narration and story. Residents have a keen eye for detail and are able to relate with brilliant specificity accounts of their history and geography. Perhaps no one knows better how to detail the many truths of a town or stretch of road than a woman who has walked those places late in a winter evening with three children in tow. Perhaps no one knows better the realities

of hinterland existence, and the boom and bust cycles of a logging community, than an ex-faller turned truck driver who speaks his life over a countertop in a truck stop.

My conviction is that story of place is inextricable from geographic knowledge of place. A narrative, and by this I mean (like story) the recounting and representation in textual format of both real and imagined events, constructs an equally relevant depiction and representation of geographic knowledge as, for instance, one of Geography's best-known forms of representation (the map). By creating my own narratives about the landscapes in which I have lived and worked, I attempt to engage in the production of geographic knowledge through story, making tangible a belief that narrative practices are a medium from which to extract geographic knowledge, and also to represent and produce it.

Introduction

The objective of this project is twofold: to produce creatively informed geographic awareness of Northwestern British Columbia and to address a shortage of creative geographic writing concerned with the rural and remote communities in Northwest British Columbia. Thus this thesis responds to the apparent gap between ongoing calls by geographers for the creation of artistic geographic knowledge and the lack of this creative geographic work being produced. The project is situated within the context of interdisciplinary studies and seeks to arrive at a thirdspace wherein new knowledge, real and imagined and more, is created (Soja, 1996). Strategies for achieving this synthesis of geographic and creative knowledge include situating creative practice in a theoretical and historical context, producing narratives about Northwestern British Columbia, and evaluating the processes involved in creative literary mapping.

I rely on definitions of landscape and sense of place developed in the discipline of human geography. By sense of place I mean the conflation of both subjective and objective characteristics of a place, based in part on experience, memory and intention, as defined by Cosgrove in the *Third Edition of the Dictionary of Human Geography Terms* (548). With regard to landscape, I rely on a definition also found in the *Dictionary of Human Geography Terms*, the definition of landscape being James Duncan's characterization of a "polysemic term referring to the appearance of an area, the assemblage of objects used to produce that appearance, and the area itself" (316). The thesis is located primarily in two fields of knowledge, cultural geography and literary studies, and the research depends upon, and dialogues with, discussions that advocate a blurring of boundaries between geography and creative writing. The project anchors

itself in theoretical constructions concerned with thirdspace, interdisciplinarity, hybridity, and connection between various methods of knowledge production. The project is anchored in work done previously by writers and geographers who represent a context of ongoing discussions concerned with destabilizing disciplinary boundaries towards a new way of knowing. It is into the context of interdisciplinary studies and ongoing discussions undertaken by these theorists, writers and geographers that I situate my own narrative practices, which form the core part of the project and are concerned with the rural and remote communities along Highway 16 in Northwestern British Columbia. The work also engages a call made by geographers in the 1980s and early 1990s urging geography to avail itself of creative knowledge and to seek to create artistic representations and evaluations of landscape. Particularly, I respond to a statement made by geographer D.W. Meinig, who wrote in a 1983 essay entitled “Geography as an Art” that

We shall not have a humanistic geography worthy of the claim until we have some of our most talented and sensitive scholars deeply engaged in the creation of the literature of the humanities. Geography will deserve to be called an art only when a substantial number of geographers become artists. (325)

Through the process of responding to Meinig’s assertion, I hope to offer a story, a written map, of life in remote rural communities. By presenting explorations of geography, creative narratives, and interdisciplinary thought, I hope to offer an exploration of creativity as a method of producing, and contributing to, geographic knowledge. The structure of the thesis is designed, in part, to reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the project. The thesis is divided into three discrete yet imbricated sections, each section

designed to orient a reader to specific concepts pertaining to geographic, literary and creative landscape representation. The first section explores various discussions and theories concerned with methods of representation and the creation of knowledge. The second section represents my own narrative contemplations of Northwest British Columbia, and the third section is a meditation on the processes involved in developing both the first and second sections of the project.

Section One introduces various theoretical backgrounds concerned with landscape, sense of place, and intersections of creativity and geographic representation. It explores concepts contributing to an interdisciplinary project in which creativity and geographic knowledge are both evaluated and created. Within Section One I examine geographers, writers, and theorists who have argued for ways of knowing that concentrate on connections and fusions, rather than on divisions, in the production and representation of landscapes and place. The thesis relies on the works of human and cultural geographers who have argued that the discipline of geography must expand its boundaries and embrace the creation of artistic endeavours. The exploration of these geographers (who have each called for the use of creative practices in place and landscape representation and evaluation) concentrates both on their analysis of why creative practices are valuable to a geographic inquiry, and on their own use of creativity when considering and representing landscapes and place.

This work also dialogues with the geographic concepts developed by geographers Edward Soja and S. Quoniam, particularly Soja's concept of thirdspace which he defines as the "knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions [and] events marked out materially and metaphorically in spatial praxis" (31). This

definition provides a method of understanding both geographic knowledge and landscape or place that is outside traditional mediums and beyond clear disciplinary models. Soja's book *Thirdspace: Travels to Los Angeles and Other Real and Imagined Places* reflects an appreciation of interdisciplinarity, manifested in a poetic musing on the city of Los Angeles. In a similar vein to Soja, S. Quoniam, in his essay "A painter geographer of Arizona" asks the question "how as an artist am I also a geographer of Arizona landscapes?" (14). He argues that landscape painting and geography are not mutually exclusive; rather they are related and constitutive. He goes on to say that his own work occupies a space *between* geography and art, a space of interdisciplinarity.

In addition to exploring the manner in which the discipline of geography has expanded (and continues to defend further expansion) to include artistic methods of knowledge production, Section One of the thesis also considers theorists who have argued that creative contemplations of sense of place and landscape are valid and valuable methods of 'mapping' culture and the interaction with place. The works of Geographers, post-structuralist literary theorists, and those involved in interdisciplinarity will be considered and evaluated with particular emphasis on how certain works represent new methods of knowing space and place. These theorists provide clear articulations of method; they also provide a frame of reference within which this project occurs. Homi Bhabha's thoughts on interdisciplinarity are influential, particularly his observation that interdisciplinarity must not simply be "an attempt to strengthen one foundation by drawing on another, [but rather interdisciplinarity should be] a reaction to the fact that we are living at the real border of our own disciplines, where some of the fundamental ideas of our disciplines are being profoundly shaken" (*Translator translated* 15). The concept

of one discipline attempting to strengthen itself by drawing on the foundations of another discipline speaks directly to early convictions held by humanist geographers regarding the use of literary and artistic works as sites from which to find and pull out geographic knowledge, thus adding to traditional sources of geographic information (e.g. Salter and Lloyd).

In contrast, work done by Deleuze and Guattari in their book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is part of an interdisciplinary project aimed at the creation of new and continuously shifting knowledge situated outside any strict or traditional disciplinary context. The authors posit that the processes involved in mapping and writing must be viewed as one and the same. They argue that maps teach an invaluable lesson to authors, in that maps are made to be malleable and are subject to transformation. The linking of mapping and literature done by Deleuze and Guattari in the introduction to their text can also be found in Baudrillard's text *America*, in which Baudrillard reads the physicality of landscape as literary metaphor. Other literary theorists offer a framework in which to consider both the politics and processes involved in writing, representation, and the creation of knowledge and understanding.

Following an exploration of the theorists concerned with interdisciplinarity, literary theory, and geography, I introduce the reader to a number of Canadian authors concerned with rurality whose work embodies the blending and interdisciplinarity of which the theorists speak. The texts produced by these writers engage calls by geographers for creative investigation and representation of landscape and place, and also calls of theorists who concerned with interdisciplinarity and the creation of new knowledge. The exploration in Section One of theorists, authors, and artists concerned

with landscape and sense of place provides an introduction to my own creative interpretation of Northwestern British Columbia, and the rural and remote communities within it.

Section Two of the thesis is comprised of a collection of personal narratives about the land and places in Northwestern British Columbia, specifically the communities and landscapes at the western end of Highway 16 between Terrace and the Queen Charlotte Islands. Through a juxtaposition of technical maps depicting the areas described in the narratives, the purpose of Section Two is to introduce creative writing as a valid method of geographic understanding. The purpose of placing maps alongside a creative narrative is threefold. First it highlights the subjective aspect of the map, an item too often viewed as an empirical and objective piece of information (Harley 237). Secondly, the overlay of narrative on map highlights the absence (in a mapped representation of landscape) of people and their lived experiences. While maps offer information on location and coordinates, they offer a viewer little in the way of information about peoples' lives and values in an area (Harley 240). Yet, as Kent C. Ryden writes "[m]aps may be inadequate in themselves to express human life, they may resist poetry, but nevertheless they can inspire the imagination, emotion and words" (22). Juxtaposing maps with narratives serves to highlight the maps' 'surfacial' representation (the representation of the earth's surface) in conjunction with the maps' ability to inspire a greater depth of thought. In this case that greater depth of thought refers to an axis centered on the human dimension of place, including imagination and memory. In Section Two of the thesis, then, the narratives give voice and description to landscapes and places that have, from time to time, lacked extensive technically mapped

representation, but by no means lack meaning as places. Thirdly, the interaction of maps and narratives mirrors the objective of the thesis – the production of knowledge in which interdisciplinarity is a key component.

Section Two thus represents narrative practice as geographic knowledge, and is the practical and creative manifestation of concepts outlined in Section One. The narratives, coupled with maps of the regions described in the narratives, represent the creation of an artistic interpretation of geographic concepts such as landscape and sense of place. The narratives in this thesis reflect what, to quote Kent C. Ryden again, is “the nature and quality of a place [that] can sink deep into you, influencing and conditioning the way you think, see, and feel...far down into your very bones by simple virtue of residence and time” (289-290). They are reflections and manifestations of my experience and interactions with rural communities in northwest British Columbia. Concentrating on movement through resource-dependent towns, the narratives reflect a childhood in economically depressed communities, adolescence in regions of the outskirts, and all the tactile memories one accumulates from developing an intimate bond with land and place over time.

An exploration of the personal essay, and its ongoing contribution to geographic knowledge, is also imbedded within Section Two. I have chosen to use predominantly the medium of the personal essay for several reasons. It reflects the interdisciplinary tone of the project, it signals a personal and intimate relationship with its subject (the landscapes of Northwestern British Columbia), which is one I have, and it has been described by authors and critics alike as being a medium conducive to literary mapping.

For instance, Phillip Lopate asserts in his edited anthology *The Art of the Personal Essay: An Anthology from the Classical Era to the Present* that

The personal essay possesses the freedom to move anywhere, in all directions. [It] has long been associated with an experimental method....there is something heroic in [it]...striking out toward the unknown, not only without a map but without the certainty that there is anything worthy to be found....The personal essay is not, for the most part, philosophy; nor is it yet science. In the final analysis, the personal essay represents a mode of being. It points a way for the self to function with relative freedom in an uncertain world. (xxxvii – xlv)

In Section Three of the thesis, through a final personal narrative, I discuss the processes involved in contributing to the ongoing discourse concerned with knowledge creation. I discuss the narrative practice as one that has new and qualitative impacts on geographic representation of Northwestern British Columbia, and evaluate the developments surrounding the creation of eight narratives. Rather than being a traditional conclusion, Section Three outlines the processes involved in arriving at a place wherein there exists an understanding of thirdspace and a knowledge of creative literary mapping. Linking Section Three with Soja's concept of thirdspace, the final section is a meditation on the methods used to arrive at a place that is real, imagined, and more.

Section 1: Theoretical Backgrounds

1.1 Exploring creative geography: discussions of art, literature and geographic knowledge

Geography's deployment of literature and creative material has shifted over time. Initially concerned with artistic or creative material as a source of geographic information useful to augment existing geographic knowledge, the discipline has moved toward an understanding that creatively informed knowledge can be geographic in its own right, communicating in a different but equally well-founded manner concepts and information crucial to geographic thought. This shift in geography reflects the re-conceptualization of interdisciplinarity from a concept that allows disciplines to borrow from each other to supplement disciplinary constructs, to a practice involving the creation of new knowledge outside pre-existing disciplinary boundaries. Constructing geographic knowledge through creative practice and endeavour is not a new concept (e.g. Cosgrove, 1993; Duncan and Ley, 1993; Ryden, 1993; Meinig, 1983; Porteous, 1985; Watson, 1983; Salter and Lloyd, 1977). While Geography historically grounded itself in physical landscape (Sauer, 1925), over time the discipline expanded from a natural science concentrating on physical geography, to a discipline in which the definition of landscape included the people upon the land and the impacts and changes they were making (Lewis, 1979). As Philip L. Wagner writes in the forward to *Re-reading Cultural Geography*

The individuality of place or landscape...however striking and illuminating, consists of a particular conjunction and relationship among a host of spatially extended elements, both natural and cultural or artificial. (4)

As interest in the social components of geography expanded, the discipline itself branched into new sub-disciplines, including cultural, social and humanist geography. Eventually, the methods by which representation of this physical and cultural landscape also expanded. Within the expanding field of geography, human and cultural geographers began to consider the inclusion and use of artistic and creative methods as forms of geographic representation (Tuan 1974, 1978; Salter and Lloyd 1977; Meinig 1983; Watson 1983; Porteous 1985, 1986, 1989; Cosgrove and Domosh, 1993; Duncan and Ley, 1993). These geographers argued for an expansion of geographic thought – positivist empirical approaches to the study of landscape and geography were no longer sufficient. Tuan developed a new vocabulary, describing a love of landscape as ‘topophilia’ (Tuan, 1974). Porteous argued for the use of literature as a valid source of geographical information (Porteous, 1985), Salter and Lloyd posited that the only way geographers could truly understand place was through interactions with creative interpretations of it (Salter and Lloyd, 1977), and Watson (himself a poet) stated the very soul of geography was linked with artistic representation and thought (Watson, 1983). More recently, geographers such as Cosgrove, Duncan, Ley and Barnes have reopened the discussion of representation and landscape, arguing again that geography must avail itself to artistic and creative methods, including creative literary interpretations of place. In their book *place/culture/representation*, Duncan and Ley write that

[t]he scientific way of knowing is no longer regarded as a privileged discourse linking us to truth but rather one discourse among many, which constructs both the object of its enquiry and the modes of seeing and representing that object. (28)

They go on to write that “[a] map, a picture, a text – all of them are forms of creation, all are in large part a measure of personal expressions” (37). Geographic inquiry, concerned with this personal expression, also developed an interest in ‘sense of place’, described by Dennis Cosgrove as being the “character intrinsic to a place itself [and] the attachments that people themselves have to a place. ...[I]n everyday life individuals and communities develop deep attachments to place through experience, memory and intention.

...[O]bjective aspects of a place are conflated with subjective aspects of our experience of that place” (‘sense of place’ 548-549). Ways of representing sense of place and personal attachment to landscape grew to include artistic and narrative endeavours, and geographers took up these methods (Pred 1990, Quoniam 1988, Watson 1983). For instance, in 1993 geographer Kent C. Ryden not only wrote creatively about his surrounding landscape, but advocated creative methods of representing geographic enquiry, stating that “the nature and quality of a place can sink deep into you, influencing and conditioning the way you think, see, and feel...far down into your very bones by simple virtue of residence and time” (289-290). He stated further that nature and quality of place can sometimes best be captured in narrative form.

Despite the increased support for geographers to engage with artistic methods, hesitancy to do so, and by extension a lack of artist/geographer practitioners, remained. This is nowhere more eloquently expressed than in D.W. Meinig’s words when in 1983 he called for geographic scholars to become artists. An exploration of the geographers who have heeded Meinig’s call must take place in order to ground this project in a larger discourse of creative geography. Similarly to Meinig’s call for geographers to become artists, geographer S. Quoniam questioned how a landscape artist might also be a

geographer (Painter 14). Quoniam posed this question of his work that is a combination of illegible text and landscape painting and representations. The question is at the heart of any investigation concerning the call for geographers to become artists and creative writers, or the call for artists and creative writers to be recognized as geographers.

Inherent in the question is a series of themes. First, how does one extrapolate geographic meaning from works of art or literature? Secondly, to what degree is an artist also a geographer (and visa versa), and on what grounds might an artistic text be understood as a geographic text? Finally, is the outcome of artistic geography (or geographic art) a simple combination of two methods of thought working side by side, or is it to be a hybrid of new thought destined perhaps to the margins of both disciplines? If the hybrid outcome of fusing together geography and artistic text is destined to the margins of disciplinary boundaries, it calls into question Meinig's demand for the discipline of geography to produce artists; after all, if work is to reside on the boundaries it would suggest that single disciplines cannot contain the work. Thus the outcome of a truly hybrid relationship between geography and creative writing might only be capable of residing in an interdisciplinary context.

In response to his initial question regarding the ability of an artist to also be a geographer, Quoniam answers:

A first answer would argue that the space of Arizona, like every space, itself creates new imaginings. But in the process of analysis, and explanation about landscape reality, a great variety of approaches are plausible. Painting is one...It is also a difficult, if not hazardous exercise to talk about myself and about my

painting because I want to remain on the boundaries between geography and art.

(14)

This answer has inherent in it an equal number of complex themes as does the question to which it responds. First, space and place (including textual representation of the two) are themselves constitutive. Second, the consideration of landscape is a multi-faceted endeavour in which both artistic and scientific modes of thought and analysis are acceptable. Finally, the outcomes of new geographic analysis and representation reside on the margins and boundaries between (not outside) geographic and artistic methods. The second component of Quoniam's answer is the part that addresses most succinctly Meinig's and other geographers' call for artistic modes of geographic thought, while the first and last components of Quoniam's answer insist that Quoniam, as both a geographer and artist of Arizona, represents the synthesis of two apparently disparate methods of evaluating the landscape. This synthesis results in a new, and ultimately more productive, way of investigating and representing place. Quoniam writes "[t]he artist could not go through [Arizona] without painting and the geographer without describing the feelings of the painter, with each experience informing the other" (4). The outcome of this creative geographic mode of inquiry is, as Quoniam writes, "a kind of parallel but separate geography" (12). Quoniam's final evaluation of his own painting/geographing of the Arizona landscape as being something that resides on the boundary between geography and art suggests on the one hand a method of representation that is outside both disciplines, and on the other a method of representation that is a combination of the two. His work is thus truly a manner of landscape interpretation and evaluation that is both geographic and artistic in nature, and the outcome depicts a new space, which by the

artist/geographer's own evaluation will in turn spark more new imaginings of space. The goal of my thesis mirrors those of Quoniam's in so far as the narratives in the project are neither clear geographic articulations nor are they purely literary descriptions of place. Instead the geographic narratives of this project are an exploration of literary mapping, an outcome representing the hybridization of traditional geographic and literary methods of representation and knowledge production.

Methods of landscape representation anchored in an interdisciplinary mode of inquiry, particularly one concerned with creative geography, occur in narrative writing endeavours as well as painting practices. Predating Quoniam, and practicing poetry rather than painting, geographer J. Wreford Watson wrote in a 1983 essay and address entitled "The soul of geography" that

Geography without passion is about as alive as a body without blood – ready for the gravediggers. ...We ought to say of landscape not only – this is what it looks like, but, this is how I feel it...[It is] the poet who gets to the *real* issues [of geography], because [s]he is *of* them. [S]he voices them as prime experience.

(391-392)

Similar then to Quoniam's assertion that the geographer is an artist and the geographer in turn informs the artist, Watson does not separate the poet and the geographer. Instead, he suggests that the poet is a geographer by virtue of the poet's experience of geographic issues, including place. Watson thus implies that creative representations of geographic issues are not only inherent in creative endeavours, but geography is in need of more creative geographic methods of representation. Watson, a practitioner of his own call to passionate and creative geographers, is himself a poet engaged in a writing process

concerned with landscape. His poetry, imbedded into the 1983 Presidential Address delivered at the Annual Conference of the Institute of British Geographers, contemplates everything from “a fume-ridden and socially riven mine town at Kirkland Lake in Canada” (390) to the Canadian National Telecommunications Tower in Toronto. Of the latter, he writes that it is

built from rock – but rock
eyed with vision, crowned with light,
rock with a thousand voices such as
lead out of night,
rock raised to the high and burning noon. (389)

Imbedded in these poetic lines of urban geographic contemplation is the passion Watson argues is necessary to geography. His lines thus represent a merger, and a mixing, of both geographic and literary narrative methods of inquiry and representation, culminating in a knowledge pertaining to place that is anchored in the languages of both poetry and geography. Watson’s theoretical rationale for his geographic poetry does not entirely reflect the cross-disciplinary nature of his work. The concepts behind his narrative embody an understanding of interdisciplinarity that advocates the borrowing from one discipline to strengthen pre-existing disciplinary constructs. Watson advocates a ‘borrowing’ from one discipline for the purposes of another, and he suggests the ‘use’ of literature for geographic purposes rather than the creation of new and disruptive knowledge formations. Watson embodies the concepts of which he writes, namely that there needs to be

...use of literature in geography. It [cannot be] on the sidelines. It is central – because it draws us back to an earth enriched by the blood and bone of people, an earth of hope and despair, over which [humans] break themselves, or which they overcome. We [must] not sit on the bleachers and watch the earth as a geographical spectacle: we are partnered with the earth, and *geography is the book of that bond*. (397)

Literature's centrality to geographic endeavours, in conjunction with the willingness to create poetry as a method of geographic representation, are both concepts that inform literary geography and creative narrative mapping. While Watson stops short of calling for the *creation* of literature in Geography, his practice of producing poetry infused with geographic content suggests he supports creative production of geographic knowledge. Thus it might be suggested that Watson is responding to Meinig's call for geographers to engage in the creation of art, and by doing so is offering insight into a method of geographic representation in which the narrative practice is central. Watson's work represents a response to calls for geographers to become artists, and his poetry in part suggests that geographers can create art as geographic information. While Watson marks this response, his rationale for the use of literature remains grounded in a theoretical construct arguing for the borrowing from one discipline to strengthen the pre-existing discipline of another (geography). Thus he does not mark an interruption to disciplinary constructs, nor does he represent a departure from traditional interdisciplinarity.

Geographer-poets and geographer-painters are not the only geographers to advocate creative methods of representing geographic knowledge. Geographer Kent C.

Ryden, neither a poet nor a painter, engages in narrative representations of place, arguing that

It is in stories – narratives formal or informal, elaborate and detailed or offhand and telegraphic – of what happened to people in a place, of what they have done with the things that they found there, that best reveal the ‘real geography’: geography, that is, experienced and understood as place. (46)

Ryden argues that to understand the nature of place, and to communicate meaningfully about that place, traditional modes of geographic inquiry (the map for instance) no longer suffice as representational methods. His argument leads him to an investigation into, and a defence of, creative geography. In the first essay, “Of Maps and Minds: The Invisible Landscape,” in his collection entitled *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place*, Ryden re-envision the map. He writes that the map is perhaps the most apparent representation of geographic knowledge, stating that

Of all the media of communication about geography, the map is probably the first that comes to most people’s minds, and it has certainly been one of the most basic and long-lived....the modern map is a marvel of efficient geographic communication, though, in other important ways it does not tell us very much at all...it compresses the landscape’s ambiguities into an arbitrary and simplified flatness – it is all surface. (19-21)

But Ryden’s analysis of the map does not end with a critique of its surficial nature. Instead, he sees the map as an item capable of creative stimulation and artistic inspiration, going on to write that “maps, while they have their limitations, nevertheless possess the

power to summon up a deeply human response, appealing irresistibly to memory and creativity and dreams, connecting intimately with people's minds and lives" (23). His assertions that maps are recognizable renderings of geographic knowledge capable of creative stimulus culminates in his observation that maps are, in fact, themselves creative and artistic endeavours:

Modern maps look so precise and scientific that it is difficult to remember that (unless they are generated completely from aerial photographs and satellite data) they are summaries of the direct field observations and experiences of surveyors and geologists, not the anonymous predictions of computers and machines. In this sense maps stand as segments of the professional autobiographies of their makers, and thus, inevitably, of their personal autobiographies as well.

Ryden is, in a sense, transforming the map as method of representation indicative of interdisciplinarity. He suggests the map is both a scientific endeavour and an endeavour in the fine arts. This assertion, prefaced by a considered evaluation of the poet Elizabeth Bishop's writing on the map (21), produces the possibility of intersecting narrative autobiographical text with the map, as Ryden's suggestion is that the two are not exclusive of each other, but are in fact mutually constitutive.

Ryden's reviewing of the map as both a creative practice and a rendering capable of creative inspiration, is one of many geographic validations of interdisciplinarity and the merging of fine arts and geography. Of final interest in the scholarly endeavours of Geographer Kent Ryden are his personal narratives scattered throughout a text concerning maps and methods of geographic representation. These personal narratives, integrated into a "doctoral dissertation on which this book is based" (294) suggest an

understanding of creative narrative as a valid method of recording and creating geographic knowledge. Ryden addresses this understanding in his statement that

In a way I see this book not only as a scholarly study of place but as a personal mapping of place, an allusion to my own geographically rooted narratives, and those narratives will remain inextricably joined in my mind with the learning that I have accumulated in the course of my research – and I have to admit that the stories may will be more vivid and entertaining than the learning. (296)

It is this sense of geographically rooted narratives linked inextricably with personal narratives, and the end result being more vivid, which is the motivating force behind this thesis. While Ryden expresses this sense explicitly, he is not alone in an approach to geography that fuses the geographic with the personal and creative. As discussed, S. Quoniam and J. Wreford Watson are other examples of geographers whose work embodies interdisciplinary concepts and thus paves the way for further contemplations of creatively informed geographic knowledge.

1.2 Something beyond: the creation of new landscapes outside single disciplinary models

The greatest challenge I faced when writing this thesis was discovering a language in which to anchor my investigations of creatively informed geographic knowledge, knowledge produced in an interdisciplinary context of fine arts and geography. My project was to uncover arguments that resisted divisions of creative and geographic representation into single disciplinary models and strove instead towards fusion and intersection of these methods of representation. My interest was not a re-

privileging of the creative over the geographic. Rather, my interest was, as Gayatri Spivak argues for, a critical interruption of the two methods of representation. Spivak, in her essay “A Literary Representation of The Subaltern: A Women’s Text From the Third World,” states that single disciplinary models of thought must “...critically ‘interrupt’ each other, bring each other to crisis, in order to serve their constituencies; especially when each seems to claim all for its own” (241). Bearing Spivak’s assertion in mind, I was primarily concerned with the representation of place, particularly northern landscapes and communities, as places of memory and human experience. My desire was thus to find a theoretical construct in which to fit my own research concerning creatively informed geographic knowledge. To this end, theorists whose work concentrates on interdisciplinarity, new methods of knowledge production, interruption of traditional disciplinary research models, and reconfigurations of literary and geographic binarisms, were the theorists with whom my project dialogued. These theorists came from a variety of positions, including post-modern and post-colonial, and from a variety of disciplines, including Literary Studies, Geography, Cultural Studies and Gender Studies. The project dialogues most significantly with the theorists Homi Bhabha, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Edward Soja. In order to contextualize these four theorists in a discourse of interdisciplinarity, it is worthwhile to examine what the concepts of interdisciplinarity are.

Julia Thompson Klein, in her essay “A Conceptual Vocabulary of Interdisciplinary Science,” suggests that the production of knowledge has, in the last decade, moved more and more towards a concern with interdisciplinarity (3). She draws on the examples of new disciplinary constructs in academic settings, particularly the

melding of Biology with other academic disciplines such as Physics, Chemistry and Psychology. Klein asserts that the ensuing interdisciplinarity of these new disciplines (Biochemistry, Biophysics, etc) has benefited the manner in which scientific research occurs due to an increased capacity of understanding. She writes that “[t]he reconstructive capacity of interdisciplinary research alters the architectonics of knowledge by strengthening connections outside the discipline ‘proper’” (18). While Klein nowhere in her analysis writes of strengthening connections between traditionally scientific disciplines and the disciplines traditionally found in the arts context of an academic institution (e.g. English, Philosophy, or Women’s Studies), she nonetheless opens the door for new and innovative connections between and across traditional ‘fixed and proper’ disciplinary boundaries.

Klein is conscious of the skepticism that accompanies calls for interdisciplinarity. She concedes that constructs of discipline invoke ideas of rigour, commitment and authority, while interdisciplinarity is accompanied by ideas of superficiality, disequilibrium and shifting meanings. She aptly uses the metaphor of noise to illustrate the conflicting ways interdisciplinarity is viewed:

Perceived as noise in one context, variety and interference become information in a new or reorganized context. New meaning is constructed out of what first appears to be noise as the exchange of codes and information across boundaries is occurring, whether the activity is borrowing...developing hybrid interests, or disrupting and restructuring traditional practices. (22)

Klein’s statement illustrates the broad manner in which interdisciplinary knowledge can be created. Be it through processes of borrowing, hybridity or disruption, new meaning

is the end result. Her statement, while specified to a melding of traditionally 'proper' scientific disciplines, is relevant to the production of interdisciplinary knowledge between any apparently disparate disciplines. Here Klein's conceptualization of hybridity is important, as it is broad enough to encapsulate the possibility of connecting scientific and non-scientific disciplinary methods of investigation. She writes that

Hybridization is a biological metaphor connoting formation of new animals, plants, or individuals and groups. A hybrid emerges from interaction or cross-breeding of heterogeneous elements. In organizing theory, the metaphor marks tasks at boundaries and in spaces between systems and subsystems. (9)

It follows from Klein's statement that hybrid knowledge production, which she has defined as one method of creating interdisciplinary understandings, can arise from the 'interaction or cross-breeding' of disciplinary methods found in, for instance, Creative writing and Geography. The resulting 'hybrid' knowledge, by Klein's definition, would reside at the boundaries and 'in-between-spaces' of both disciplines. These hybrid outcomes may interrupt existing single disciplinary constructs by denoting the limits of contained disciplinary knowledge. In order to understand creatively informed geographic knowledge of Northwestern British Columbia, knowledge produced through the hybridization of Geography and Creative writing; Klein's definitions of both interdisciplinary knowledge and hybridity are exceptionally useful. Her arguments pertaining to the creation of interdisciplinary thought, particularly the component of her argument that is anchored in organic analogy, do not stand alone. Concepts centred on an organic model link both with a creative process and a narrative-based mapping method of landscape. Organic models also allow for linkages to be made in symbiotic manners,

suggesting that relationships between geography and creative writing can result in a new and innovative end product not situated clearly in either discipline but rather resting on the margins of the two.

Deleuze and Guattari, in the text *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, argue for the simultaneous fragmentation and explosion of thought, for interaction or cross-breeding to occur between methods of representation. They, like Klein, anchor their discussion in analogies to the organic. Their concept of 'rhizomatic' knowledge production is illustrated with trees, roots, rats and other organic materials (6-7). Representation, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is strongest when occurring across boundaries (akin to Klein's definition of hybridization and interdisciplinarity), and it is at this point that knowledge production becomes rhizomatic, or in mimicry of the rhizome. Deleuze and Guattari describe the rhizome, and by extension the process through which knowledge should be created, as something that continuously defies clear containment and absolution:

The rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even non-signs...It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither a beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows....the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. (21)

Deleuze and Guattari's defense of rhizomatic representation, like Klein's defense of interdisciplinarity through hybridity, suggests creativity that is informed by geography is a valuable method of knowledge production by which to create something new. A rhizomatic method of producing text draws from both geographic methods and traditional literary methods of creating. The link between rhizomatic representation and the map suggests that a traditional method of geographic representation (the map) is endlessly connectable, opening it up the possibility of linkages with creative narrative practices, and thus to a hybridization between map and creative narrative practice. Rhizomatic methods of representation and narrative creation can be deployed for continuous disciplinary transformation and fusion, always resulting in something new and beyond the initial scope of what might have come before. This method of producing knowledge and representation exposes new possibilities in the area of literary mapping and creative geographic mapping.

In the authors' "Introduction: Rhizome," they write that "[w]riting...has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come" (4-5). Deploying the concepts of 'realms that are yet to come' is significant when viewing the processes of creative literary mapping as it suggests the possibilities of hybridity and interdisciplinarity, opening new spaces in which to produce creatively informed geographic knowledge. Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that writing must strive toward an act of mapping implies that maps can be created from words and writing. This supports some geographers' demand that the discipline of geography shift into the realm of poetry, creative writing and literature. Deleuze and Guattari also argue that when a

text sets out to map a place or thought, it must do so from a multidisciplinary perspective, constantly mindful of thwarting the constraints of dichotomies and linearity.

In their final call to authors, Deleuze and Guattari insist that writers “[m]ake maps, not photos or drawings” (25), prefacing the demand with the statement that

The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. (12)

In the same way humanist geographers have called on students of geography to become artists, Deleuze and Guattari call on authors to become mapmakers. It is in the space between these two calls that I hope the essays of this collection will reside. The narratives are creative literary maps of places and landscapes along the western section of Highway 16, a thin line that my father’s finger traced years ago. The language set forth by Deleuze and Guattari, in conjunction with Klein’s definitions of hybridity and interdisciplinarity, thus offers the opportunity to produce creatively informed geographic knowledge premised on principles of hybridization and the rhizome, knowledge arising from the unification of map and narrative practice in an interdisciplinary context.

Interdisciplinarity, as defined by Cultural Studies theorist Homi Bhabha in an extensive conversation with W.J.T. Mitchell entitled “Translator translated: an interview with cultural theorist Homi Bhabha,” resists some of the usages and definitions offered by Klein. Bhabha’s embrace of interdisciplinarity, and his exacting concept of what the creation of knowledge in an interdisciplinary context might look like, offers a guide (a

map) for the production of creative geographic literary mapping. Unlike Klein, Bhabha does not believe that interdisciplinarity is the simple 'borrowing' by one discipline from another. Bhabha's concepts of interdisciplinarity are premised on the ideas of hybridization (as are Klein's), and they make use of spatial metaphors (evocative of Deleuze and Guattari's maps), but his theories suggest more accountability in the concept of interdisciplinarity. Bhabha concentrates on the dismantling of binaristic heterogeneous disciplinary sites through which interdisciplinarity is created simply by the 'cross-breeding' of disciplines. His ideas resist movement between definitive sites (thus resisting Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic configurations) because his ideas attempt to dismantle the very particularities of which sites are comprised.

Homi Bhabha divides concepts of interdisciplinarity into two types. He names them 'interdisciplinarity 1' and 'interdisciplinarity 2', differentiating between them because he states the foundations of 'interdisciplinarity 1' are predicated on outdated tradition while 'interdisciplinarity 2' is formulated on more liberatory concepts motivated by disciplinary crisis. Bhabha defines 'interdisciplinarity 1' as being a construct of interdisciplinarity that

we are all familiar with: joint degrees, joint teaching. It assumes that different disciplines have foundational truths, but if you put two foundations in proximity, you have a wider base, right? So Interdisciplinarity 1 is a way of framing or garlanding a particular discipline with another discipline's insights or expertise in order to celebrate the capricious humanism of the humanities. Illustrating your historical thesis with references to literature, and then aligning them with a

sociological or psychological perspective, casts an auratic glow around your own work. (15)

Parallels exist between Klein's concepts of borrowing in order to widen the breadth of disciplines 'proper' (biology borrowing from chemistry, for example) and Bhabha's definition of 'interdisciplinarity 1'. While Klein's idea of borrowing is a starting place in the process of creating interdisciplinary representations of place, her concepts do not entirely stretch the boundaries of interdisciplinarity. Klein remains contained in an idea of strengthening existing disciplines, as opposed to recognizing the limitations of single disciplinary constructs. Thus in both the instances of Klein's interdisciplinarity and Bhabha's 'interdisciplinary 1', disciplines are strengthened through the mutually beneficial sharing and cross-pollenization of knowledge. While this reciprocal relationship is, according to Klein, of worth and interest it does not push interdisciplinarity far enough according to Bhabha. In agreement with Bhabha's position, the creation of creative geographic narratives is an attempt not to strengthen either the discipline of creative writing or geography, but rather to combine the two for a new thirdspace-residing product (see page 32).

Bhabha argues that interdisciplinarity, far from strengthening disciplinary foundations, should instead highlight the crisis experienced by disciplines 'proper' in their present construction. It is precisely this 'mode of crisis' that should drive a more meaningful construction of interdisciplinary studies. This is the interdisciplinarity that Bhabha refers to as 'interdisciplinarity 2'. He defines this second type of interdisciplinarity, 'interdisciplinarity 2', as being one in which

our invocation of another discipline happens at the edge or limit of our own discipline. It is not an attempt to strengthen one foundation by drawing from another; it is a reaction to the fact that we are living at the real border of our own disciplines, where some of the fundamental ideas of our discipline are being profoundly shaken. So our interdisciplinary moment is a move of survival – the formulation of knowledges that requires our disciplinary scholarship and techniques but demands that we abandon disciplinary mastery and surveillance.

(15)

While Klein's classification of interdisciplinarity and Bhabha's definitions of 'interdisciplinarity 2' are not mutually exclusive, they might certainly be read as being at odds with each other. This potential incommensurability is due primarily to Bhabha's insistence that rather than interdisciplinarity being used to buttress disciplinary foundations, it should be read as representative of disciplinary crisis. Rather than single disciplines forming a mutually beneficial relationship that simply reinforces pre-existing shortfalls, interdisciplinarity must instead insist upon radical and innovative methods beyond the existing ones.

Interdisciplinarity 2, and the ideas implicit in it, offers the possibilities of new methods of producing knowledge outside traditional disciplinary models. While the discipline of Geography has long been committed to interdisciplinarity, there are arguably few geographers engaged in the production of creative works. A shift has occurred from early human geographers' calls to post-structuralist geographers' theoretical constructs. In the former, geographers agreed that creative works had worth to geography in so far as they provided further venues from which to extract geographic

knowledge. In the latter post-structuralist stage, geographers (notably S. Quoniam) began to create artistic works as geographic knowledge, refuting the implicit relationship of one discipline having more worth or power than another. Still today though, few geographers are simultaneously geographers and (for instance) poets, novelists or painters, wherein their creative work is viewed as a meaningful contribution to geographic knowledge. A theorist like Bhabha might suggest geography's lack of artistic production is indicative of a state of being in "interdisciplinarity 1", and that this might denote a predicament for geography. This predicament might manifest itself in a statement like D.W. Meinig's declaration that "Geography will deserve to be called an art only when a substantial number of geographers become artists" (325). "Interdisciplinarity 2" offers a conceptualization by which geographers can become artists, and in turn their artistic renderings be viewed as geographic knowledge. It is perhaps significant that the language offered by Bhabha to address what was a geographic dilemma faced by Meinig is language decidedly geographic in nature. For instance, Bhabha spatializes his description of "interdisciplinarity 2", thus inferring geographic connection through the resonance of descriptive metaphors such as 'edge', 'limit' and 'border'. These spatial descriptions connect "interdisciplinary 2" with the production of creative geographic knowledge and processes of literary mapping.

One geographer who addresses concepts of interdisciplinarity argues for narrative practices to be evaluated for geographic knowledge, and who also fuses creative and geographic representations, is Edward Soja. Soja's text *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real and Imagined Places* is an in-depth investigation of how

disciplinary constructs can be both interrupted and exploded. His text draws from a multitude of disciplines and evaluates the discipline of Geography as one in need of (re)newed connections with feminist theory, postcolonial theory, and creative narrative practices. Soja argues that a renewal of the discipline of geography will come with recognition of what he terms thirdspace. Thirdspace, and the possibility of inclusion of art into geography, is defined by Soja as a space that is a

knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices...shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centre and periphery, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned space of the conceptual and the lived, marked out materially and metaphorically in spatial praxis... (31)

Soja's thirdspace of the real and imagined is manifest throughout his text. His integration of poetry, performance and lyrics in order to contemplate and situate spatial locales, (including borders, cities and homespaces) embodies a merging of creative and geographic knowledge and methods of representation. He includes his own poetic musings on the city of Los Angeles (318-320) and extensively cites the creative writings of bell hooks (103-104) and Gloria Anzaldua (127-129). Soja insists that the discipline of geography avail itself not only of traditional methods of investigation, but also of new methods predicated on evaluating and creating thirdspace geographic knowledge. In this insistence is the language of interdisciplinarity:

Of particular importance, here and now,...is the insight provided on how fragmentation, ruptures, deviation, displacements, and discontinuities can be

politically transformed from liability and weakness to a source of opportunity and strength. (117)

Soja's language in this statement mirrors Bhabha's language of "interdisciplinarity 2" and Spivak's concept of critical interruption, though Soja also suggests that from deviation and rupture (akin to Bhabha's crisis) comes strength and opportunity. The positive outcomes made possible when discontinuity is transformed from limitation to potency allow for the opportunity to produce creatively informed geographic knowledge. The possibility is opened for an intersection between creative narrative practice and a traditional method of geographic representation (the map). Rather than the hybrid outcome of such an endeavour being viewed as disruptive and therefore a liability, Soja's statement simultaneously legitimizes and explodes its possibilities.

Soja's contemplations on thirdspace, creativity and the transformation of fragmentation offer both a theoretical and practical context concerned with interdisciplinary relationships between creative writing and geography. His usage of personal narrative musings for the purpose of conveying historical and geographic knowledge of place are further examples of his thirdspace theory manifesting itself in a practice of thirdspace creative geographic writing. In his comparison of Amsterdam and Los Angeles (280-320), Soja situates himself clearly inside his own analysis. His writing about the two cities is akin to personal prose, and provides a strong reference point for creative musing about landscape as an acceptable method of creating geographic knowledge. His depictions and contemplations of Amsterdam occur primarily from his homespace:

I lived just around the corner in another of these artfully preserved places and spaces, a relatively modest variant of the more than 6,000 “monuments” to the Golden Age that are packed into the sustaining Centrum, the largest and most successfully reproduced historic inner city in Europe. With a frontage that seemed no wider than my driveway back home in Los Angeles, the building, like nearly all the others in the Centrum, rose four storeys to a gabled peak embedded with a startling metal hook designed for moving furniture and bulky items by rope in through the wide windows. Given my sizable bulk (I stand nearly two meters high and weigh more than an eighth of a ton), I had visions of having to be hoisted up and in myself when I first saw the steep narrow stairwell (*trappenhuis*) to the first floor. (282-283)

Within Soja’s gentle narrative meanderings of the cityscape are dense and complex descriptions of importance to the geographer: architectural detail, spatial comparison and even urban historical facts. In addition to Soja’s successful merging of creative and geographic narrative, he also integrates a type of hybrid visual art into his representation of the city. His photographic documentation of Amsterdam includes a disruptive overlaying of his home on the city of Amsterdam (284), emphasizing his belief in creative renderings as a method of recording geographic knowledge.

Soja argues for a new way of viewing wherein fluidity and exchange between apparently oppositional constructs form new and ever-changing representations and creations. Throughout the text, the author validates spatial experience and analysis that arise from personal narrative accounts. His discussion of the ‘homeplace’ as written

about by bell hooks clearly defends creative meditation on space as a valid way of understanding and knowing. Soja writes of hooks's narrative approach:

There are few writings anywhere in which life's intimate spatiality is made so explicitly and brilliantly revealing...hooks creatively and consistently grounds her work in what I have described as the trialectics of spatiality, an alternative mode of understanding space as a transdisciplinary standpoint or location...(104)

While Soja suggests that hook's work is transdisciplinarity in nature, a relationship exists between transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity in so far as both are outside the single disciplinary construct, and both suggest a limitation of single disciplinary containment. Soja's defense of grounding spatial understanding in an intimate and creative context, in conjunction with his appreciation of multidisciplinary methodology, is an invitation to contemplate sense of place from a narrative approach, including the approach of the personal essay. Soja's appeal for the creation of a thirdspace in which modes of identification are not built upon oppositional relationships, but rather evolve from new relationships between ideas, provides a theoretical framework from which to respond to geographers' calls for a new envisioning of landscape study – a study which not only draws from and utilizes artistic modes of thought and representation, but also creates its own. It is perhaps Soja's own creative musings which most succinctly offer a language and theoretical construct into which I am able to find the (third)space needed to write this thesis. In fact, Soja's own poetic meditations on the urban landscape of Los Angeles (318-320) summarize the words of Klein, Deleuze and Guittari, and Bhabha. He writes that

It is about real-and-imagined
bodies

		cities
	texts [...]	
It is about		border work/la frontera
		a new cultural politics
		choosing the margin as a space
		of radical openness
		and hybridity
about finding meeting places		
where new and radical happenings		
can occur		
about a politics of	detrterritorialization – and – reconnection	
a politics in which arguments over	SPACE	its enclosures
	exclusions	internments
become subjects for debate and discussion		
and more important, for		
resistance		
and		
transgression	(319-320)	

Though European and North American geographers have only recently been exploring the potential of creatively produced knowledge as a method of both transmitting geographic knowledge and as a site from which to extrapolate geographic information, Indigenous people have long been using story as a method of communicating geographic knowledge. Methods of mapping antithetical to the traditional mapping techniques described by Ryden (e.g. topographic representation) can be witnessed in the song maps, or songlines, of Australia's Aborigine peoples wherein direction, landscape features, and geographic sites are recorded and communicated through a method of song. Bruce Chatwin recorded this mapping technique in his 1987 book *The Songlines*, and though the text is predicated on problematic travelogue recording of culture, the book nonetheless offers insight into alternative methods of communicating geographic information. The use of song and story as a mapping technique is by no means specific or limited to Australia's Aborigine peoples. North

American Indigenous Peoples have been mapping their land by story since time immemorial, and narrative is a vital method of communicating geographic information. Leslie Marmon Silko writes in "Interior and Exterior Landscapes" of the Pueblo technique of passing landscape and migration knowledge by story. She uses the concepts of story and map interchangeably, writing that

A dinner-table conversation recalling a deer hunt forty years ago, when the largest mule deer ever was taken, inevitably stimulates similar memories in listeners. But hunting stories were not merely after-dinner entertainment. These accounts contained information of critical importance about the behaviour and migration patterns of mule deer. Hunting stories carefully describe key landmarks and locations of fresh water. Thus, a deer-story might also serve as a map. Lost travelers, and lost pinon-nut gathers, have been saved by sighting a rock formation they recognize only because they heard a hunting story describing this rock formation. (10)

While story and map may transmit geographic knowledge in different manners, and while the production of such knowledge may take variant forms, each method is capable of communicating geographic information. It is important to note that Silko states the stories told and created by the Pueblo people are shifting narratives and stories with no claim of absolute or objective truth. Indeed, the geographic information contained and being communicated through the medium of story represents an ever-changing physical and cultural landscape:

The oral narrative, or story, became the medium through which the complex of Pueblo knowledge and belief was maintained. Whatever the event or the subject,

the ancient people perceived the world and themselves within the world as part of an ancient, continuous story composed of innumerable bundles of other stories...

The ancient Pueblo people sought communal truth, not an absolute truth. For them this truth lived somewhere within the web of differing versions, disputes over minor points, and outright contradictions tangling with old feuds and village rivalries. (9-10)

The creation of knowledge described by Silko mirrors, to an extent, the much later movement by some geographers away from a positivist method of geographic representation towards an interdisciplinary methodology premised on hybridity. This is particularly apparent in both Silko's description of innumerable bundles of stories working together, thus continuously producing shifting and responsive knowledge, and her description of the manner in which differing sites and types of knowledge are integrated and fused to create something new. Much like Quoniam's assertion that he cannot separate his methods of geographic representation into the discrete categories of 'artistic' and 'geographic,' Silko suggests that the Pueblo method of creating and transmitting landscape knowledge and information is not divisible into separate or autonomous forums.

Leroy Little Bear in "Jagged Worldviews Colliding" also documents the transferring of geographic and other forms of knowledge through the method of story. In the essay, Little Bear discusses the traditional Indigenous manners by which knowledge is not only created, but also transferred. Story and narrative are key components of these processes, as described by Little Bear:

Storytelling is a very important part of the educational process. It is through stories that customs and values are taught and shared. In most Aboriginal societies, there are hundreds of stories of real-life experiences...creation, customs and values. (81-82)

Storytelling is thus a method of transferring geographic information and of educating about customs and values. This can be seen also in the stories told and collected by George Blondin in the text *When the World was New: Stories of the Sahtu Dene*. The stories in the text represent “everything [that] was held in memory and handed down from generation to generation by Dene storytellers” (i). Many of these stories contain spatial, directional, and landscape-based information, presumably fulfilling a map function, as noted by Silko. The story “The Mooseskin Boats” is one example of many stories filled with particular and local geographic knowledge in *When the World was New*. The story tells of a family travelling to trade marten for Winchester rifles at Ross Post (145). The journey, along with a variety of landscape features that would be of concern to others making the voyage, is reordered through story:

When his son Edward was young, Paul Blondin and his family travelled in the mountains with the Shihta Got'ine for three years, mostly between Tulit'a and the Yukon. This land is big, and Paul could move about freely, hunting and living off the land. After days of travelling in the summer heat, bothered all the while by mosquitoes, they reached the first mountain ranges. As they travelled over the mountains, they had to cross a big river, the Bega De. Then they journeyed alongside Bega De, hunting whatever they could and making dry meat. In the fall, when they reached the head of the Bega De, they spent a great deal of time

hunting and making their mooseskin boat. Then they headed back down the Bega De towards Tulit'a, traveling 500 to 600 kilometres. The mountain people made this circle every summer and winter just to survive. (144)

This opening account of the story “The Mooseskin Boats” is rich with geographic detail, conveying distances, landscape features, travel times and resource information. The story imparts knowledge that might otherwise be found on a map, again strengthening the position that story can be a method of narrative mapping. “The Mooseskin Boats” and other and other stories in the text are part of an oral tradition of passing knowledge through narrative, and thus speaks of transference of geographic knowledge through the method of story.

Story as a recognized method of transferring geographic information, and also as a method of recording and claiming ownership of land, is of vital importance to the Gitksan Nation in Northwestern British Columbia. The Nation's people link their claims and rights for self-government in lands in the Nass River Watershed to their stories (*adaawk*) of the region. This claim of landownership validated by story was the cornerstone of the precedent setting case *Delgamuukw v. The Queen*. As described by Sterritt *et al.* in the text *Tribal Boundaries in the Nass Watershed*, story was an essential component of mapping ownership of land:

These *adaawk* (stories) clearly show that the Gitksan, including the Gitanyow, have been established in their territories on the upper Nass and Skeena Rivers since the earliest times. The Gitksan have acquired and validated their ownership of their territories within the Gitksan system of land tenure for the millennia,

through naming, adaawk (stories)...and feasting. Their defence of their territories continues into the contemporary period. (57-58)

Not only can the story and the narrative function as a mapping method, it can also operate as a method of securing land ownership and historical claim to region. The story transfers, throughout history, both a sense of connection to the land and a title to that land. Through narrative practice the Gitksan people transmit their knowledge of their region and map their boundaries, areas, resources, and the migration of their people. Each of these intrinsically geographic concerns is encompassed in the act of creating and telling story.

1.3. Creating something new: a fusing of geographic analysis and literature

Two authors who (in the eyes of some geographic theorists) have come closest to fully fusing geographic analysis and literature are Antoine de Saint-Exupery and the Canadian novelist Malcolm Lowry. Pilot and author de Saint-Exupery wrote almost exclusively about landscape and geographic phenomenon. His descriptions of landscapes are seen by some critics as unparalleled, and his attentions to, and transcription of, place and culture have provided rich resources for geographers and other academic scholars alike. Yet de Saint-Exupery made clear his dislike for geographers, consistently distancing his lyrical and narrative mappings from the scientific evaluations of his contemporary geographers. Geographer Edmonds V. Bunkse, in his essay "Saint-Exupery's Geography Lesson: Art and Science in the Creation and Cultivation of Landscape Values" wrote of de Saint-Exupery that

His contempt for the geographer's craft ran deep...he was to condemn it as...a discipline aloof from the world and from human things that matter (such as the ephemeral beauty of a flower): 'The geographer is much too important to go loafing around. He does not leave his desk,' wrote Saint-Exupery...(1971, 61-64)...The geographer is depicted as a detached, emotionless observer. (97)

The self-imposed distancing of de Saint-Exupery from the discipline of geography stems from what Bunkse writes is

...a problem that still vexes geographers in their work with the earth's phenomena, that is, the seemingly unbridgeable dualism of the general, the abstract, the aggregate, the nomothetic, versus the specific, concrete, individual, idiosyncratic and poetic. (97)

This division and dualism between the poetic and the aggregate is precisely the relationship of binarism that Soja argues against in his demand for the creation of a thirdspace. It is also a relationship that

...begs a response that will, on the one hand, address the general role of humanism in geography, and on the other, make a determined effort to incorporate the perspectives of art – or more precisely literary, artistic or non-scientific humanism – into the work of geographers, and not do so merely as an embellishment or a source of data for scientific research, *but as a path of truth and wisdom in its own right*, equal in value. (Bunkse 98)

Bunkse's demand for a transformation in humanist geography addresses the concerns of later geographers who used post-structuralist and interdisciplinary methods to create new types of geographic knowledge, geographic knowledge produced through literary and

artistic means and understood not as embellishment or peripheral, but as relevant knowledge unto itself. Like Bunkse, geographer J.D. Porteous argues adamantly that narrative is a valid and important method of geographic understanding and representation. Porteous's extensive analysis of the novels by Canadian author Malcolm Lowry has led to the development of a conceptual framework for literary geography involving the touchstones of 'home', 'away', 'insider' and 'outsider', all concepts outlined in Porteous's essay "Literature and humanist geography". In the essay it is clear that Porteous's numerous evaluations of literature as a wealth of geographic data on sense of place and landscape rest on an argument that

The interpretation of imaginative literature has much to offer geography. Above all, geographers will best attain [a] goal of understanding if they are willing to encounter human experience as well as 'objective' geographical reality, landscapes of the mind as well as landscapes on the ground. (122)

In this argument, Porteous not only suggests that the use and evaluation of creative literature will expand the boundaries of cultural geography to include both the landscapes of the mind and the ground; he also argues for a dismantling of unchecked geographic 'objectivity'. His suggestion is that the 'subjective' nature of human experience is captured, and thus able to be evaluated, in narrative writing. Further, Porteous suggests that because the human experience is captured in narrative literature there is a possibility of truly understanding it, something that preoccupies many cultural geographers (e.g. Crang). Central to Porteous's argument that literature has much to offer the cultural geographer is his belief that geography encompasses more than the external world. In his essay "Inscape: Landscape of the mind in the Canadian and Mexican novels of Malcolm

Lowry,” Porteous states that the human condition and experience must also be understood by evaluating the landscapes of the mind, what Proteus terms ‘inscapes’:

The notion of landscapes of the mind...allows us to go beyond the initial study of the correspondence between literary and ‘real’ landscapes, to the investigation of correspondence between landscapes and human personality. Studies of inscape may enrich our understanding not only of landscape, landscape types, and literature, but also of ourselves, but comparing and contrasting our experiences with those of the artist. (124)

Porteous, like Bunkse and Soja, is resisting strict disciplinarily dualisms. Creative literature and geography, he argues, can work together and simultaneously in order to create new methods of knowing and understanding. He asserts that the division between landscapes existing through narrative, as opposed to those existing within ‘reality’, is a false division hindering a comprehensive understanding of landscapes and the human experience of them. Further, Porteous dismantles a traditional notion of a division between external and internal. The landscapes of the mind and the landscapes of the ground become fused, creating a new method of evaluation and understanding of sense of place. Finally, Porteous goes on to argue that it is no longer enough for the literary geographer to simply evaluate literary landscapes within a comparative framework of ground-based landscapes. This reinforces the binary nature of the two, as opposed to creating something new and truly meaningful.

Porteous and Bunkse, in their evaluations of Malcolm Lowry and Antoine de Saint-Exupery, come to similar conclusions: conclusions which mesh with the theories of Soja, and Deleuze and Guattari regarding the possibilities of new methods of producing

knowledge, of representation and thus of understanding landscapes and sense of place. Porteous and Bunkse both conclude that strict divisions between geographic landscapes and literary landscapes are prohibitive – the partitioning of disciplines is limiting rather than enlightening with regard to a full conceptualization of sense of place. Geographers like Soja and literary theorists like Deleuze and Guattari conclude that the creation of something new, something occupying a thirdspace, is optimal in the evaluation of sense of place. This is neither a strict comparison of the geographic to the literary, nor is it a parallel evaluation of the two. Instead, a true understanding of landscape and sense of place arises when disciplinary dualisms are discarded completely, and a hybrid sense of knowing arises from a blending and equalizing regard for internal and external, geographic and literary, subjective and objective.

The works of Lowry and de Saint-Exupery are but two examples of hybrid contemplations of landscapes and sense of place. There are other texts the geographer and literary theorist interested in incorporating the perspectives of art, literature and non-scientific humanism might turn to. They are texts from the visual arts, the genres of poetry and essays, and novels. A discussion of these works provides the second foundation upon which this thesis rests, that of a tradition of creative interpretation and consideration of sense of place by geographers, artists and authors.

1.4 Landscapes between pages: geographic knowledge, authors and creative narratives

The language of interdisciplinarity opened the possibility of grafting together geography and creative writing, and thus interdisciplinarity made possible the project of

this thesis. The hybrid outcome of a creative writing geographic endeavour, as suggested by scholars of interdisciplinarity, would be something new, something that resided on the borders and boundaries of both disciplines, the 'in-between' spaces separating the two disciplines of Geography and creative writing. As outlined in the previous section, the endorsement of such hybrid knowledge can be glimpsed in the statements of those like geographer Kent C. Ryden who suggests that the most apparent representation of geographic knowledge, the map, is capable of inspiring poetics and literature, or with Deleuze and Guattari's demand that literature be informed by the mapping process. Also as outlined in the previous section, the endorsement of hybrid knowledge can be found in statements like those of Gayatri Spivak who suggests that all disciplinary practices should call each other into crisis and engage in a process of critical interruption of each other. Some geographers have argued for new methods of geographic representation conversant with other disciplines, including those in the fine arts, but their calls often fall short of clearly advocating the demand that the discipline of geography be critically disrupted. Few geographers have created new hybrid forms of geographic knowledge, though a shift occurred from simply borrowing and using literary and artistic methods of representation, to the creation of new artistically informed geographic knowledge. The discipline of geography then can be seen as emblematic of what Bhabha refers to as "interdisciplinarity 1" and "interdisciplinarity 2". Each of these concepts contributes to the prospect of creative literary writings being viewed as venues of geographic knowledge, though the latter is perhaps more relevant to creative geographic mapping in that this method of conveying geographic information more truly resides in the margins of both disciplines, suggesting the limitations of both. The evaluation by two geographers

of de Saint-Exupery's and Malcolm Lowry's fiction as sophisticatedly geographic in nature adds to the discourse of literary geography. In addition to Bunkse and Porteous's work, geographers Salter and Lloyd have also defended literature as a place of geographic knowledge, writing that

...geographers [should] consider the purposeful application of literary insights to their scholarly work.... authors tend to bring an artistic sensitivity to their work which encourages them to sense and communicate the essentials of landscape and space, incorporated into a meaningful story and brought to life through the development of identifiable characters. In effect [authors]...clarif[y] landscape, replete with the richness of life which in turn can contribute to an enhanced geographical understanding and description of landscape. (1, 3)

Bearing in mind the thoughts of previously discussed theorists and geographers (in conjunction with the statements of Salter and Lloyd) the questions central to this thesis became 'what geographical knowledge can be extrapolated from literary and creative works?' and 'can particular literary texts contribute to an understanding of creatively informed geographic knowledge about northern landscapes?' In order to answer these two questions, and thus to investigate concepts of literary geographic knowledge, I will explore the perspectives and works of three Canadian fiction and non-fiction authors whose work consciously blends the act of mapping with literary works, and who communicate geographic knowledge through narrative practice. I will also discuss several geographers who are concerned with creative literature and narrative practices.

A natural association exists between the disciplines of Geography and literary studies in so far as both disciplines are involved in the reading of texts. Geographer John Brinckerhoff Jackson, for instance, writes that landscape can be read, stating that

Wherever we go in contemporary landscapes we run across...signs: boundaries, roads, and places of assembly. We read them at once, and we not only read them, we create them ourselves, almost without realizing that without them we could not function as members of society.

Jackson's depiction of the landscape as a readable entity suggests a parallel between it and a text. This parallel is taken up by other geographers, including Trevor Barnes and James Duncan, who in their introduction to *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape*, write "the notions of text, discourse and metaphor have emerged as powerful concepts over the last twenty years. Originally defined in terms of literary criticism, they now have much wider importance..." (12) to disciplines like geography. According to Barnes and Duncan, this wider importance is particularly relevant to landscape geography, which they write is fundamentally a discipline concerned with texts, stating that the "concept of the text...includes...maps and landscapes, as well as social, economic and political institutions....In short, landscapes are characterized by all those features...definitive of a text" (5-6). The linkages Barnes and Duncan draw between the productions of geographic knowledge and literary studies do not end with an evaluation of landscape as text. In addition to the 'reading' parallels between geography and literary studies, Barnes and Duncan state that 'writing' is another commonality between geography and literature, writing that "...the very root meaning of the word 'geography' is literally 'earth writing' (from the Greek

geo, meaning 'earth', and *graph*, meaning 'to write'...the one thing that links all geographers of whatever stripe is that they write" (1). For geographers then, the parallels between literary studies and Geography are clear. This is further illustrated in a statement made by Duncan and Duncan in their essay "(Re)reading the landscape" :

Insights from literary theory [can be] applied to the analysis of landscapes....literary theory provides us with ways to examine the text-like quality of landscape, and to see them as transformations of ideologies...[and] it provides us with theories of reading and authorship which we can adapt to explain how landscapes are incorporated into social processes. (117)

Duncan and Duncan's assertion that there exists an overlap between geography and literary studies insists upon an interdisciplinary approach to landscape studies, and therefore an interdisciplinary approach to a sense of place that is linked to that landscape. The defense of interdisciplinarity opens the space for endeavours focused on the production of creatively informed geographic knowledge and argues that geographic evaluation is comprised of more than a topographic (or mapped) endeavour. Duncan and Duncan's assertion that mapping and landscape analysis is connected with authorship and literary studies helps to displace a language of disciplinary oppositions with 'science' on the one hand and 'art and literature' on the other. Also, the defense of an interdisciplinary reading posited by Duncan and Duncan provides an opening through which to enter an exploration of literary studies' contemplation of textual creations and landscape analysis.

An understanding that literary studies and geography not only have much in common, but in some ways also mirror each other with regard to their methods and

purposes, does not entirely address how literary works or creative narratives can be read as sites of geographic knowledge. There are, however, geographers who argue both that writing is a site of geographic knowledge and that there exist such things as literary landscapes. Mike Crang, in his text *Cultural Geography*, asks “[i]f anyone were to look around for accounts that really gave the reader a feel for a place, would they look to geography textbooks or to novels?” (44). That “[t]he answer does not need saying” (45) indicates the author’s certainty that anyone desirous of understanding the feel of a place would certainly avoid geography texts and would gravitate towards the novel, and suggests that geographic knowledge (sense of place) can indeed be better found in creative narratives. Crang writes that “[l]iterary accounts can...reveal something of how spaces are ordered and how relations to spaces can define social action” (49). Crang’s defense of creative narratives as meaningful sites of geographic knowledge is mirrored in his admonishment of the hesitancy found in the discipline of Geography to train geographers as creative writers:

Undergraduate geographers receive years of training which seem to remove the ability to write a piece of prose (let alone, say, poetry) that imaginatively engages its reader. Such is a slightly sad state of affairs and leaves geography a more arid, desiccated and poorer discipline. This is especially important if we are trying to describe what landscapes mean to people. (45)

Through Crang’s statement we can read a continuation of Meinig’s 1983 assertion that without a significant number of geographers becoming artists (here we can also include creative writers), the discipline of Geography will remain outside of an arts categorization. By relating Crang, Meinig, Duncan, and Ley’s concepts to each other,

and then re-reading them in a context of interdisciplinarity wherein a hybrid relationship between creative writing and Geography can be understood to create new outcomes (or thirdspace products), an opening emerges through which the production of creatively informed geographic knowledge becomes possible. Quoting Daniels and Rycoft's essay "Mapping the Modern City: Alan Sitlitoes's Nottingham Novels," Crang states that "[w]e should not see geography and literature as two different orders of knowledge (one imaginative and one factual) but rather as a field of textual genres, in order to highlight both the worldliness of literary texts and the imaginativeness of geographical texts" (58). Thus the production of creatively informed and literary geographic knowledge (the objective of this thesis) rests not only on the foundations of geographical thought, but rests too with works of literature that embody sense of place and landscape study.

A broad overview of literary texts concerned with landscape and place is far too large a topic for this thesis. A discussion, however, of several literary texts that concentrate not only on the specific landscapes of rural Northwestern British Columbian communities, but which also further integrate aspects of mapping, is useful in that it identifies pre-existing projects concerned with mapping place through creative narrative. I have thus chosen to evaluate narrative texts whose focuses are rurality, the integration of map into creative writing, sense of place, or a combination of these three. As a starting point, an exploration of Jean Baudrillard's text *America* reads as a testament of literary theory concerned with reading landscape, and provides an anchoring in creative writing with which Geography is meant to dialogue in an interdisciplinary project.

Jean Baudrillard, in his essay "Vanishing Point" in the text *America*, uses almost exclusively his personal meditations on the American desert as the starting point from

which to understand the American landscape. A collection of travelogue vignettes, “Vanishing Point” contemplates cities (San Antonio and Salt Lake City) and natural environments (Monument Valley, Dead Horse Point, the Grand Canyon, Alamogordo and Torrey Canyon) in order to understand both the geographic and temporal aspects of American society. Each place contemplated in Baudrillard’s work is a meditation on sense of place, not only metaphorically but also as a signifying agent. His writing is both an exercise in cultural geographic contemplation of landscape and place, and also a personal and creative meditation. Beginning by locating himself in a very particular place Baudrillard writes that

Geological – and hence metaphysical – monumentality contrast with the physical altitude of ordinary landscapes. Uprturned relief patterns, sculpted out by wind, water, and ice, dragging you down into the whirlpool of time, in the remorseless eternity of a slow-motion catastrophe...It is perhaps these reliefs, because they are no longer natural, which give the best idea of what a culture is. (3-4)

The technique used by Baudrillard in *America* is, in part, a reply to the calls of human and cultural geographers for a fusion of geographic analysis with literary devices and creative contemplation. He reads the landscape, representing it in a personal and creative fashion while simultaneously grafting natural geophysical phenomena to aspects of culture. His choice to contain his contemplations in personal meditation suggests the medium is conducive to complex cultural and geographic knowledge and has the capability of producing knowledge geographic in nature. Imagination and personal meditation are thus, when Baudrillard’s *America* is read, methods of transmitting geographic information.

The transmission of geographic knowledge through imaginary or creative practices is, according to Hugh Brody, a well-established technique. Brody's text *Maps and Dreams: Indians and the British Columbia Frontier*, investigates the mapping practices of an Aboriginal people in Northeastern British Columbia, the Beaver People of the Cree Nation. The text is not only an investigation of mapping practices predicated on imagination, story, myth and an oral tradition, but is also an investigation into the limitations of Euro-western mapping practices as they pertain to First Nations lives and land-use realities (146 - 177). The text suggests that geographic knowledge is transmittable and reproducible in methods outside the scholarly and accepted practices, or outside what Kent C. Ryden suggests is the most apparent representation of geographic knowledge, the conventional paper map. The method chosen by Brody to record his year of work with the Beaver people reflects the author's resistance to conventional cartographic methods of representation. His text is an interdisciplinary endeavour in so far as it merges his personal meditations and anecdotal stories with anthropological investigation. In addition, the text includes graphical images depicting a merging of Euro-western maps of the region overlaid with the 'traditional' maps of the Beaver people. *Maps and Dreams* thus provides a clear entry point into the evaluation of texts that combine creative writing and geographic inquiry. *Maps and Dreams* has been described by critic Graham Huggan as a

Contrapuntal structure [that] combine[s] with the interpolation in the text of a series of palimpsestic maps in which the Native Indians' hunting routes are superimposed on to the standard Ordnance Survey grid. Brody thus illustrates his attempt to alternate between cultures; by switching between the operation of

scientific record and those of personal memoir, Brody further suggests the intersubjective nature of ethnographic inquiry. (64)

Huggan thus holds that similar themes exist in Brody's text as have been understood to exist in Quoniam's paintings. Brody's text shifts between scientific observations and meditative creative writing, producing a new manner of knowing that lies between the two traditionally polarized perspectives. This new way of knowing mirrors the complexity of the stories told by the author. Brody is clear through the method of representation he utilizes that the landscapes of which he speaks resist traditional disciplinary methods of telling. In addition to resisting strict disciplinary methods of landscape representation in his writing, Brody also injects graphic images into his work. Traditional thematic maps are disrupted by the wandering lines of dream-maps drawn and remembered by the First Nations people of the Beaver Reservation. Thus, not only does Brody's book resist traditional disciplinary constructs in his narrative representation of place, his graphic images also oppose clear and singular ways of knowing place and landscape. In his insistence on resisting a singular method of knowing the landscape, Brody (like Quoniam) is recording not only a new understanding of the landscape. By insisting on the complexities of the landscape he represents, Brody instils in his readers a resistance to linear and traditional understandings of Northeastern British Columbia, creating for them a new place entirely.

Maps and Dreams is relatively unique in its four-way use of standard thematic maps, imaginary maps, ethnographic accounts of field research, and personal anecdotal creative writing. The author, throughout the text, tends to keep these four methods separate, most notably through chapter delineations. The text in its entirety, though, is

very much an innovative representation of landscape and culture, created in part to mirror the complexity of what it addresses. *Maps and Dreams*, the work of an anthropologist, has relevance to cultural geographers in part because of its inquiry into people and their interactions with their surroundings, but also because, with its consistent use of map and landscape imagery, it has a distinctly geographic sense about it. As such, the text provides an important example of the unification of creative writing, mapping, and scientific inquiry leading to a successful text-based evaluation of sense of place and landscape. It is here that *Maps and Dreams* provides me with a foundational reference for my own evaluation and contemplation of Northwestern British Columbia from an anecdotal and creative perspective.

The interdisciplinary combination of personal meditation and scientific detail found in Brody's text is also found in a recent collection of essays written by Steven Hume. The text *Bush Telegraph: Discovering the Pacific Province* is a comprehensive investigation into the people and landscapes of rural British Columbia. Hume has captured rural experiences and perspectives while at the same time offering landscape detail and economic, environmental and historical facts. Through the medium of the personal essay, then, Hume has found a venue to transmit knowledge of a geographical nature.

The essays included in *Bush Telegraph* roam British Columbia, and transcribe what Hume refers to as "truth [which] emerges less from facts...than from folklore lovingly burnished into legend" (58). This reverence of folklore, and of the local voices found in communities, provides the thread of continuity that is needed between 32 essays exploring places as disparate as Port Renfrew and McBride, Vancouver and Stewart. In

his opening essay, "The Pacification of Stewart", Hume charts the development of a small isolated port town from its economic boom times of the gold rush, through downturns in the forestry and mining sectors, to the fluctuating tourist dollars of the present day. He does this by linking the social and political tides of the town to a ninety-seven year old police officer, "...the toughest cop in Stewart's history....[who] knew what he wanted to do in this new place of endless frontiers and wild country" (13). "A Dry Wind in Eden" tells the story of Walhachin, a town site which Hume describes as "represent[ing] one more decaying monument to the twilight of a ruined civilization" (57). Walhachin, from its inception as a First Nations community on the banks of the Thompson River, to a pre-World War I railway settlement, and finally to "a town murdered by the First World War" (61) when "with a total population of under 150, [Walhachin] sent 43 men to fight for King and Empire" (69), is written about again through the voices of past residents and from Hume's own experiences as a child who went to a nearby school. "Annie's Variety Store" is akin to slide-show snapshots in a rural social geography presentation; the essay depicts Sointula, a relocated Finnish community weathering "timber prices [that] fell [as] did the price of salmon" (101) where "...a road narrows, elbows through a jumble of net lofts, boat sheds, repair shops and [ends] in a tangle of blackberry vines" (103). "The Secret of McBride", a short essay in the middle of the collection, offers the reader the opportunity to know a community where "[t]elelevision didn't even arrive until 1973 'with a population [of] 592. Nope, make that 600 – inside municipal boundaries'" (189-190). "We Are Out There" is a moving account of rural isolation, frustration and economic downturns in a global economy; yet, more than a strictly academic assessment of social factors, the essay is also about a

resource community's endurance and the residents' sense of hope. The essay is a musing on Prince Rupert, a place where "[t]here is uncertainty about the future of more than 750 jobs at the town's big pulp mill....[a town where] unemployment now hovers around 16 percent [and] at the Community Fisheries Development Centre jobless fishers can sign on for counseling about upgrading skills, [but] the average caseload per counselor is 300 clients" (219-220). In his essays, Hume always returns the reader back to the humanity of a community. For Prince Rupert humanity is the statement that "...to paint a picture of despair would be inaccurate...9,392 local births [are] an affirmation of a hope that won't be denied." Hume ends the essay on a powerful note: "[a]t the moss-covered ruin of the Union Steamship wharf, the skipper in his bronze oilskins still stands in the rain, pointing out to sea: 'We are out there'. So is the future" (229). *Bush Telegraph:*

Discovering the Pacific Province is thus primarily about the landscapes and geographies of rural British Columbia's people. The text thus, as Meinig wrote, sharpens our sense of the human experience of place.

This sharpened sense of place, this heightened understanding of geography and landscape produced through works of creative narrative, mirrors a statement by author Sheila Peters. In the acknowledgements section of her book *Canyon Creek: a script*, Peters thanks the foundation that made possible the publication of her text for "...knowing how stories remind us of our relationship to the land" (iii). Peters is a Northwestern British Columbian writer whose first book, *Canyon Creek*, is an interdisciplinary exercise combining historical account, creative writing, mapping, interviews and photography. The text is not only concerned with a rural community on Highway 16 (Telkwa) but it also makes use of the interaction between narrative and map.

In addition, *Canyon Creek* is explicit in its literary exploration of landscape, both cultural and physical.

Peters' text takes the form of a screenplay script. The story is told by a narrator situated in the position of film director who takes the reader/viewer in hand and points out features of a region's landscape. The area being represented in the text, Canyon Creek, is just outside Telkwa, a tiny community on the outskirts of the town of Smithers. Place is central to the fiction. At the onset of the story, we are asked "[w]here is this place? North and west of the cowboy Cariboo and Chilcotin, way up in the bush. The Bulkley River flows north from here, into the mystic Skeena, and west to the Pacific coast" (8). Peters communicates geographic knowledge throughout her narrative. Her story weaves between the deterritorialization and brutality faced by the Wet'suwet'en people and the accounts of the region's colonizing people. Maps augment the text systematically (13, 29, 38) as do photographs of the landscape (1,3,5,7,9,22), both of which suggest a concern for the spatial context of the narrative and allow the reader/viewer insight into place. Peter's narrative is distinctly geographic in nature because it conveys information on land use, on settlement formations, on spatial considerations like direction and relationships between sites, and on people's interaction and impact on the land and their surroundings. She is overt in her concern for the landscape, infusing the narrative with details of settlers and geologist such as

They made...mostly accurate observations of the physical attributes that make up landscape: contour, water, wildlife, vegetation and mineralization. They drew the land, surveying nine townships along the Bulkley Valley Road between

Morictown and Round Lake...In this township twenty-four sections have been surveyed, besides the lines defining the outlines. (38)

This re-mapping in words, overlaying of narrative interpretation on map and geomorphologic detail, all through the medium of 'factual fiction' highlights the capabilities of narrative and literature to transmit geographic knowledge. While Peters uses maps in her script, she is quick to infuse the lines of the maps with a new representation of place. She is not content with the concept that a map encompasses all there is to know about a landscape, and is insistent that other methods of conveying geographic knowledge exist, namely the method of story. In *Canyon Creek: a script*, a re-mapping of place (Telkwa) in Northwestern British Columbia has occurred, and it has occurred through an interdisciplinary literary practice. It is precisely this mapping anew and conveyance of geographic knowledge through story that motivates this thesis. My objective in writing personal essays about communities along the western section of Highway 16 is to actively participate in the formation of creative geographic works and to convey new stories about the physical and cultural landscape of the region. To borrow author Aritha van Herk's term, I am interested in creating 'geografictione' about the communities along the western end of highway 16 in Northwestern British Columbia.

While Northwest British Columbia is not the location under consideration in Aritha van Herk's narrative, her text *Places Far From Ellesmere: a geografictione, explorations on site*, does engage with the topic of my thesis as both are concerned with rurality and personal interaction with components of the social and physical landscape. *Places Far From Ellesmere* is also a conscious merging of geographic, creative and literary practices, most expressly denoted in the author's coining of the term

'geografictione', in her book's cover depicting text superimposed upon map, and in the topics of her four narratives; Edburg, Edmonton, Calgary and Ellesmere. Like Sheila Peters' text, *Places Far From Ellesmere* conveys geographic information within a medium of creative (non)fiction. It contemplates concepts such as home, migration, dispersal of population on land, relationships between hinterland and heartland areas, and people's relationship to their spatial realities. Van Herk's text is also infused with geographic language, seen in descriptions like the following:

[S]tare out the window through the Battle River valley and the impossibly fairy-tale dense trees south of Camrose and across the bridge before racketting through the junction and sliding up to Edburg from the northwest.

No town without a train/no train without a town...

The village itself strung along that gravel intersection: the school/houses/Erickson's store/ a blank-faced building? shed?/ the hotel/another dusty storefront with a tabby sleeping in its window/the Co-op store/across the street Nock Radomsky's hardware and the garage/around the corner the coffee shop and the fire hall and the village office and the post office/more houses/more houses. (19)

Van Herk's contemplation of the relationship between train station and community is a theme considered by geographers (McCann 1987, 1998), and her detailing of the downtown core in a rural village reflects observations that a geographer might make when describing an 'ordinary landscape' (Lewis, 1979). Yet these examples of geographic knowledge are conveyed not in a traditional geographic manner. They are contained within a fiction, within a story.

The narrative sections in *Far From Ellesmere* allow for a fusing of geographic and creatively produced knowledge to emerge. In this way, the text is a clear illustration of the objectives sought in my own project. The text is a reflection on region and social interaction with land and an expression of the self being injected into place and space. The text is also an insistence on the importance of injecting body and person into geography, and descriptions of merging the creative and the geographic, combined with an infusion of self, are found throughout:

Edburg that place where awareness made itself known, not so much memory as consciousness that you took breath and had existence. This disappearing location of appearances: sites of seeing. Escapation: occupation: sites of initiation and marking (the soul's tattoo).

Edburg a village left in the wake of passing, itself a vanish-ment of waiting.

Which came first: the wagon trail? the people? the railroad? the longest wooden trestle bridge in the world? (29)

Van Herk is describing models of settlement and the patterns of demise faced by rural agricultural communities. She is also incorporating her experience and memory onto that landscape and by doing so is practicing creative literary mapping.

1.5 *Landscapes on canvas: sense of place, geography and two visual artists.*

Works of literature, as discussed, are one medium in which to find geographic knowledge produced through creative method. They are, though, by no means the only medium. While literature and writing are the foci of this thesis's inquiry into the

production of creatively informed geographic knowledge, a brief investigation of the visual arts is also meaningful. Exploring graphic arts concerned with geographic interests offers context for the inclusion of scanned and reduced maps, overlain with text, in Section Two of my thesis. The manner in which I have used maps in this thesis removes the maps from their intended purpose. While the end resulting overlay of mapped landscapes and the narrative representations of the same landscapes is not necessarily indicative of a complete reconfiguration of mapped representation, my desire is to gesture towards a new way of understanding mapped representation. I am aware this gesture is by no means a full response to the complexities of producing entirely new methods of mapping, but I hope that the overlay of narrative on map nonetheless highlights the fragility of a single method of conveying geographic knowledge. The maps are no longer depicted according to their original scale, and they have also been removed from their full plate original construction. The maps in this thesis are not intended to depict direction or to serve the traditional functions for which they might have been created. Rather, they are meant to represent one method of geographic representation. Overlaying creative text on maps is meant to highlight the surficial nature of the map (concerned with the landscape's surface) while simultaneously suggesting the rich and varied stories that a map is capable of summoning and inspiring. The overlay of creative narrative on maps thus gestures toward the visual arts in that the combining of narrative text with the graphic results in a 'picture' of sorts and illustrates the main objective of interdisciplinarity that is fundamental to this thesis. Because of the inherent reference to the visual arts that these 'illustrations' make, a brief review of other artistic works concerned with geographic themes is relevant to the project.

Somewhat like geographer and painter S. Quoniam, visual artist Nancy Friedemann constructs new landscapes that are inextricable from geographic knowledge. Hers are imaginary maps: working on four by six panels of transparent velum she renders fragile crocheted landscapes of metropolises, suburbs and winding roads (Gaffney, 133). Friedemann's works as a visual artist embodies a language of interdisciplinarity in that they combine the fields of literary studies and geography (map making) to produce an end result of innovation and newness. Five of her panels, entitled "Maps", are created

...with volumes of Sylvia Plath clutched in one hand, and include transcribed passages, impromptu translations into Spanish, and Friedemann's own automatic writing. Each panel is several sheets of velum thick, and the increasing blurriness and illegibility of text on the successive layers creates a sensation of spatial depth that evokes the fading of memory. (Gaffney, 133)

It is interesting to note that Quoniam and Friedemann, in their blending of geographic and landscape painting with literary methods, both choose to use illegible text. For Friedemann, the use of illegible text transforms words into graphic imagery, bringing creative literature one step closer to a mapped work as opposed to a collection of words. Gaffney quotes Friedemann as saying "text [then] becomes a visual element – it retains a part of its original meaning but then vanishes into what could be the web of memory" (133). For Quoniam, as he states, his medium ensures residency between geography and art. This creation of landscape and sense of place through a fusing of disciplinary models provides yet another thematic foundation upon which the project *Along Highway 16: A creative meditation on the geography of northwest British Columbia* rests. The use of maps in conjunction with my own creative narrative is intended to highlight not only the

spatial realities in which the stories take place, but also the fact that territorial or topographic maps are themselves creative endeavours. These maps also, in part, are imaginative and creative products.

The works of artist On Kawara also concentrate on mapping processes as creative endeavours, and as geographic knowledge being inherently contained in works of art. Art critic Ann Romier has explored the works of On Kawara in her essay “A mental journey in time”. She suggests that Kawara’s *Date Paintings* series contain concepts and representations of time, landscape, cultural interactions and connection with place, all of which might be understood to be components of geographic knowledge (225). In addition to these themes being alluded to in his art, Kawara is also overt in his inclusion of the geographic into creative art. He uses maps of cities, marked with his daily movements, as an integral component of his lifelong project. Begun in 1966, Kawara’s *Date Paintings* series are a meticulous recording of events that took place not only in the artist’s life on a particular day, but also in the world at large. The series includes paintings of the date of the day on which they were produced, clippings from media recordings of that day, a mapped itinerary of movements, and postcards sent on the day, also stamped with the date. The process of integrating maps into a three-and-a-half-decade long art project illustrates the manner in which the geographic medium of map can be transformed into something outside its original function. The map can be transformed into an art object.

Critic Anne Rorimer details this transformation of spatial recordings into a work of art. She writes of Kawara’s date paintings that

The notebook volumes contain a record of the artist's itinerary that he marks in red ink on a Xeroxed map of the city where he happens to be. Documenting his daily course along city streets, Kawara translates his movement from one destination to another (necessitated by errands, sightseeing, or the normal demands of life in general) into the planar linearity of drawing....Kawara has [also] typed the name(s) of anyone known to him whom he encountered through the twenty-four hour period. Language in place of line, in this work, reveals those points of interpersonal contact that connect over time to form a social framework for individual existence...These...works bring abstract time into view vis-à-vis the concrete reality of people, places, or events by utilizing available systems of representation – the news media, maps, or proper names, to formally convey their content. (226)

Rorimer's assertion that Kawara's work brings into view the abstract, specifically by transforming an available system of representation (the map), suggests that a map must be in part altered artistically prior to it being able to represent a lived reality. In addition, her statement implies that language and text in conjunction with, or overlaid on, a map, alters the map by forcing it to serve outside of its original function. Map combined with narrative thus highlights the artistic components of the map while simultaneously stressing the 'mapping' component of narrative writing. The outcome of a union between map and creative narrative is a complex representation of place, landscape and culture – precisely what this thesis is attempting to depict of the communities along Highway 16 in Northwestern British Columbia.

1.6 *Before me: the personal writings of two geographers*

In 1997 geographer Cole Harris wrote in the introduction to his text *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographic Change* that “[d]isciplinary boundaries are disappearing, and probably should; I am not even sure there needs to be a distinction between academic and non-academic writing” (xiii). This small but profound statement in part introduces a scholarly inquiry into the historical geography of British Columbia, an inquiry, as Harris states, partly predicated on the author’s personal interaction with the province’s landscapes (xvii-xxi). His unselfconscious recounting of his childhood on a ranch in New Denver BC suggests that Harris not only believes geographic knowledge arises from personal interaction with place, but also that personal narrative is a useful method of conveying geographic information.

Producing creatively informed geographic knowledge is the core of this thesis. To that end, the construction of narratives concerned with elements of both physical and cultural geography constitutes a central concern of this project. Section Two of the thesis is made up of these narratives, augmented with text overlaid atop of mapped representations of the communities being written about. Section One provided a discussion on interdisciplinarity, setting down a foundation upon which to contemplate artistic geography, literature as having geographical importance, and the visual arts as a site of transformation for both the map and a narrative. By way of directly introducing my own narratives, I believe it worthwhile to explore (briefly) one other writer who has already entered a space wherein landscape and geography are understood through creative fiction and personal writing.

Wanda Hurren, a geographer with the University of British Columbia, wrote in an article entitled “Living With/in the Lines: poetic possibilities for world writing” that

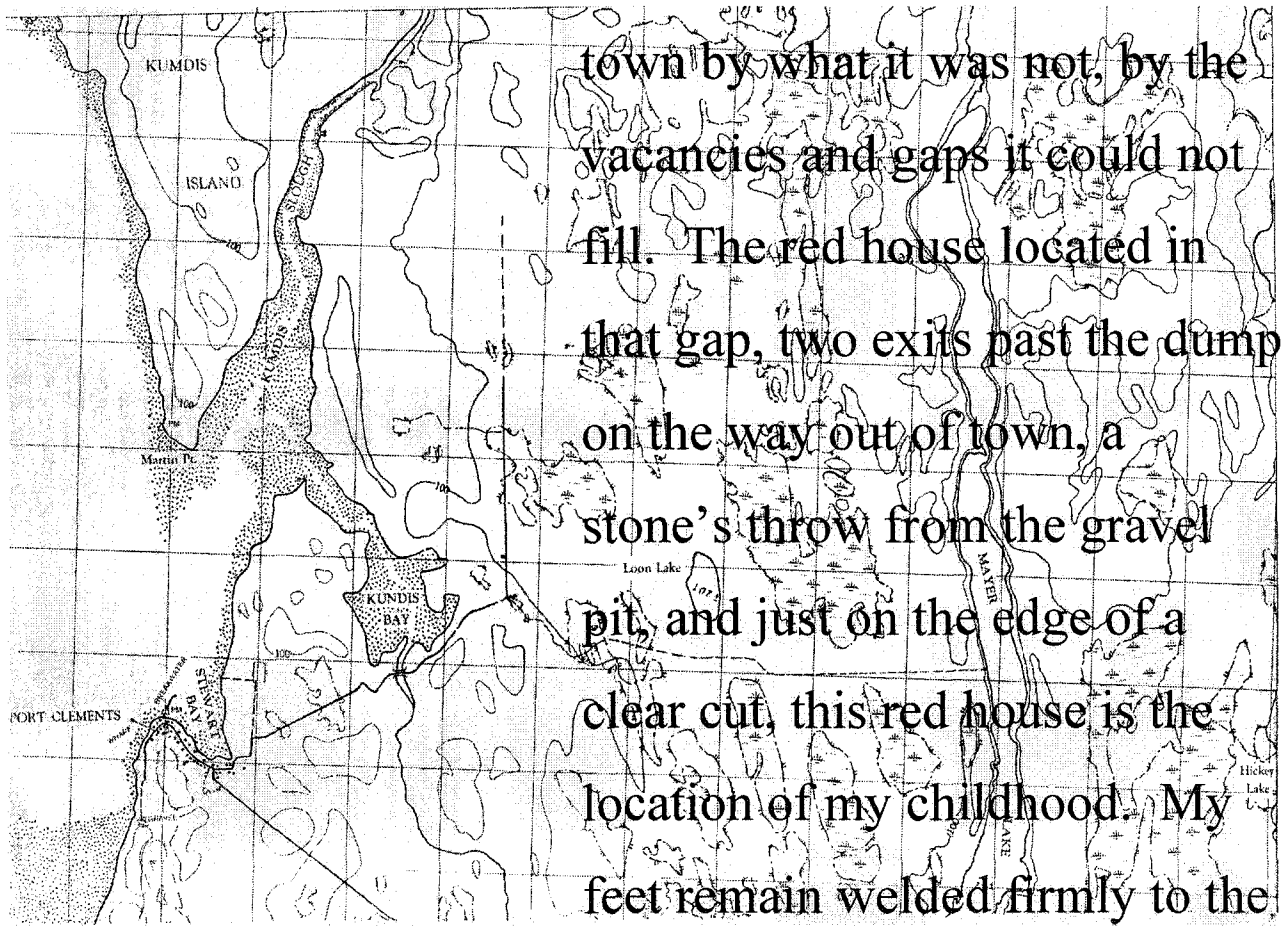
Poetics can be considered as *an act of writing* and composing (poema, poieein: to make, compose, create), and as a *way of writing* and composing (poetic language). Geography as a poetics of the world – a writing of the world – and possibilities for embodied world writing are notions [that] inform...geo-graphying. (301)

Hurren’s liberatory reading of geography (that it is the poetics of the world) establishes for her the space in which to create personal narratives linked to maps. She imagines and writes the details of life occurring ‘between’ the lines of a map, stating that “my map-poems contest the widely accepted bird’s eye view of maps and they attempt to bring the corporeal into map reading/writing” (301). This contention of the widely accepted reading/writing of maps suggests that while a map contains significant geographical knowledge, geographic knowledge more generally will profit from the establishment of creative works as significant works of geography. My choice to include maps (albeit altered from their original state) in my creative narratives was made in order to highlight not only a fusion between two often disparate disciplines (Geography and Creative writing), but also to offer a re-reading/writing of traditional methods of representing the communities of Northwestern British Columbia. Hurren’s end product is a merger of map and narrative and culminates in poetry superimposed on maps. Hurren states that “[a]s we read the lines that have already been written on maps, it is possible to live poetically with those lines – to rewrite the line as we read – to impose/compose lines according to our own lived, bodily experiences” (301). The personal essays contained in

this thesis are a re-reading of the mapped lines that have depicted the communities in my Northwestern British Columbian life. In this way, the essays not only contain geographic knowledge, but they (as Hurren advocates) impose upon the lines of a map my own lived, bodily experience.

Section 2: Creative Geographic Narratives: Eight Personal Essays

PORT CLEMENTS 1980-1983



By Grade Four I knew my town by what it was not, by the vacancies and gaps it could not fill. The red house located in that gap, two exits past the dump on the way out of town, a stone's throw from the gravel pit, and just on the edge of a clear cut, this red house is the location of my childhood. My feet remain welded firmly to the ground of a town overlooked.

It begins somewhere.

It must. Everything has a beginning after all, even when the beginning denotes only something missed – a skipped heartbeat, a breath hesitated, a head turned back, something surely moving in the periphery.

But where? Where does it begin?

A bend in the road or a particular telephone pole? The highway kilometre sign? White letters on green, letting you know a place occurs further down the road; this might be a beginning, a starting point. Or perhaps at the announcement of its incorporation: small white sign, black letters reading “Port Clements: Incorporated.” No date, no population number, just an announcement of incorporation. This is definitely one beginning, the beginning of my mother’s work in Port Clements. The incorporated sign might be as good a place to begin as any. I remember clearly the once-a-month Thursday evening rush as my mother prepared for the city council meeting. She was the municipal secretary. Not clerk, not transcriber, not assistant: just secretary. Once a month she carefully typed the minutes of a town hall meeting, the words of Port Clement’s mayor and council in neatly aligned sentences and columns. To get the job she’d had to do a typing test. The first time around she was so nervous she laid her hands across the typewriter and placed her fingers on the incorrect row of letters, typing a dictated memo in nonsense words. They let her do the test again because no other applicants had come forth for the position.

So this beginning springs forth from confusion, it’s muddled. Perhaps a better place to begin is Jack’s house.

This seems clearer, if only because everyone selects right or left at Jack's house, situated as it is at the crossroads of Port Clements. Left and you go downtown (euphemistically speaking). Right and you head out of town, towards Masset and the army base an hour down the highway. His house is balanced mere steps from the incorporated sign, as if punctuating municipal pride. By the time I was in grade five, Jack had a new home. Two others had burned down, and now a trailer sat jacked up on blocks, kept off the ground to make sure it did not rust too much. Its walls were already eaten through, great brown holes gapping so that in places the guts of his home were visible through the siding.

Everyone knows that when you see Jack's place you have made the drive home to Port Clements. His house announces home, declares for residents that just around the corner rests their own warm rooms. The yard is a miserable chaos of junk, each item waging silent war against another in painful contortions of twisted metal, snapped wood, ripped plastic, and bent wire and cable. Look closely and what you see is Jack's life piled in front of this trailer. Countless motors from unidentifiable machines (lawn mowers, tractors, boats?) peek from beneath blue plastic tarps coated in fallen red cedar needles. Five cars, or the skeletons of what once were cars, lie like abstract sculptures. Tires and mufflers piled on top of fenders, these in turn piled on top of hoods. Only one of those cars works, but Jack always swore it paid off to keep the bodies of others on hand, just in case something might need to be fixed.

A time existed when Jack decided to carve burls. To make a little extra money on the side he said. The burls now lie in haphazard heaps, dull contortions of sickness chain-sawed from trees; wooden bodies resting against the corpses of cars. Centre

sections of the occasional burl are carved out, a testimony to Jack's plan of selling burl salad bowls to tourists. Other burls have been thinly sliced, now faceless future burl clocks dull from never knowing a thick varnish coat.

Jack's house is a good beginning. It speaks of continual loss yet infinite hope, an absolute certainty that in nothing exists something. His house opens a door to the town of Port Clements, a town that can be missed in the blink of an eye, driven past because you have turned your head, distracted for a moment by a bend in the road or a scent you could not quite place. A scent of ocean on log booms, perhaps the dry land sort quiet in the evening air.

Early on it became apparent I lived in a passed-by town, a town easily missed. Even before I lived there, it was unknown. At the age of eight, to my grade three teacher, I announced my family was moving. Where, asked the teacher, and I recall the eyes of my classmates on me, a sharp inhale of air held in expectation. Port Clements, I said. Silence settled around the room, and the teacher asked me once again, as if by rephrasing the question a community would appear, as if by my answering a second time, a place of meaning would come into focus. Port Clements, I restated. *Ou est ca?* asked Monsieur Longe, because even in my French immersion classroom, even in another language, the town was foreign. It's on the Queen Charlotte Islands, I told my classmates, and the teacher smiled, a place he knew finally coming clear. Oh, said Monsieur Longe, I hear it never stops raining there.

Indeed we crossed to the islands through mist and rain, my sister, mother, and I. My father had gone on ahead, manoeuvring the great bulk of the moving truck north from southern BC and Vancouver Island, away from my classmates who knew nothing of my

new community, away from cities whose names were widely recognized. The roads we drove to arrive at the ferry left cities behind, vast swaths of trees and barrenness became increasingly common, and my mother's anxious calculating of miles between gas stations spoke of spaces empty and endlessly alone.

My memory of journeying is vivid. Clusters of towns thinning out into open fields and sage covered hills, the scent of ocean far behind. My mother telling me the names of places I have never heard of. Spuzzum. Hell's Gate. Merritt. Cache Creek. This is the interior of British Columbia, miles and miles of undulation, landscape curving. Then Hundred Mile House, my sister and I playing name games: Williams Lake, caught a snake; Quesnel, Quesnel, oh well, oh well. Here our journey itself curved, back towards the coast and westerly, the possibility of sea-scent once again real. Hills stretched into flatness and lowlands, then Prince George, Burns Lake, then back into mountains and Smithers, hush of new snow, even this early, even in late August.

These mountains, my mother is saying, are the edge of an ancient sea, all of this underwater once, and we are taken with the images of starfish on cedar trees, silver fish abutting with logging trucks, rainforest in an impossible coral reef, as impossible as the journey itself. I am lost in the hours it has taken to travel this far, two days of driving and only on this second day are we getting near.

Achieving our place by travelling the remains of ancient oceans.

Before this my world was contained and I did not understand size, the impossibility of moving so far and achieving so little. I was young and the careful mapping I had done included paths to school, roads leading to my grandparents, the small track of land at the bottom of my street, the edge of fence across which I reached to feed

carrots to horses. Contained. Moving north uprooted me, left me groundless in the face of so much land. I am floating on an ancient sea, travelling to my new home, a place unknown by those who knew me.

Beyond Smithers, names my eight-year-old mouth trips on. Kitsegukla, Kitwanga. I ask at every bend, have we arrived? I am impatient, needing to know everything immediately. Where we will live, what will my school look like, even the colour of my bedroom walls is a question. Moricetown. Here? Is this our destination? New Hazelton? Terrace? The highway is endless. I am sure we are the only people on the road and nothing exists anymore; my previous yard, the small place behind the back fence and between the white garden shed, the tree branch located exactly seven knotholes from the ground. Against the highway, against the possibility of a new home, everything fades.

Then Prince Rupert, the great mountains are far away, the ocean is real, not ancient and imaginary, and we will cross it in the mist and rain on a great white boat winging through the water, the horn vibrating down my spine, sleeping in a room of such wonder, swallowed into the bowels of the great ship, perfectly dark when the lights are shut out. To get to my new home, you have to sleep twice, awaken two mornings in a row to a horizon you have never seen.

My new home is not located; it is distance.

I am expecting something different, a visual reminder that these people are three days travel and two nights sleep away from the people I have left behind. I stare hard. My mind insists they are strangers, unknown, living in a place on the edge of nothingness. I know I have moved to a place on the edge of nothingness because I hear it

spoken of by people who come and visit my parents, people who come from cities with names I find on the globe in my grade three class room.

My father's friends come to hunt. No place better, they laugh. You can bag a deer a day, play steelhead from dawn to dusk. Couldn't live here though, oh no, how do you do it anyway? Missed the place driving in, thought it was a highway camp or something, because surely it wasn't a whole town. Got forty clicks out when we checked the odometer, and sure as shit, we realized we'd passed right through. Had to turn around on the highway, almost clocked a bear right then. Place is just crawling with them, you might as well be living on top of them. Great place to come hunting, sure is, but no way we could live here.

For two and half weeks my sister and I find candy bars under our pillows. My father's two friends chide my parents. How are you supposed to bring up kids here? That isn't a school they've got, it might as well be an outbuilding. Only goes to Grade Six, then what, the bus? Two and half hours a day on the bus? In the city they'd never have to go through that.

On the back porch covered in tin roofing with the rain beating down in our forgotten town, deer hang, meat softening. My sister and I know how to skin and gut a deer; it hangs from its back legs and you cut from its genitals towards the throat, peeling back the skin, slicing the white membrane that attaches hide to flesh. You slice down the inside of the chest cavity, carefully pulling out the innards, feeding gut and intestine to the dogs, saving the heart, liver and kidney to fry for dinner, fat popping on the stove.

We learn this in our passed-by town, in the off hours, when we are not attending our outbuilding school, when we have stopped dreaming of cities and the places where we once lived.

Port Clements has no place to buy school supplies, no place to register for and take swimming lessons, no galleries, no restaurants to dine in, no place to watch a movie, no police officers, no malls, no civic centre, no doctor's office, no corner stores, no video stores or clothing stores nor a single chain named business. An attempt is made. Two churches, though we attend neither. A community hall with Christmas concerts and once, just once, a movie brought in. The entire town on splintered chairs scrapping varnished wood floor, sawdust from red-strap jeans flickers in the blue light. *Tron*. I understand none of it, but it makes no difference. The movie is only part of why we are here. The idea of it is everything. Nothing else truly exists other than for the idea of it.

One store, no fresh fruit, a back section with dusty jigsaw puzzles and plastic dolls in brittle plastic wrap. Everyone knows birthday gifts must be ordered weeks in advance from the Sears catalogue. Who would dream of buying the outdated merchandise in Bay View Market? A gas station, a bank open one afternoon a week, the woman comes in from out of town, she is from the big city two hours away, the one with a single high school. She wears red high-heeled shoes, a belt around her waist, the greatest fashion icon we have in Port Clements. One hotel, where loggers come to stay when they get out of camp, days off spent before the television, beer balanced on windowsills.

By Grade Four I know my town by what it is not, by the vacancies and gaps it could not fill. The red house located in that gap, two exits past the dump on the way out

of town, a stone's throw from the gravel pit, and just on the edge of a clear cut, this red house is the location of my childhood. My feet remain welded firmly to the ground of a town overlooked.

From that red house, if you peddled fast, terribly fast so your feet got going quicker than the pedals, you could make the sharp bend, the one down the hill and past the Golden Spruce Hotel, and you could make it in a way that stole your breath. The bike pedal was a filament of space from the pavement, and the slightest miscalculation would leave you bruised on the edge of Kumdis Slough, a wind from the tidal flats sickly rotten in your lungs. If you twisted through that curve though, perfectly balanced, the one main road of Port Clements opened its beaten pavement arms to you. Past an intersection, the terrible intersection with the boy who squashed orange and black caterpillars, an alder branch carefully cut for the purpose, flattened and sanded on one end, the better to catch body between stick and pavement, past the Mac and Blow machinist shop, grader perpetually parked outside, someone always working on it. Then those nice houses, the four on the hill to the left, new and company built, the homes of fallers and foremen, the turn-off to the school and the Ministry of Highway's storage lots, the wet pitted baseball field, company built, the tackle and hunting shop and Sears Catalogue order counter all in one.

If you negotiated that steep curve, everything became possible, again and again. Over the bridge, Kumdis Creek brown under the over-creosoted deck, the trailer court with four trailers, on the right hand side. A displaced CNRail worker lived there. I knew because I babysat for his kids, both from Quebec, someone in town heard I spoke a few word of French. One Friday night a month I put the two children of a displaced CNRail

worker to bed. Bonne nuit, I said, bonne journey. I had forgotten how to say 'sweet dreams', and in the silence of a logging camp town, I sent children into the night journeying, languages lapsed. The beginning of something, even if translated incorrectly.

JUSKATLA 1980-1983

For five days and four

nights they auctioned off

Juskatla, piece by piece,

great spotlights catching the

steam of onlooker's breath,

inhale, exhale, a way of life

sold off. And I remember

clearly the look of Leah's

father, Sportsmen Unfiltered

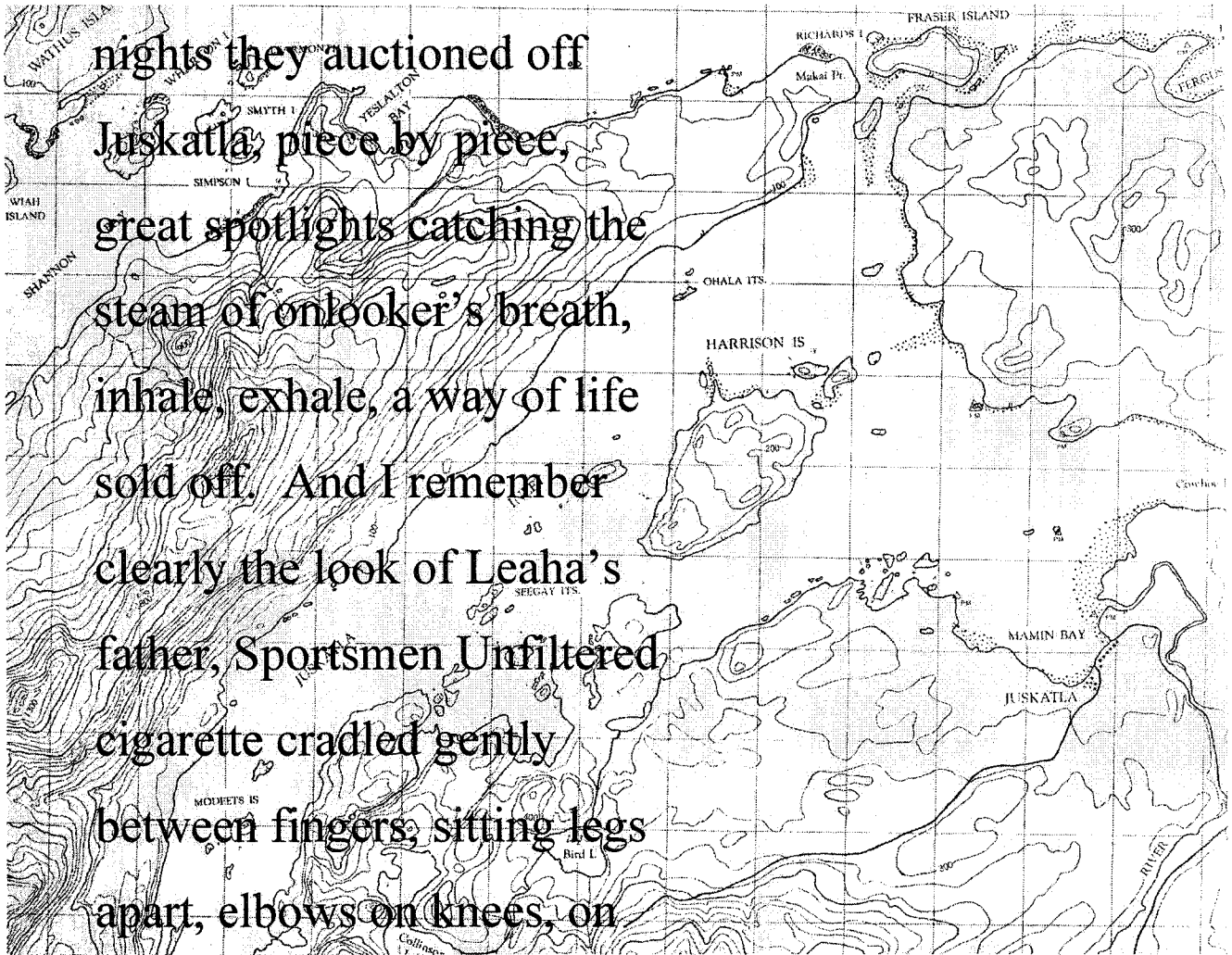
cigarette cradled gently

between fingers, sitting legs

apart, elbows on knees, on

the hood of his golden

Cadillac.



Learning to smoke entailed stealing Sportsmen unfiltered cigarettes from Leaha's dad on Friday nights.

After he'd passed out following a week of choker setting, of course.

We could take them directly from his breast pocket; once, pressing the snap closed so hard on his cowboy style shirt the pressure seemed to dent his ribs inward, him not moving an inch, deep breathing unaltered. Friday nights meant men throughout trailer and bunkhouse rooms in Juskatla reaching the same state as Leaha's dad, most of the guys staying drunk until Monday morning, many not yet sober as they pulled on their red strap jeans well before 5:00 am, lifting Husquavarna chainsaws onto their shoulders, one saw for each side. They would work a drunk off, booze slipping out of their pores while they made the day's first cuts, deep and perfectly slanted into the sides of Sitka spruce, always hoping like hell not to meet a widow maker, that freak tree which snapped out with all the pressure of hundreds of years, easily shattering a man, breaking life in a single mean moment.

Men like Leaha's dad were men with hands wrecked from bush work and faces that bore scars of being broken open in bar fights and busted down in logging accidents. These were men with skin of monsters, burned from chainsaw diesel spilling behind their collars as they packed saws while walking from crummies into the bush. Leaha's father epitomized the broken body of a Juskatla logging man. By the mid-eighties, he had been logging with Mac and Blow for over twenty years. To show for it he walked with a bent and painful drag, was missing most every one of his teeth and had a gold Cadillac with white leather seats and a double wide trailer balanced on the edge of a gravel road. That

Cadillac was his pride and joy, gold flashing against gravel, white leather against scars and breakings.

Every good bender began with a bottle of Canadian Club in one hand, a bucket of turtle wax washing solution in the other. Right after work, even though supper was waiting and a fight always flared up red-hot between him and his wife when he chose the gold Cadillac over her, he would wash the week's grime from that vehicle, inch by inch with the care one might take to administer medication to a deathly ill child. And then the slow logger's drunk would overtake him, carefully like all logger drunks do, and the man would get gentle and slow, an escape from work that ruined him, leaving him with nothing but his own slow escape.

In grade five we stole cigarettes from a man who drove his gold Cadillac fast over back roads, set chokers during the day, and drank himself to oblivion in the evenings. No one seemed to notice when Leah and I climbed out the side door and slipped down to the mess house and bunk houses and machinist's yards where we crouched in the metal jaws of front end loaders and taught ourselves to inhale. Only seven kids lived in the logging camp of Juskatla, so even when I came to stay with Leah, we were easy to overlook. And those easy to overlook have a freedom to view as they please, which is just what Leah and I did.

Smells hard to describe exist in logging camps, smells neither sweet nor acrid they occupy a place in memory painfully difficult to clearly position or, failing that, to eliminate. The smells shift throughout the day, starting early in the morning with propane as camp stoves are lit, bacon grease, then the piss and filth of loggers waking up and converging in shared bathroom stalls in bunkhouses. By mid-afternoon the scents

have slid smoothly into the realm of fabric softener as load after load of Stanfield sweaters and GWG red-strap jeans are washed, into the realm of hot welded metal as in-camp mechanics solder trucks and loaders, and finally, into roasting meat as the camp prepares for its returning men. Then first up in the evening is a thick odour of diesel from returning crummy trucks, then a haze of cedar sawdust scent followed by an indescribable scent of men's sweat mingling with food. Late into the night, a scent cloud of burning wood hangs over the camp, and to this the silent smell of men at rest is added. This smell, the smell of loggers at rest, of hand-rolled cigarettes and damp newspapers, dirty sheets and pots of weak coffee, this greeted Leah and me when after dinner we snuck through Atco trailer halls of thin brown panelled wood walls, dashing into non-occupied rooms as the floor squeaked warnings of loggers on the move. The scent of ancient Louis L'Amour duster novels piled pile upon pile. Hustler magazines tossed into bathroom stalls, shards of Irish Spring soap used and forgotten, caught in the tiled corners of bunkhouse bathrooms.

We shared the air with loggers home from falling, from bucking and loading. We breathed in the spaces they forgot to look, watched them doing nothing at all, and this was everything to us.

Scents suggest silence, as if the camp operated in a vapour of smell isolated from any other senses. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Sound erupted from between every piece of stored machinery, from beside every bunkhouse and mess hall, from the dark insides of every company-owned trailer in Juskatla. Leah and I knew because it was the sounds of being broken that drew us to Davie Junior's trailer on the Thursday night of a long weekend. The sounds, and that he was just one grade ahead of us and

already a practiced smoker, drew us across a gravel road flowing with rain and mud. We knew wandering camp with him until the early morning hours would ensure excitement and possibility, and we knew this even as we heard the ripping sounds of air filled with fighting between adult and child. We simply waited outside and listened as his father flew at him and no wall could contain the wails, though no doors opened in camp, Davies's dad being a foreman and all. Years later the twelve year old face of Davie would creep into the edges of my memory, a face red and as pulped as a rotting nurse log, no tears though, no tears for a boy who would go on to be a logger.

From wails to the song of a strong break as loggers began an evening of pool, the sound of truck tires revved fast and resolved on gravel driveways, the echoes of men yelling at each other, of dogs barking from unspecified sites. These are logging camp melodies, heard against a sky reflecting clearcuts.

Nothing escaped our ears, not the shifting bodies of men as they slept in beds too small, not the midnight wanderings of a man having the last cigarette of his day. To us it seemed the only silence of Juskatla was the silence that accompanied a lack of women. Fewer than twenty families lived in camp, so mostly it was a landscape of men and their sounds. Not a single woman lived in the bunkhouses, their voices unheard in any of the machine shops or mess houses – here it was the sound of loggers, and women didn't log.

Though Leaha's mother rarely left the house, stepping out only twice a month to head into 'town', the tiny cluster of Port Clements with its elementary school, one store and no bank, she nonetheless had a formidable impact on Leaha and me. It was Leaha's mother, after all, and not Leaha's father, who caught us returning one night through the side door of the trailer. It was Leaha's mother who had patiently waited with metal

spoon in hand until we crept home well past 1:00 am and who then flew at Leaha in a deadly quiet anger so rendered and carefully concentrated that it left Leaha with seventy-seven bruises. I received not a single mark, though I witnessed the metal ladle smashing at Leaha and heard with absolute clarity Leaha's mother as she spoke softly, almost gently, saying over and over to Leaha 'do you want to end up as a slut in a logging camp? Is that what you want? To be a slut in a logging camp?' I have no memory of tears one way or the other. Leaha may have cried, but then again she may not have. What I do remember are the welts rearing up on Leaha's skin: blood blisters where the edge of the spoon came close to breaking the skin but proved not quite sharp enough.

Roaming a logging camp, knowing a company-owned town, a community suspended on the edge of being nothing, leaves blisters and boils just beneath the skin's surface.

Though dullness saved Leaha's skin from scars, it certainly did not save the community of Juskatla from damage and eventual eradication. By 1986 lethargy had sunk deep into the veins of the logging industry on the Queen Charlotte Islands. Men talked of days gone by, days when the sounds of push sticks on logging booms sitting fat and ripened in the waters of Juskatla Inlet were the sounds of everyday. Days when the numbers etched deep into a scaler's stick were worn thin in no time at all, a scaler had that much work for him. Days when a logger could quit and find work within hours, days past when a logger could have a fight with a foreman and walk back hat in hand to that same job a day later because a need existed for loggers. Days past.

They talked about past days and watched the dismantlement of Juskatla, pot by pot, mattress by mattress, bunkhouse shaving mirror by bunkhouse shaving mirror.

Leaha and I had learned to inhale by then. I think social services had made their first calls to her house; some discussions were circling in the air about foster families. The last night of Juskatla was the last night I ever spent at Leaha's house. Her bruises had long ago healed and my parents were not aware of beatings with metal spoons and somehow this is all welded together in my mind with the night a logging town shut down.

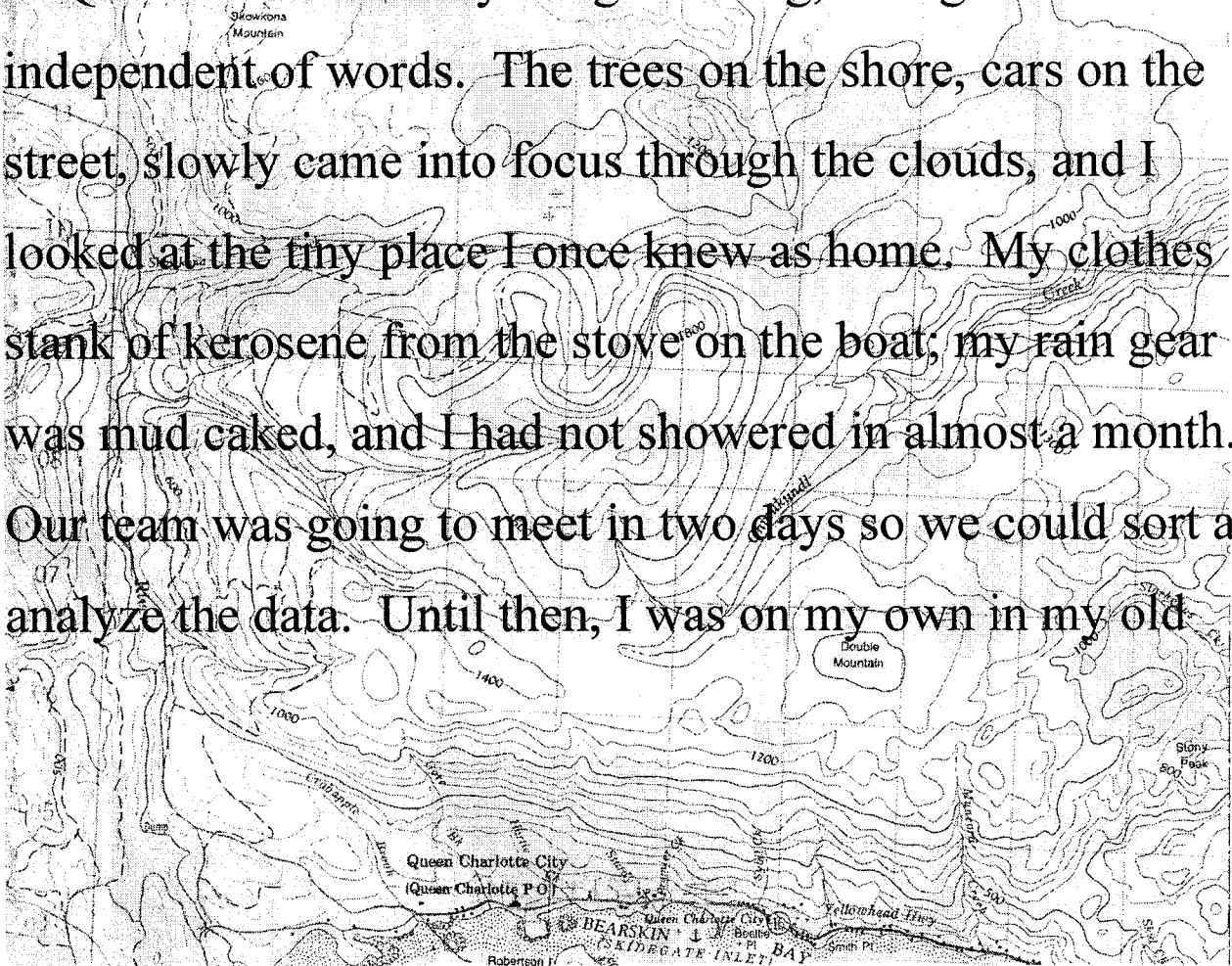
Perhaps it is pain fused with pain, bruise with bruise. The sound of a metal spoon smashing against skin, the sound of an auctioneer. "I have ten, do I hear fifteen, fifteen, do I hear twenty?" This for great slabs of stainless steel counter, a cookhouse piece by stainless steel piece. This for grapple yarding cable, great rust coloured coils of it, thicker than my twelve year old wrist. For chainsaws sold by the dozen, for tools and engines and lanterns and every piece of something and nothing upon which logging camps run, upon which communities build themselves.

This for mattresses indented with the shapes of a sleeping logger's body.

Five days and four nights they auctioned off Juskatla, piece by piece, great spotlights catching the steam of onlooker's breath, inhale, exhale, a way of life sold off. And I remember clearly the look of Leaha's father, Sportsmen Unfiltered cigarette cradled gently between fingers, sitting legs apart, elbows on knees, on the hood of his gold Cadillac.

A stunned look of resignation, the same look I had always imagined might flash across a faller's face the instant he cut into a widow maker, those terrible trees who in such a long split second rip out to take a man down.

As we inched around the breakwater, I caught the sounds of Queen Charlotte City. Dogs barking, lifting tones of voices independent of words. The trees on the shore, cars on the street, slowly came into focus through the clouds, and I looked at the tiny place I once knew as home. My clothes stank of kerosene from the stove on the boat; my rain gear was mud caked, and I had not showered in almost a month. Our team was going to meet in two days so we could sort and analyze the data. Until then, I was on my own in my old



The rain seldom stops on the Queen Charlotte Islands, the tiny green archipelago on BC's northern coast that is always shrouded in mist. The ground is soaked with grey fog, the main street of Queen Charlotte City a maze of cracks and potholes, all designed to catch and channel rain. Even the rivers on the Islands are continuously bursting their banks, their channels never quite sufficient to contain the rainfall.

In the eight years since I had last lived here, nothing had changed. The docks still jutted out from the shoreline at ninety-degree angles, their bright red paint offering the only colour to a downtown core comprised of a legion hall, a grocery store, the only bank, a bar, and a combination hardware and apparel store. Here in this haphazard arrangement, all pieced together from metal siding, tin roofing and plywood painted the same rust ochre as flats on low tide, is where I spent my junior high school years. It is where I walked long Friday nights, dreamt of running away, swore they'd always be my best friends, promised to keep secrets forever.

Now I was pulling in closer, working with Parks Canada doing biological surveys, still that sticky sweet sensation of escaping caught in the back of my throat as we came closer to the ragged shore, the edges of the town becoming clearer, the washed out fronts of houses near the ocean, grey from salt and wind beatings. Houses balanced on cliffs, it all still seems precarious - washed away and fragile. Red and yellow of the dock's water-beaded banisters, trollers and seiners abreast three deep, seagulls screaming overhead, and the familiar smells of gas, tar, and fish; these remain all the same as well.

I had not seen Karen in five years, Queen Charlotte City in eight. Karen and I grew up here. I do not remember when I met her, only that she, above all other people on the islands, remained in my life. Through middle of the night phone calls, or chance

meetings on the streets of different towns, I kept in touch with Karen over the years. Even though I hadn't seen her in five years, I'd heard from her, about her, through gossip and letters from my parents' friends.

Eight years prior to this summer, I left Queen Charlotte City on a ferry with my parents, destined for a small northern mainland community, and I watched from the back of that ferry as the islands faded into the black of ocean. Now once again on the water, I lived for four months on a converted commercial fishing vessel, collected invertebrates and streamside vegetation samples from Gwaii Haanas, the park on the southern tip of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Our supplies were flown in and in all those months, I saw only six other people, kayakers slipping through the cold waters near the shore, tourists enjoying the silence, not wanting to talk to a bunch of biologists.

When I was in grade nine I left the islands. Now I'd almost completed a university degree, had traveled North America, and was living in a city. I was nervous about meeting anyone I'd gone to school with, nervous about making that awkward small chat that only proves your differences.

As we inched around the breakwater, I caught the sounds of Queen Charlotte City. Dogs barking, lifting tones of voices independent of words. The trees on the shore, cars on the street, slowly came into focus through the clouds, and I looked at the tiny place I once knew as home. My clothes stank of kerosene from the stove on the boat; my rain gear was mud caked, and I had not showered for almost a month. Our team was going to meet in two days so we could sort and analyze the data. Until then, I was on my own in my old hometown.

As I stepped off the boat, my feet touching their first dock in months, the ropes made a high pitched squeal, and the boat whined as it rubbed against tires attached to the side of the dock. I walked up the steep platform connecting the lower wharves to the top dock, made my way between parked cars. At the intersection of the dock and the main street was a sports tackle shop, hip waders and gaffs on display in the window, the roof lined with seagulls, new since I had lived there and invisible when we were pulling in. Beside this new business was something else I didn't remember. An old delivery truck, red paint applied broadly over rust spots, was pulled into the small gravel parking lot out front. A green piece of cloth stretched from the side door to two wooden stakes, everything flapping in the wind. A thin stream of water poured through a tear in the top. A table was set up under the wisp of cloth: peaches, pears, plums and apples in mushy green cardboard boxes.

The thought of fresh fruit suddenly became the most important thing on my mind. I hurried toward the stall, fingering peaches and pears, picking them out while my mouth watered, placing them into a wet plastic bag. I was so intent on this task that it took me a moment to realize someone was calling my name. I turned and stared into Karen's face. She was standing there, a small child in tow, an armful of groceries in a wet paper bag, a smile on her face. Her hair always struck me, a mass of black curls so thick nothing could restrain them, and my eyes took those curls in once again. I'd forgotten she wore glasses, bright pink frames balanced on her nose, hiding some of her eyes. She had more wrinkles around her eyes; I noticed that.

In grade five I went to summer camp with Karen. She got a ride to the airport with my mom and me. Her mom's car wasn't insured. We sat beside each other in the

belly of the yellow Grummon Goose plane, watched the water rise over the windows as we moved off the landing dock and prepared to take off, restrained ourselves from grabbing each other's hands when the plane lifted out of the water, leaving a trail of water droplets against the sky, my mom waving at us from below.

Rediscovery was an innovative summer camp started on the Charlottes in the late seventies. Located on the wide sandy beaches at the edge of virgin rainforest, the camp offered complete isolation and a chance for kids to understand the Haida culture a little bit more. We lived in tents, went on a "solo", a two day, one night camping trip all by ourselves for which we were given only three matches and a potato. During this expedition, we were encouraged to learn more about ourselves, study the land around us.

Most of the food we ate was collected from the area, deer meat, fish and different types of mushrooms. For two weeks kids learned how to paddle kayaks, gather food, and build fires using spruce sap as starter.

Our plane landed in a bay near the camp, a canoe came to get us. Karen and I lugged our packs into the unsteady little craft. Ashore, we waited for the next plane in an old longhouse on the beach, one still used during sockeye season for fishing and smoking purposes. Inside there was a thick smell of smoke and cedar, the floor made of large pieces of gravel. Diffuse light through leaves and needles covering a sheet of fiberglass used for the roof. Karen and I sat together, eating cookies and waiting in the house that was the centre of this village. We talked about who else we thought would arrive, about school and other friends. After an hour or so, one of the camp leaders came in and asked if we wanted to go for a walk and see one of the totem poles in the area. We all stashed our gear and made the twenty-minute trek over wet green moss and slippery seaweed-

covered rocks to the Triple Watchman Pole. Three poles stood with their backs connecting, one looking over the ocean, one looking to the right, and one to the left. Great bear teeth and claws wrapped around the midsections, frogs hung out of the mouths of killer whales. On the top of each of the poles sat a watchman, a cedar hat on his head, his eyes open wide. The poles were now silvered cedar, pieces had been cut out, other sections had rotted. Salal and lichens grew around and on them, tree branches reached out and brushed at them. Around the bottom of the poles were bones. The poles had also been burial poles, high chiefs left on top of them years ago. One of the camp leaders said the poles were carved by Charles Edensaw over a hundred years ago. Karen leaned over to me and told me that he was her great, great *chineye*, her grandfather.

Years after Rediscovery, in a dark little room at the University of Victoria, I sat in cramped plastic seats learning about Northwest Coast Native art. I took notes on the different styles of different Native peoples, I saw slides of poles, masks, and other art objects now in museums. Raven masks with long beaks, a chief's settee, the broad black and red ovals depicting a frog, indicative of Charles Edensaw's firm hand. I listened to the lecture on Edensaw's work, how he was the greatest of Northwest Coast carvers. I saw argillite boxes and copper pendants he had carved, now mounted on blue satin. Not once did we see slides of the poles in the forests all over the Queen Charlottes. Not once was Charles Edensaw mentioned as a grandfather. We just learned about his ability to carve things for museums.

These were the thoughts that flashed through my head as I saw Karen standing there in front of me. Rediscovery and my university education. I didn't know what to say, I just stood there holding my bag of fruit, rain running down my back. She asked me

what I was doing, what it was like to finally be home, where I had been for past several years.

Home, this place I had left, had wanted so badly to leave, to run from. Karen referred to it as home, as my home.

She introduced me to her four-year-old son, Bobby Junior, clad in Ninja Turtle gear and holding a Transformer. She looked so well, smiling and talking quickly, an excited tone to her voice. I told her I was living in Victoria, I was going to university there, asked her how she was doing. Hey, she said, why not get together over coffee and go over old times? Where was I staying? She could get her brother's car and pick me up. I told her I had a Parks truck waiting for me, why didn't I just take them home and have some coffee at her place? It looked like her grocery bag was pretty wet and a ride might not be such a bad idea. I bought my fruit and we walked to my truck, got in and shook ourselves out like wet dogs. She laughed, asked me if I missed the rain. Not much, I admitted, as I turned on the defroster in a vain attempt to stop fog forming on the inside. I asked Bobby if he wanted a plum, asked where she was living. Same old house, she said. Her chineye had finally died and left the house to her and her three brothers, but only one was living there right now. Him and his girlfriend she said. I started the drive, listened to the slapping of the windshield wipers and the sucking sounds Bobby made as he ate his plum. Karen talked, her hair slowly drying out with the air in the cab. About Denise, did I remember Denise? She got married a little while back, finely got her Indian status recognized and got a house in Skidegate. Doing really well, said Karen. And what about Jenny and Robert, did I remember either of them? He beat Jenny up so badly he dented the side of her skull and she lost the baby she was carrying. A few guys went out

to kill him, but he fled to the mainland, and nobody has heard anything about him since. I listened to her, remembered these people, people my age. I thought of the ways in which I knew them; from being in a class with them, sitting across from them at a party. I remembered these people as children, the image of them preserved in my brain. I watched Karen point out where different people were living, thought about what might be going on in the homes of these people I once knew. She asked me what I was doing back.

Working in South Moresby Park, I told her, turning down the small side street where she lived in front of my old school. She hauled Bobby on her lap as we pulled closer to her driveway, the potholes lurching all three of us from side to side. She'd always wanted to go there, she said. Only it was way too expensive. She really wanted to see places like Anthony Island and Skedans. They had been the spring and summer villages of her family. But it was just too expensive, and anyhow, she had Bobby and her brother to look after.

On the way up the west coast of South Moresby, our crew had decided to stop and see Skedans. Take a day off and see some sites. We'd pulled our skiff onto the beach and walked through the fallen remains of one of the largest Haida villages on the Charlottes. Huge front house poles leaned up against alder trees, mortuary poles rested face down in the long beach grass growing at the edge of the forest. Waves drew themselves over the rocks in front of clusters of totem poles. I took pictures of it all, wandering around the village and knowing nothing about the people who had once lived there. Only that because of disease and starvation brought by missionaries and fur traders, Skedans, like many other Haida villages, lost almost its entire population. Those

who did not die moved into Skidegate, one of two villages left on the islands. And there I was, exploring Skedans.

From the outside, Karen's house looks a little run down. There is a big lawn with long grass and an old apple tree in the front. The green and white siding looks a little worse for wear, but no different from myriad other houses on the Charlottes. We entered through the basement door, me carrying the bag of groceries, Karen carrying sleeping Bobby. The basement door opened inwards, sticking in the frame because the wood had swollen slightly in all the rain. Karen went in first, I followed.

I do not know what I expected. From the basement I could see the roof of the upstairs room, the edges of orange carpet hanging limply through a burnt hole in the floor. The stairs leading up had no banisters, were suspended from the floor above with nothing on either side. Two huge dogs lay at the foot of them. The floor of the basement was cold grey concrete, and what stuck me as most strange were the sheets and blankets laid out over the concrete with organized care, covering every square inch of the floor, sheets filled with dog hair and mud.

Karen was already half up the stairs, Bobby balanced on her hip, so I followed, edging up the stairs, feeling them sag under me. We walked into the living room. Two walls had been knocked out, nails and plaster dribbling out like guts. The room was essentially the top floor of the house. A TV stood in the middle of the room, an orange extension cord snaking over a roof beam, tin foil attached to the antenna. In front of the TV was an old brown and green love seat, both cushions missing, like a mouth with no front teeth. In one corner was a pile of stuffed animals, teddy bears and giant stuffed

horses and whales. Karen put Bobby down in this pile, and he curled into the animals, looking at once just like he belonged there.

It was the soot smudges and scars of flames reaching up the walls that really caught my attention. The paint was licked with black; the roof had strange patterns of smoke damage over it. I walked into the kitchen and pulled up one of two chairs to a plastic covered table. What happened to the walls? I asked. House fire, she explained. About two years ago, it had started with an electrical short in one of the bedrooms, and the whole inside of the house was just sort of gutted. She was going to get it all fixed up as soon as she had the money. Would I like a cup of coffee?

The mug was warm against my hands, the tips of my fingers still a little shriveled from the rain. How was university? she asked. What was I taking? I told her about geography and biology, about deciding to go into creative writing. She was trying to get accepted into the adult education correspondence course offered through a community college on the mainland. I told her I thought it would be great, what did she want to take?, and we talked about how she would one day really like to go into teaching. I asked her about Bobby, when was he born, how was it being a mum? Karen never flinched, didn't hesitate or look embarrassed, just said how she'd just got him back about six months ago because Social Services had taken him away on account of the fighting between her and her ex-boyfriend. Once they fought so badly, she said, her boyfriend had pulled out a gun and shoved it in her mouth, told her he was going to kill her and Bobby. Luckily, she said, her brother's girlfriend come home and called the police. The police called Social Services. They took her son away.

I kept my hand wrapped around my mug, watched the steam rise and blow on to the window. Karen puttered in her kitchen, unpacked the grocery bag, put loaves of bread and jars of peanut butter in the fridge. Told me about the programs and courses she now went to in Skidegate, told me how she had fought to get her son back, how more than anything else she wanted to raise him on the islands, raise him as an Edensaw. She was applying to get a funded house on the reserve. It would be better to be close to her family, she explained, and it would be good to be in her village. She was a little low on the list though, because her father had been a white man, she laughed.

Our class visited the museum for the Native art class. We had a guided tour of the Indian exhibits, looked at the mask displays and the tiny display models of Indian villages. We sat in the life-size model of a long house, listened to the piped in sounds of drums and watched a fake fire crackle in the centre of a carpeted floor. One of the things I put on my resume that got me the job on the Charlottes was my standing in a Fine Arts department. I got an "A" in that art course.

Yeah, Karen was saying, I knew I was the only one who could raise my son. He died three times, see, and it was me that brought him back to life. Three times? I asked. How does a kid die three times? He was born not breathing she said, and the doctors were trying to hook him up to all their machines, but I just started to scream that they better give me my son right now, and I was screaming so hard and swearing, and the nurse who's a second cousin of mine told that little white doctor he'd better hand over my kid if he knew what was good for him. She knew I'd have gotten right up out of bed and punched him if he didn't. And so they handed me Bobby and I just held him and said over and over how if he had an ounce of Edensaw blood in him he wouldn't die. He

couldn't die if he was a real Edensaw. Then he started breathing, and even the doctor was crying at that. It happened twice after that, Bobby stopped breathing for no reason, and each time I just told him he couldn't die, not if he was my son.

We sat beside each other at the table, our coffee cups empty, Bobby breathing in the background. Outside the fog packed and the rain drizzled. Karen talked, laughing about her brothers and how one was always in fights, and the other was working hard out in the bush as a faller. How her mum had sobered up and was working with the band council, but that she still pissed her off all the time. I thought how inspiring this woman was. The same age as me, and all she'd gone through, laughing inside the shell of her house, rain falling outside on the roof, rain falling on the docks and the sea, the trees and the beaches. Falling on the totem poles of Karen's chineye.

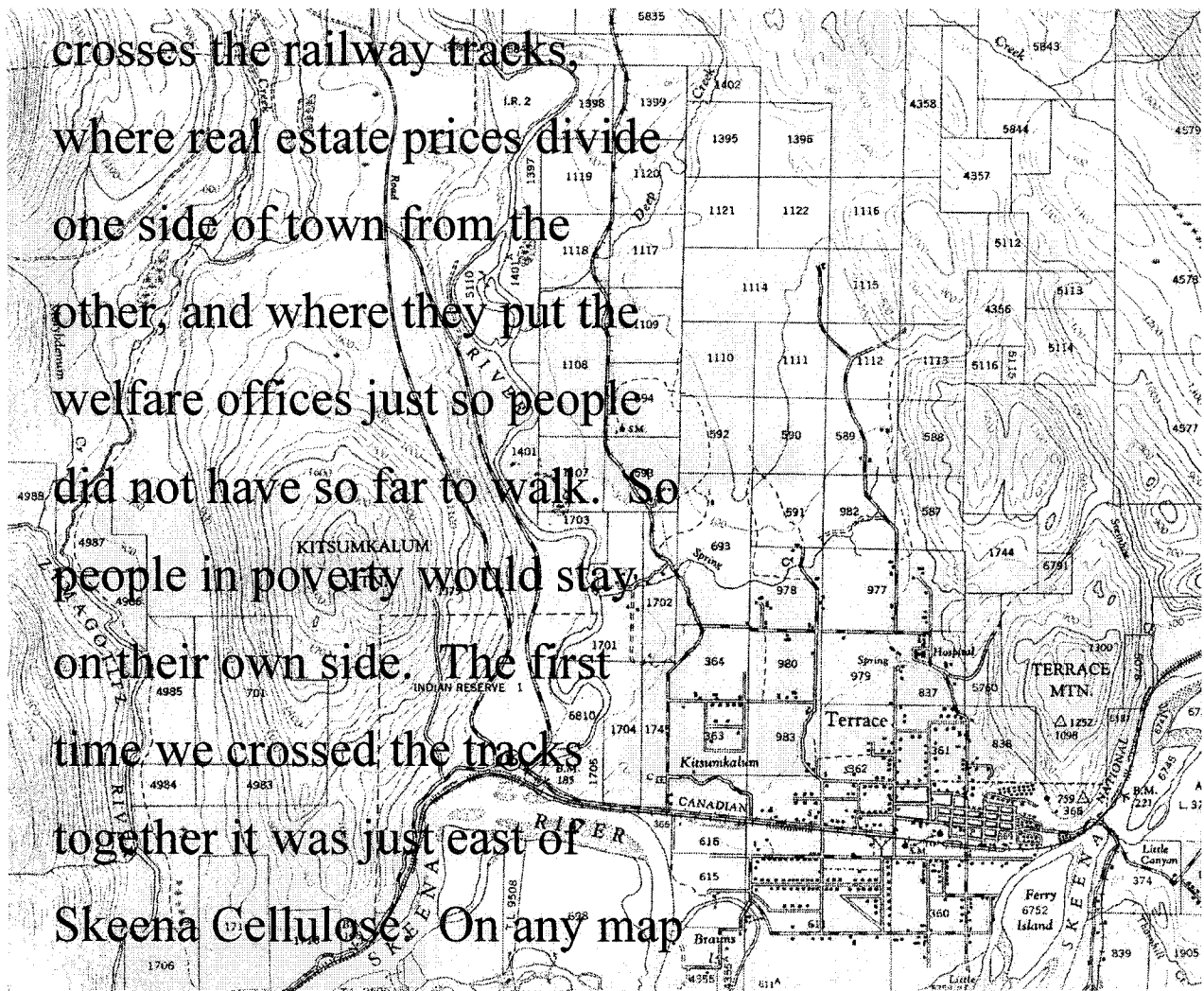
TERRACE 1974 – 1975 & 1988 – 1991

Look here. Look closely.

Where the industrial section is
etched out, where the highway

crosses the railway tracks,
where real estate prices divide
one side of town from the
other, and where they put the
welfare offices just so people
did not have so far to walk. So
people in poverty would stay
on their own side. The first
time we crossed the tracks
together it was just east of
Skeena Cellulose. On any map
other than ours the crossing is

impossible to demarcate, but in
our minds the site was perfectly



Practice. This was practice. It set the stage for years of moving to, from, and through logging towns, towns forever balanced on the edge of wilderness, on the edge of their very reason for existence. It was preparation, preparation on how to dream of escape, dream of everywhere but here, dream of endless motion when you are anchored in absolute immobility. A yearlong dress rehearsal for adolescence in a town with the dubious honour of having the highest teen pregnancy rate in the province, an adolescence of watching bar fights and getting drunk on the edge of clearcuts, in gravel pits, behind truck stops.

Anywhere but here.

Did it make me any more resilient, any stronger? Did it prime my pallet for a fluency in the languages of rural communities?

I really cannot say.

Images of northern resource communities resided within me from a time prior to memory. Never have long winters stretching between September and May not been known. Never has daylight beginning at 8:30 in the morning and vanishing by 3:30 in the afternoon not been a part of how I understand the day and night. This is not to suggest such a time did not exist. Indeed it did, only it was a time before I was one year old, and thus a time I have no memory of. In 1974, just days before my first birthday, my parents moved north for the first time.

I do not remember, but my parents tell me I discovered the moon just past Meziaden Junction, six hours north of Terrace by gutted logging road and two and half hours southeast of Stewart. At that time Stewart was a booming mining town, houses being built just as fast as miners and their families moved in. Apartment blocks sprang

up within meters of terminal glaciers. A community civic centre, complete with a swimming pool, took its place beside gold rush hotels. I discovered the moon from the back seat of a car driving logging roads to a mining town, my father hired on contract work to assess fish-bearing streams in the way of road construction plans. In the same way the moon cannot be attributed to a moment of discovery in my memory, the landscapes of northern British Columbia are not reducible to a particular point of discovery in my memory. Both the moon and the landscapes of northern British Columbia are innate to me.

Between 1974 and 1975 we lived in the Cedars Motel. Two bedrooms, a kitchen and a living room whose front window balanced over the shoulder of Highway 16, looking over into the yards of a mill – into lumber sorts and plots upon which newly milled two-by-fours rested before being loaded on trains headed for the coast. I teethed to the sounds of logging trucks and boxcars, toilet trained in a motel for men in from camp on their days off. As a baby the sounds of a logging town coaxed and rocked me to sleep, the sounds of pickup trucks and loggers telling stories, all filtered through thin motel walls.

The stories of our year in the Cedars Motel have implanted themselves so firmly in my sense of the world that it is as if they are my own, always my own, as if the details of stories are remembered details and not ones imagined. Brief flashes of my own memories do exist but they are always braided securely with details known only from other people's stories. Memory or image solidified from years of hearing a story? The flash of recollection - acquiring a cat. My father away on a moose hunting trip and my mother and I alone in our motel home. This part is not memory (here I am sure) but

story. Memory begins with the knock on the door and a small girl standing there from the Kitsumkalum Reservation down the highway. In her arms she is holding a box of kittens. Her mother has told her working men like to bring things like kittens back to their families, that these kittens will find good homes if the girl gives them away to men staying in motels. Ours is the first door she knocks on, and my father is not home, only my mother and I. My mother takes one nonetheless, naming it Moose with the hopes that my father will return quickly. When he phones my mother tells him there is no need to shoot a moose, he can come home right away. We already have a moose she says, and (clear memory now) I am playing with her right now, on the pale green carpet of our motel home living room carpet.

In 1974, my father has told me, moose meat was still a core component of diets in Northern British Columbia. Moose meat and fish, jars of canned salmon or freezers of fish, augmented a diet of canned vegetables and potatoes. Bread was baked at home because Terrace did not yet have a bakery and store bought bread was rare, often already mouldy when the truck came in. Fresh fruits and vegetables were almost non-existent, save for the high months of summer when they made splash appearances at the one grocery store or appeared at the farmer's market.

A time existed when red peppers, avocados or green leaf lettuce were as rare to Terrace residents as the eagles we regularly witnessed pulling steelhead from rivers were to our southern counterparts. It was a time when Terrace practiced becoming a town, took its first baby steps towards becoming a city.

1988 – 1991

In my mind we have walked every street here, explored the spaces of every lumberyard and railway station, snuck home on every trail and back alley. It is as if I learned Terrace from you. After all, we knew the northern lights from their appearance over your back yard.

My first Monday of school away from the Queen Charlotte Islands – it is as if my vision has become a wide-angle lens. Everything is large beyond the imagination. A high school with more than six rooms. Stoplights and pedestrian cross walks, things I had not known in over seven years. I have come from nothing to this, am hesitant to cross a road, the traffic terrifying. This is huge and dangerous and impossible to navigate. Crossing the threshold to a homeroom at school is like being hit by a truck. By grade ten I had not yet attended a homeroom. What for? In Queen Charlotte City we all knew home, everyone knew us, we were each accounted for and no need existed to check us in.

The first question you asked me is, ‘where do you live?’ Confusing, as I remained rooted in Queen Charlotte City, still balanced on the edge of the Pacific Ocean. Then with quick remembrance I re-locate myself, answering absurdly ‘here, I live here’. It is your patience with my ineptness that bonds us, your rewording, asking me ‘what street is your house on here in Terrace?’, allowing me to place myself in this new town, my new home.

We envisioned red lines charting our every movement. New travels were made permanent in our heads by envisioning an etching of red across a map of Terrace. The map was carefully folded inside our minds, a map of roads and hills and lengths of times to walk home; a map of under bridges and beside the lake hoping desperately not to get

pregnant. A map of just how to navigate being an adolescent in a place like Terrace, a map of how to navigate it together.

Look here. Look closely. Where the industrial section is etched out, where the highway crosses the railway tracks, where real estate prices divide one side of town from the other, and where they put the welfare offices just so people did not have so far to walk. So people in poverty would stay on their own side. The first time we crossed the tracks together it was just east of Skeena Cellulose. On any map other than ours the crossing is impossible to demarcate, but in our minds the site was perfectly clear.

We are weaving through the boxcars, hands greasy black from grasping joining cables, something close to joy aching in our throats. We are, after all, thwarting death. Already two train mechanics have been killed on these tracks, and the terribleness of disobeying orders is sweeter with the clutch of a truly awful image lodged clearly in mind. Another night (this has become habit, all sound eclipsed while standing in the chasms between box cars, a wonderful thrill of entrapment as one line of cars lurches into motion, deafening) we climbed into the open car. Lay in great piles of wood chips headed west for Prince Rupert and then Japan. We charted an escape plan, across the Pacific Ocean, anything to leave this town, anything to flee.

Flee what? From what did we imagine ourselves running?

Oh, our lists were long and carefully organized. We aimed to escape every cinder block business, every lack that was nothing to do, no one to see. We had plans to escape every teenage death and every accident, every teenage pregnancy and every shut down, laid-off, out of work, depressed and trapped resident who filtered in through the edges of our understandings about home. When plans to flee faltered, when we spent money from

after school jobs on vodka rather than bus tickets and saving accounts, when we fell in love with the sons of mill workers and truck drivers, when we caught ourselves thinking about liking Terrace (buying a house, taking out a car loan – this was what the grade twelve graduates ahead of us were doing), when we caught ourselves (or caught each other) doing any of these things, we played the role of reminder.

We bore bad news to each other.

Consider the rafting accident with Sheri Davidson. Sixteen years old and partying with three guys in town just for the summer, working on the highways, working construction and flagging, driving graders and shovelling tar. Three guys over thirty and out for a good time, happy to buy the beer, happy to drive down to the river, pump up the tubes on a hot Saturday afternoon. Tie the inner tubes together, float down the Kalum River, cooler of beer anchored in net dragging deep below the water's surface.

Remind each other.

Of Sheri's cousin Daisy who watched Sheri being dragged under the logjam, Daisy who watched Sheri disappear, the body never to be found. Remind each other; remind each other of the rafting trips we'd been invited on, of the nights in trucks with drunken construction workers.

Consider Crystal, same grade as me, killed when her boyfriend drove his Chevy truck into her, breaking her body against the wall of the Greyhound Bus Station. Remind each other of how one of the only two Chinese restaurants in town closed shortly thereafter, the restaurant's inside wall shared with the bus station.

Consider the two suicides, both hangings, both young First Nations men (why not be honest? In school everyone called them Indians, slurring the syllables, mocking the

accent – this is what they were to everyone. Indians). They seemed ephemeral to us, as if they did not exist, fleetingly they were bussed in from out of town reserves, existing only on our edges because in schools clear divisions existed, territories mapped out with the confines of halls and locker rows. Skid row, where the Indians hung out at break and lunch, reservation alley, where we caught ourselves not looking.

Consider the four girls in my grade ten year alone who left school, forbidden to attend because of ‘the condition of pregnancy’. In a class of less than one hundred, their absences were considerable, the whispers of their lives deafening.

Consider waiting on Friday afternoon for a truck of friends driving to Terrace from Prince Rupert. Along the banks of the Skeena River, that narrow twisting Highway 16 paralleled on one side by river, on the other by cliff and railway track. Waiting for hours, well past any explicable time delays, and then the call to a parent in Prince Rupert; confusion and a call to the RCMP.

Remind each other of the tiny slip of wheel, a misplaced stone, and the near death of two. Cherry, a face rebuilt of metal plating (medical miracle after the impact with the truck’s stick shift), and Tom, the one travelling to see you, left with the endless searching for marks and bruises it seemed impossible to have not sustained. Long after we have moved away from Terrace, we contemplate not having the scars and bruises inflicted upon others in our grades, in our town. As best friends, we searched each other, then painfully congratulated each other for escaping.

While there, we considered carefully – reminded each other in the back seats of cars racing down main street past the only two grocery stores, past the one men’s clothing store, the one shoe store, the hotel. We reminded each other as we learned to drive

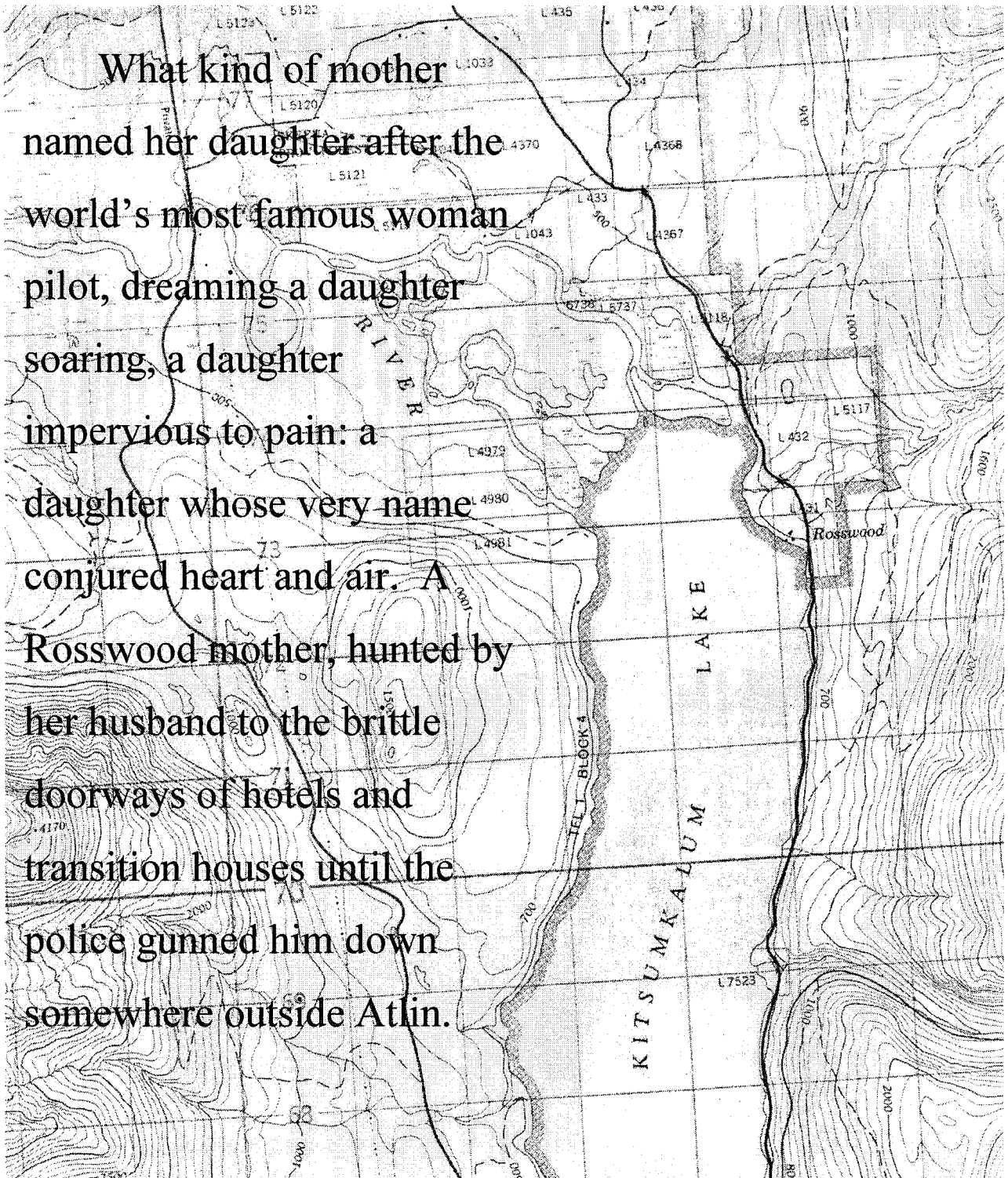
winding logging gravel roads outside of town, as we downed bootlegged bottles of rye whiskey in empty fields, as we skipped school to cower in the corner booths of a steak house, drinking coffee and imagining ourselves older, beautifully citified.

Everything we dreamt was away. Everywhere we imagined ourselves was somewhere other than here.

Here was the movie theatre with gold shag carpet walls, with feature presentations five months behind everywhere else. Here was a centre of town with beehive burners rather than skyscrapers, museums, nightclubs or the imagined endless options that existed in the city. Beehive burner, glowing hot orange pink, throwing flames like mountain ranges into the sky, illuminating nothing but log sorts and box cars. Here was the kind of place invisible on televisions, invisible in school texts unless mentioned as 'rural places where men worked hard and life was difficult'.

ROSSWOOD 1990-1991

What kind of mother
named her daughter after the
world's most famous woman
pilot, dreaming a daughter
soaring, a daughter
impervious to pain: a
daughter whose very name
conjured heart and air. A
Rosswood mother, hunted by
her husband to the brittle
doorways of hotels and
transition houses until the
police gunned him down
somewhere outside Atlin.



What is invisible remains strange. And what did we know about magic? About myth and the impossible, about an excruciating life perched at the thin end of a lake, scattered through pine flats? In 1991 I fell in the shallow end of love, short lived and thin, with a Rosswood resident, hair thick and smelling like smoke, hands careful and blistered from working on engines, cutting firewood and hauling water. This was magic, the tiny magic of dancing facing home. His family raised bees, hives of them in those Rosswood pine flats, and invisible from most, that Rosswood boy let bees dance upon his hands, a dance of sunlight and a dance of facing home, always facing home, towards an invisible periphery containing his small Rosswood landscape.

The other side of this was sport. Difference was hunted, packs of hounds on strange scents, cornering and ripping. The school bus was a perfect hunting ground – disturbance amplified in such a small space, windows closed, air recycled through the heating vents. Stains that remained on shirts (no water), shoes too tight (your brother's and his brother's before that), dirt under nails and the thick smell of pine smoke in hair (no power, woodstoves to keep warm). The Rosswood kids, the Rosswood families, those creatures everyone felt at liberty to hurt. Why not?

They lived so far out, on the outskirts, in the outback, faraway, in the middle of nowhere, at the ends of the earth, where no one would want to live anyway. Forty minutes drive on a twisting slippery highway, forty minutes outside our comfortable city of twelve thousand, our core, downtown, metropolitan centre, our urbaneness. Rosswood allowed Terrace to take its place as heart, as centre, as above and beyond the periphery. Rosswood was backward and violent, inbred and desperate.

We shipped (continue to do so) their kids past a school where stopping would have cut the daily school bus trip by fifteen minutes on each end. So what? They were only Rosswood kids, and it was, after all, Uplands school, up/lands, land of the upper, above the tracks, above the mills, up above highways and apartment complexes, certainly above (up up high high above) Rosswood kids. They wouldn't have fit in. Not with the sons and daughters of mill executives, of company owners, of government workers and shop managers. More humane really to bus them across the tracks, where they fit in better anyway.

But not by much.

What kind of mother named her daughter after the world's most famous woman pilot, dreaming a daughter soaring, a daughter impervious to pain. A daughter whose very name conjured heart and air. A Rosswood mother, hunted by her husband to the brittle doorways of hotels and transition houses until the police gunned him down somewhere outside Atlin. Those are the kind of children we don't want at Uplands school, those are children whose mothers simply say 'if that Terrace kid hurts you again, hurt them back, hurt them back more, and win.' Which is of course exactly what some of them did.

Etched with the rigid handwriting of school principal, lips tight, three Rosswood kids suspended at once.

The children warned people, told teachers, even mentioned it to the principal. If he calls us filthy sluts again, if that kid calls us Rosswood trash, Rosswood garbage again, we are going to hurt him. Hurt him. But they were called dirty Rosswood

hillbillies one more time, and this time all three took him out back, holding him down, taking turns slamming rocks into him, cracking three ribs, one for each kid.

You couldn't reason with families like that.

They collected their water (drank it, bathed in it!) from the pissing tree. It's true, the pissing tree. Everyone knows about, standing on the side of the highway, copper tube pouring eternal water pumped up from an underground aquifer. You could actually see them doing it, twenty-gallon containers in the beds of rusted out pickup trucks, washing their faces, transporting it in bright red gas containers shining against fresh snow or long summer nights. Imagine. Water from a pissing tree.

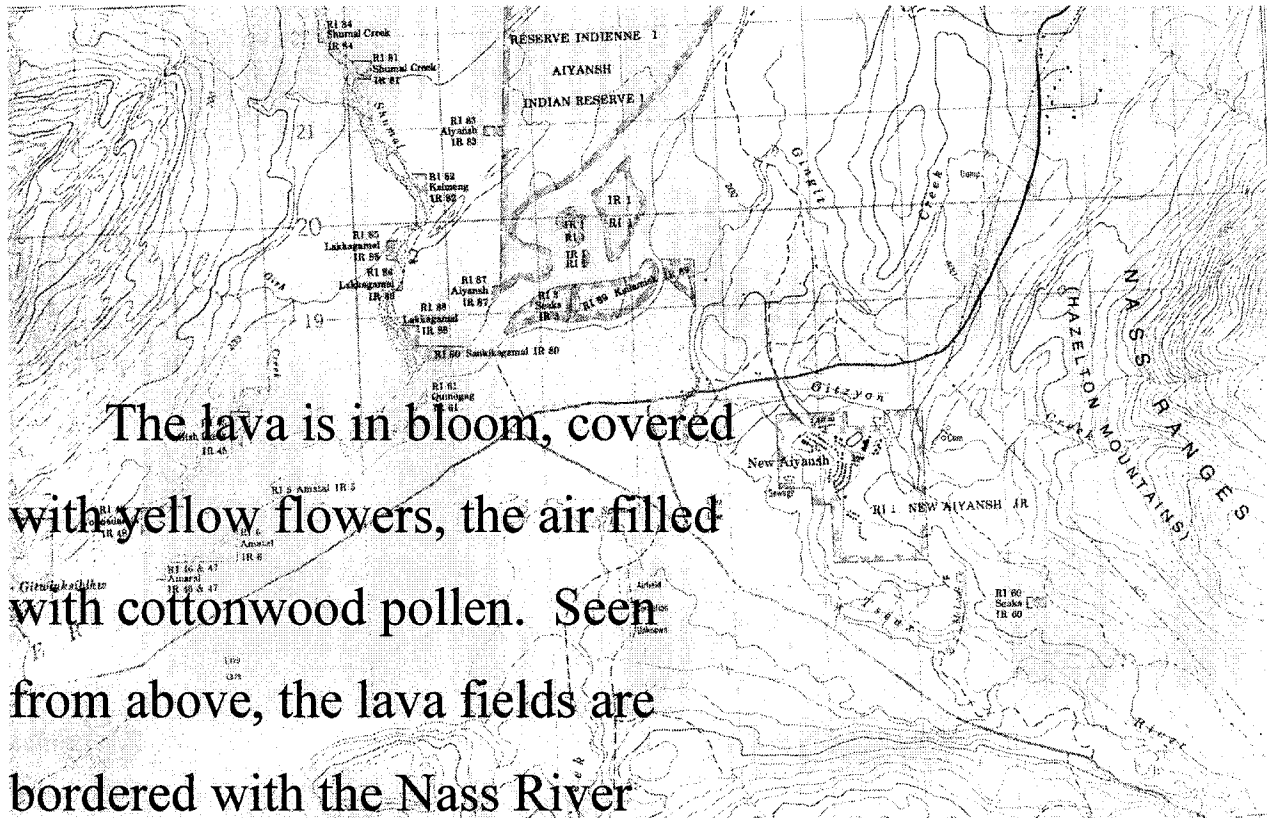
No hydro until 1999, everything running on generators, driving through at night the air filled with a dull growl of Honda diesel generators, a perfect pitch with mating moose. Hand built cabins, chinking still done with moss and mud, outbuildings built on outbuildings, you could even witness families chopping down pines, clearing and burning the land along the highway to put up fences, corrals for horses. You know how they run those generators? Oh, let me tell you. This is good, really good. Everyone knows about, I mean you can hear it everywhere. All the contractors talk about it, it might as well be written in stone. Goes to show they're thieves.

Siphoned it from logging equipment just left there overnight. Got their hoses and gallon containers out and pulled the fuel right on out. Sometimes graders, haulers, logging trucks are not even left with enough gas to start in the morning. An 'A' frame log hauler (do you know how much one of those things is worth? Hundreds of thousands, and what respect do they show?) was rendered useless for weeks on end, every night the gas tank emptied by Rosswood residents; over small hills they tromped, their packs of

dogs chasing trucks down the highway, their gas cans and mason jars in hand. We heard they sold it, and they probably did. Most of them never worked a day in their lives. Did you hear about that one guy? One of them...what was the family name again? Oh, you'd know if you heard it, that huge family, Smyths? Not that it matters, most of them are all related to each other out there anyhow. So, he was a brother, or cousin, or something, and he'd never worked a day in life. But that's not where it ends, oh no. He wasn't even registered as being born. Had no Social Insurance Number, no birth certificate, no nothing. According to most of the world, he didn't even exist. Hands never touched cash. Did all his own hunting and trapping, traded stuff with other Rosswood residents, lived on moose meat and bears killed on the highway. Lived on road kill and water from the pissing tree. What more is there to say? He came into town (Terrace, of course) on or about his 30th. No one knows for sure because of course he didn't know his own birthday. Came into town because someone figured out the government owed him back payments on the GST tax. Well go figure – stealing gas for a living and now feels he's got a right to back tax payments. That's what those backwoods people are like. Probably wanted to spend it all at the Rosswood General Store.

Did I mention that? Been there for about a hundred years or so, the only place in Rosswood really worth mentioning. Sells sugar, beans and bread, milk and candy bars. Run by a guy who barely speaks, silent in that building of glass and windows from old bunkhouses, floor to ceiling windows looking out over the highway. Got the only phone in the place, radio phone of course, and everyone in Rosswood makes their calls from that phone. If you need to call a Rosswood resident, you dial up the Rosswood General Store. Then you state (to whomever might pick that phone up) who you are trying to get

through to and the next person driving that way will pass the message on. It takes a little longer than the average phone call, but it works for Rosswood residents, balanced on the thin end of a lake, scattered over pine flats at the end of a thin slippery section of highway.



The lava is in bloom, covered with yellow flowers, the air filled with cottonwood pollen. Seen from above, the lava fields are bordered with the Nass River bending at their edges, a thin green ribbon against rock. There are no signs of habitation; none of the small villages are visible, only the silvery road snaking through the grey lava, and me making my way to a tiny logging camp in this moonscape of lava.

Where the lava stops, the thin swinging suspension bridge begins.

Gitwinksihlkw seems to be situated where the lava flows end. The bubble of grey rock falls into the Nass River's green-brown waters as they boil through the narrow canyon separating the gravel parking lot from the tiny village.

The bridge between Gitwinksihlkw and the parking lot sways with the wind, it shudders and resists as you walk across it. It is only three feet wide; just barely space for two people to walk abreast. A strange sensation can be felt when walking over this bridge. The wind rushes over you and the bridge, the waters below seem still against the movement. For a few moments you are truly suspended. Looking down between spaces in the boards, the grey waters of the Nass River seem oddly close though they are over thirty feet below the bridge.

In times of flood, when ice in the headwaters starts to melt, the water has been known to pour over the bridge, consuming it.

Until 1998, no roads entered the village of Gitwinksihlkw, and only a few houses comprised the tiny community. Some of the house windows were broken, doors on the second story of other houses lead into empty space, testimonies of balconies that had long ago fallen off. People, still to this day and even with the advent of roads, back their trucks filled with groceries into the parking lot carved from lava, unload their supplies into wheelbarrows, and cart them across the bridge into the village.

In the summer of 1992 I came here to cook, cook in a logging camp just outside the village of Gitwinksihlkw, where the lava fields come upon you suddenly, as if you have turned a single corner and suddenly entered another dimension.

The road I come in winds into Gitwinksihlkw along side Lava Lake, water striking blue green in the summer sun, even more brilliant clustered in the grey lava rock. Local legends have it that cars have twisted off the thin road into this lake. People in the Nass River Valley say it's the deepest lake in B.C., telling stories over and over again of the logger who remains death gripped to the wheel of his rig, stuck deep and forgotten at the bottom of this lake.

Locals warn their children about the day the logger surfaces.

During the summer, against the lakes and rivers, the lava becomes a problem for fire fighters. Rock molded from fire, it holds fire well. Sparks get caught in small but deep crevices in isolated corners of the lava fields. There they sit, smoldering for days, the thin line of smoke disguised by dust blowing over empty rock.

Fire travels through lava like blood through veins.

It finds intricate arterioles and tiny paths, and through these thin spaces moves great distances. When you are least expecting it, in the least likely place, the fire jumps from the lava and ignites everything in its path. There is no way to see it coming. You must wait for its arrival, hoping it won't spring up near a dry stand of timber, or worse, too near to a village.

Summer in Gitwinksihlkw brings the sockeye running up the Nass River, to the edge of the lava and under the bridge between parking lot and village. A huge fish wheel, slowly turning in the water, plucking fish up and lifting them live to people who sit grabbing the ones which are big enough, throwing ones which are too young back. Lines of red fish meat stretch across the village, children run around with pieces in their mouths, the smell of smoke everywhere. Women fillet the sockeye on huge pieces of

plywood, holding the fish by its tail and sliding a knife between the silver skin and the red meat. Guts and heads of fish slick the paths in the village, and seagulls scream overhead by the thousands.

Long ago people of the valley lived in a large village, the largest one in the Nass Valley. According to legend, children from the village went out to play with the fish in the river one day, though the chiefs had warned them against this. Again the chiefs warned them not to, and again the children went out and played with the fish. One night, after repeated warnings, the children once again tore bark off trees, rolled it up, and setting fire to it, they stuck it into the backs of the fish. The fish looked like boats with lights swimming in the water. Suddenly, the children heard a great rumble in the upper part of the valley, and they saw the lava rock pouring their way. Their games with the lit bark in the backs of the fish caused lava to flood the valley, and forever more the tiny communities seemed to exist in the midst of emptiness, of sky, mountain and lava.

No food stores, no clothing stores or restaurants or banks exist in Gitwinksihlkw. The local hospital, down the road and to the right and then up again through a new arm of lava, is small. No overnight stays are allowed unless the weather has taken out a road, and when the roads are all right to drive, the New Ayainsh ambulance can make it to Terrace, the closest community of any size, a population of under 15,000, in two hours. I'm told that sometimes people have had to will their appendixes not to rupture for a couple of hours. No other options are possible.

I came to cook in Nass Camp, a logging camp also at the edge of lava. My summer is bent over steel stoves and greasy food, feeding fallers three times a day and sharing small aluminum bunkhouses with them at night.

I am here because I need the money.

In the evenings I have been bitten by mosquitoes, I am exhausted from peeling potatoes, feeding fallers. My back is sore, and I walk outside in the late night summer sun through skeletons of heavy-duty machinery which dot the gravel lot. Rusted yellow mouths of graders, forgotten flat beds of eighteen-wheelers resting on their sides and disintegrating in the rain, the odd box of an old gravel truck.

Dusk turns the skylight purple, flocks of ravens cry overhead, black specks against the horizon, they fly to unknown destinations. At night black bears roam the perimeters of the camp, their snuffling pig-like sounds clear through the thin windows of my bedroom. During the hours I have off in the middle of the day, I sometimes make the short drive to the logging camp's dump, a leveled-off piece of land always smoking against the sky, a high and rotting smell greeting me, the taste of burnt plastic in the back of my mouth. I make this drive to watch the grizzly bears, huge and strange amongst heaps of garbage. Often a mother grizzly has two or three cubs with her, following along behind her, tearing at black garbage bags, cans like peanuts in their mouths. If you go through the garbage a grizzly has scavenged, you find cans that look like they have been target practice for a kid with a pellet gun. The bears put the entire can in their mouth, run their tongues around the inside, chew it some more, and then spit it out. Like someone eating sunflower seeds.

Even in this burnt land of garbage, their power is unmistakable.

I am trained to cook for men who work in the bush. I am trained to make more food than I thought it possible to consume.

I am trained by Glen.

Glen was not a tall man, but rather thick and broad like a pit bull, priding himself on being the best logging camp cook in the northwest. Traveled up from his native California at the age of twenty with a chef certificate in a one hand and a dream to own land in the north. He worked for offshore drilling companies, mines in the middle of nowhere, and now as head cook in Nass Camp. He always wore a formal white chef uniform, complete with hat. Glen had blue eyes, a shock of almost white blond hair to match his white hat. He had hands that could grab a bread pan straight out of the oven, no mitt needed.

For several weeks I dreamed those hands, dreamed them on lava as I braided together people and landscape, logging camp and villages.

The first time I met Glen's wife, I was hauling Glen out of the small bar behind the kitchen. He was yelling at fallers, screaming he'd piss in their food for a month, don't think he wouldn't. I had him under the arms, pulling him, and he was trying to walk backwards, stumbling.

At first, I could not get over how pregnant this woman was. She was huge, back arched with the effort of walking upright, holding her head back, belly thrust forward. Then I could not get over her strength, the way she seemed to lift her husband effortlessly, talking to me all the time, explaining he does this from time to time. Ties one on. How she will bring him back to her village, how her relatives will help her pack him over the bridge, help her lift him into bed, and finally, help her settle her own huge and pregnant self into bed.

Even to this day, I am not sure I ever got her name. As time went by, and we spent more and more time together, it seemed impossible to ask, like admitting a sin.

Then it seemed the opportunity just did not come up. Strange to think I can only refer to her as Glen's wife, as she.

As the summer moved on, she came to visit me more and more, working around the kitchen. Kitchens in logging camps are some of the most beautiful kitchens in the world. Solid stainless steel, grills the size of small banquet tables, vacuum-sealing ovens that can roast half a cow at one time. Logging camp kitchens are built to cook for the appetites of loggers, built to accommodate the needs of giant stomachs. When you peel potatoes for dinner in a logging camp, you peel twenty-five pounds of potatoes, and they're all gone by the end of a meal.

She made salad, standing over the sink, her huge swollen belly stopping her from getting too close, washing each leaf with a careful precision. She and Glen would talk about the baby, about the work they were doing on their house, about her family. Her little sister graduated that summer, she told me. It had taken four attempts, but there was another high school diploma in the family. The graduating class that year in New Ayainsh was seven people, three of whom had kids. The logging camp catered the celebration; I served little white buns and cold cuts, slices of cheddar cheese and tiny pickled onions, to hundreds of valley residents, all out for the community celebration. It was like nothing I had ever known. People from up and down the coast came, crowding into the school gym and dressed in satin dresses and tuxedos, button blankets and cedar skirts.

Outside, the doors of the school opened under the beaks and mouths of huge creatures, ravens and frogs, their eyes looking across the lava beds of the Nass Valley.

Her water broke late that night. I was told this the next morning, small parties visiting the kitchen, bringing the latest from Gitwinksihlkw, cars of grandparents, babies, and teenagers making the drive to spread the news.

The newest baby of the Nass Valley was named for the lake he was born beside.

In a small house in Gitwinksihlkw, her contractions started. She sat up for quite a while, in that strange state I'm told you enter before giving birth. She wasn't sure whether or not to get Glen out of bed, but finally, when the contractions were so close together she could no longer handle the pain, she woke Glen. Again, as I'm told some men do, he entered a strange state of panic, grabbing the 'birth bag' they had ready by the door, supporting her across the suspension bridge, and into their car. Then they decided they could make the drive to the hospital faster than the ambulance, and Glen's wife assured him she could hold on for just a little while longer.

Lines of grandmothers telling me the news said Glen drove the steep and twisting roads out of the Nass Valley as fast as he could, sped around the switchbacks beside Lava Lake, and made the paved section of highway in record time. They were 40 minutes outside Terrace's hospital when Jen's water broke. They parked beside a long thin northern lake, barren faces of alpine mountain slopes encircling the highway, the car, the two parents. She moved into the back seat and once again Glen panicked I'm told. But his wife became perfectly calm, knowing exactly what to do. She gave birth to a perfectly healthy boy beside a lake, under the faint light of an early morning northern summer sky, mountains filling the horizon. Together they drove into Terrace with a little boy in their arms, met doctors at the doors of the emergency room, doctors who had nothing left to do but congratulate new parents.

My summer in the lava bed ended the day after the newest baby in Nass Valley was brought home to his village. A mother's face, a tiny little boy in her arms, in front of a window overlooking a suspension bridge, the lava beds. I wasn't sure I would ever return to the Nass Valley, and it was this face I took away with me, leaving on the same road I came in on, passing the place on the side of a highway near a lake where a child had been born in the back seat of a car.

Years later, I made the journey once more. In the winter. I made it two days after I had done a routine visit to the transition home in Terrace, that community where so many summers ago Glen and his wife had walked into the nearest hospital, baby in arms.

I was working in the women's centre of this rural community, and a woman I was working with was staying in the local transition home. November is a cold month in Northwestern BC, grey and sleet filled, the wind never ending, the horizon always close and claustrophobic with clouds. Walking down the hall of the transition home, I bumped up against a young boy running out of one of the bedrooms. I stopped, bent down, and went with him into the room he had just come out of.

The face of the woman in the bed was the face of so many women in transition homes. Eyes thin swollen lines in purple blackness. Lips cracked, dried blood against two broken front teeth. Her hand reached from under the covers to take hold of her son, and I still did not know her name, though her son's name did not need to be spoken.

The name of a lake, a lake he was born beside. A northern lake between a village in the lava beds and small town hospital.

I made the journey in the wintertime only to remind myself of a place I had left and not returned to. On this trip, there was no greenness of lava lakes under sunshine, no

fields in bloom with cottonwood pollen filling the air. Instead, the lava fields were smooth under meters of snow and ice. The sky was bigger than I recalled, no leaves on branches to block anything out, the mountains like cut-outs against a steel winter sky.

The bridge to Gitwinksihlkw was slick in a thick encasement of ice. The huge cables anchoring it to the sides of the Nass River canyon were smooth, the ramps on either side of the bridge dangerously slippery. Two children from the village were hauling a bright purple plastic sled from one end of the bridge to the other. They were taking turns riding in it, building up speed as they ran across the bridge, hurtling themselves over the icy ramps. Below them, chunks of ice the size of houses broke up in the river, bashing together and sending spray up to the cables and mesh, adding another thin layer of ice to the bridge.

As I made my way over the suspension bridge into Gitwinksihlkw, I noticed for the first time the small white church about 25 meters down stream. Once I had crossed the bridge, both feet now in Gitwinksihlkw and the snow covered flatness of the lava across the river now, I picked my way along the icy path to the building. In the strange grey light that takes over the Nass Valley in the winter, the church seemed even more run down than it truly was. In fading red letters above the doorway, which was now boarded and sagging, was the emblem of the Salvation Army Church.

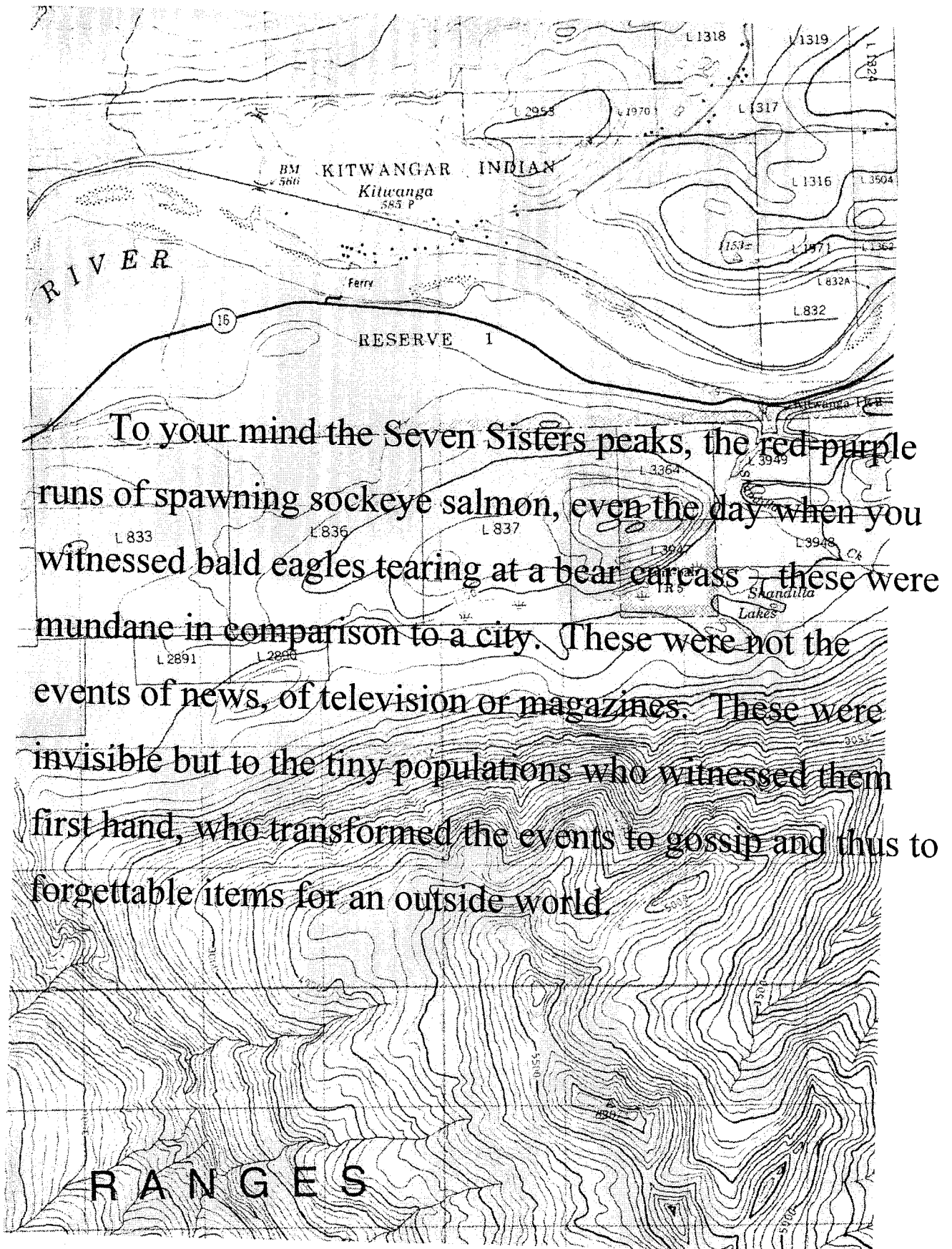
The windows of the church were smashed and gaping open, the entire structure leaning into the wind. It seemed like at any moment it would fall into the waters of the Nass River and be washed away forever. I bent down into the snow to look at the old building from the bottom. It was only from this angle I noticed the church's foundations.

At first, as breath steamed in front of my eyes, I thought I must be mistaken.

But as I bent lower, my hands freezing against the snow, I realized my first impression had been correct. The huge logs making up the foundation of this church were totem poles, hacked and sawed so the building could be fit on top of them.

Eyes of bears and killer whales could still be made out, rotting under an old white church in this tiny village at the edge of the lava.

KITWANGA 1979-1982



This is the site of your first heartbreak. Split easily as dry red cedar kindling, right down the middle. You can chart every road, driveway, front yard, kitchen back bedroom backdoor side yard the neighbour's yard, the exact location of the truck and trailer, marked in memory. There. Beneath the rim where teachers, police officers and clergy balanced themselves on high is the Reservation, Gitxsan schools, baseball fields, a stretch of totem poles against the Skeena River. There. Over the bridge and left from the gas station run by the Gitxsan Nation that sold ice-cream cones to summer tourists passing through enroute to Alaska. Or there, across the railway tracks that cracked open the road, split family from family when boxcars loaded with timber rush through. These are the memories, the sites, mapped on your mind. A child's memory, perfectly clear. To this day blood makes noise in your ears when you think of Kitwanga. To this day, your parent's divorce is a freight train splitting your heart in two, family from family.

At the age of seven you collected Christmas money, telling no one. Not in a tight palmed sweaty bundle or hollow plastic animal, oh no, not you, you had a system as complex as the river networks around you. All pennies and nickels in half envelopes, neatly taped. Dimes and quarters deserved an uncut envelope, corners reinforced; and bills - these were stored with care in small hand-made folders of construction paper, the colour corresponding to the bill denomination. All this in your ten-year-old bedroom, a trailer still on blocks, a community of fewer than one thousand people stretching around you and great as the horizon of teeth jagged mountains you only dreamt of climbing. For two years your money was carefully accounted for, filed neatly in a sequential way, and you limited yourself to one counting a month, though wherever you walked a careful tally followed closely behind.

Past the husk of what is whispered to be a Russian Orthodox Church, through railway tunnels and across rotting logging bridges, a cemetery overgrown with hemlock trees, cedar trees, food trees with scarred strips smooth and pulled from midsection to sky. You remember the edge of pavement and gravel, a malocclusion for your wandering feet, from inconsistent smoothness to raw stone and gravel, a shift that marked your walk home from school each day, a mark among many. Out the front doors, past skirmishes and fights, you know of one that started when 'fucking Nisga'a' was hurled from one Gitxsan boy to another, an insult ripping the scab from years of boundary and mountain range and carefully told riparian zones, an insult so localized that to tell this story would yield confusion even two watersheds away. Here, in this locale though, it hurts with the pain of young men's broken faces, a trip to the hospital at 3:27 on a Thursday afternoon.

Past this and across the railway tracks running parallel to the river, frozen almost entirely across during the months of November to March, sounds like animals in heat as ice flow freezes on ice flow, as snow compacts river compacting snow against exposed shore and lichen encrusted rock. Across the railway tracks and alongside the local Kitwanga mill and logging business, the operator a small town hockey hero gone businessman, up to twenty trucks on his lot, owner of his own beehive burner, his own kiln, these are the sites of your carefully charted path home. The sweet blue smell of exhaust on mud on sawdust on diesel on metal and engine. Memories etched on your heart, broken in two. You knew that family well, the dad, the son, the mother and daughter, the richest family in town, always a new truck, more guns and rods than most knew how to count. They lived in a house down from yours, how could they not? In this town, everyone was down the road from everyone else. But here existed something else;

they came over on Friday nights, formed a local band, the wife a drummer, your father the lead guitar, your mother a singer. You heard the soft rifts of blues from behind the blanket that doubled as your bedroom door, and the tally in your head felt as warm as if you held each bill beside your cheek, falling asleep.

The millyards led to the downtown, no more than a cluster of aluminium sided outbuildings; a Sears catalogue ordering counter, a truck stop diner, one other store you can't even remember the contents of, only it sold everything from duct-tape to margarine, from tins of ravioli to used transmissions. And a lumberyard, you remember the lumberyard from the high clean smell of newly kilned two-by-fours in the rain. These small gestures to a core, a downtown, these are your endless wanderings, your hideaways and well honed paths of walkie-talkie transmission, dreams of becoming an astronaut, even here outer space was alive and well.

The most amazing thing occurred over that Sears Catalogue ordering counter.

No one was there but you and the woman from down the road with the horses, she doubled on Wednesday and Friday afternoons as the Sears lady. But people talk about it, your family still laughs. You walked into the Sears building, all by yourself one month after your ninth birthday and on a Friday afternoon, just after school. You had that two years of Christmas money carefully itemized and filed in your coat pocket and the pages from the Christmas Wish Book Catalogue carefully cut out, with the two items you'd planned on circled in black marker. The woman from down the road with the horses helped you fill out the order form, added the tax and let you count out that money, and three weeks and four days later, she called you at home to let you know your digital watch and hot-rod car set had arrived. To your parents, it seemed like these items were

delivered to you from the sky – it was an equally plausible explanation to a nine year old boy, without his parent's knowledge, ordering items from the Sears Catalogue.

Thinking back on it, you remember the whole great world being contained in that catalogue. It represented bright cities and wondrous possibilities you saw reflected nowhere in your town of sawmill and gas station, one school and pitted baseball diamond. To your mind the Seven Sisters peaks, the red-purple runs of spawning sockeye salmon, even the day when you witnessed bald eagles tearing at a bear carcass – these were mundane in comparison to a city. These were not the events of news, of television or magazines. These were invisible but to the tiny populations who witnessed them first hand, who transformed the events to gossip and thus to forgettable items for an outside world.

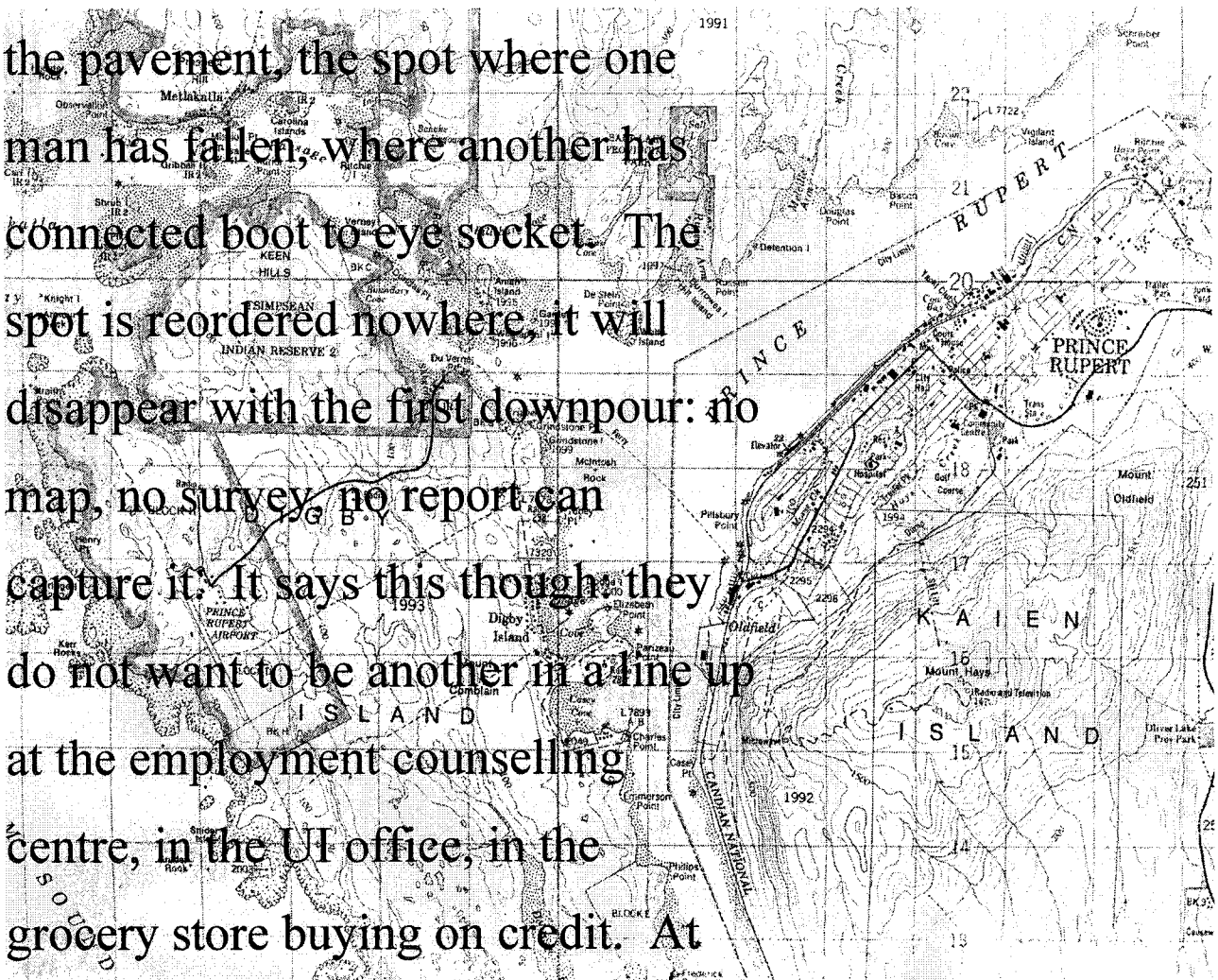
When you were nine, even then, you yearned for city. Just the idea of it. So you took it upon yourself to order in pieces of it.

The fragments of city did nothing to assuage the events conspiring to break your heart. Neither small town nor imaginary cities could do that. Where did it start? You have tried for years to identify the elements of the recipe, the components of the disaster. You have never been successful, but through the process of re-visitation the incidents have become endlessly possible, each occurrence a possible starting point. Everyone in Kitwanga has a woodpile, cords carefully stacked along the sidewall, against the garage. Every house has a woodstove, and men lift heavy awls to split great rounds of hemlock or aspen. You are not sure if it was the first time, but you remember rounding the house and seeing your neighbour there, your mother's best friend, hand on your father's forearm. Then fights occurred, terrible rages that shook the trailer with wails and hollers you knew

echoed across the valley, reverberating in the mountaintops. Your mother left, but she came back, and conversations stopped when you walked into school, all two hundred people knowing the exact happenings of your family. Was it before or after your mother left again that her best friend's husband kicked in your door? You are never quite sure, because at a point you are unable to articulate (again you are not quite sure when) your heart simply broke in two. The smashing of your front door was followed by gunshots – these you remember only because of the magnitude of them. Then your father hauled you all into the pickup truck. This is clear because the truck was sold shortly thereafter; having been bought only because it was what everyone in Kitwanga drove. You know you left shortly after, but things remain complicated in your mind. You are not sure where you went to, only that leaving Kitwanga was leaving your mother. It was the last town of a whole family, and of one thing you are clear. The town was the site of your first heartbreak, a break as clean and complete as lightning splitting a slivered cedar snag.

PRINCE RUPERT 1999

Desperation. You can smell it on the pavement, the spot where one man has fallen, where another has connected boot to eye socket. The spot is reordered nowhere, it will disappear with the first downpour: no map, no survey, no report can capture it. It says this though: they do not want to be another in a line up at the employment counselling centre, in the UI office, in the grocery store buying on credit. At the bank to mortgage their home.



Highway flanked by monsters. Split Head Mountain, phosphorescent snow shining, skin against cloud, steam rising like hot breath from cirques. A slippery river rising and falling, thick mud flats exposed, eelgrass wet and flattened. People must be terrified. It is the only explanation for Howitzer gun mounts found almost every fifty kilometres, for ridges of concrete barrier separating road from river, for the deep half cylindrical scars left from blasting caps detonated in rock faces.

Thin ribbon between Terrace and Prince Rupert, a stretch of road between forestry town and fishing town, between inland and coastal, between air full of Sitka spruce, hemlock and then the smell of salal, muskeg bogs and ocean. Fish, rotting nets, tar on docks, log barges.

Forgotten Prince Rupert, City of Rainbows. Oh yes, I know, all the locals say 'city of rain'. Did you hear about the family from South Africa? The one with children allergic to the sun, the family who came to Canada on visiting visas, knowing full well the visas would expire and they would face deportation. All this to live in Prince Rupert, city of rain, greyest community on the globe. If only Charles Hayes had not gone down with the Titanic, great plans had been afoot, the possibility of the Grand Trunk Railway running straight to Prince Rupert. Everyone dreams of what could have been. Prince Rupert, the Vancouver of the north, deepest port on the British Columbia coast. If only.

If only sawmills and pulp mills were not shutting down, Coho stocks depleted, Alaskan ferries turning away. This depression is carefully guarded. Wouldn't want just anyone to come and go from Prince Rupert, a synaptical coil on the western tip of Highway 16, poised on hills, steep cliffs and thin roads. The only way in by car, by rail, is cut with bridges, steel bangles on an arm reaching towards the coast. Travelling west

and there is first the Exstew River, then the Exchamsiks River and finally the Kasiks, all pouring green water into the fatty brown waters of the Skeena River.

Close your eyes for a moment and travel with me. Along Highway 16 and into Prince Rupert. In the spring. Here a cross, there a cross, old white paint, new plastic flowers, a symphony of tragedy, road accidents, trucking accidents, drownings, avalanche deaths. My mother's grade four class in 1995. A small desk empty, sickly loud, occupant killed with father driving home from a hockey game in Rupert. An evening chat, discussion about a paramedic friend. Did you hear? The highway's guy, the avalanche inspector. Killed the other day on the Rupert highway. Two crosses of many. Between the bridges, on the bridges, around the bridges on the way to Prince Rupert.

Keep your eyes closed; the picture will become more focused. Be patient. A bald eagle, two ten thirty fifty, all along sand bars, on the ripped root systems of trees washed towards the ocean. The oolichan runs, tightly knotted islands of seagulls bent over silver schools, just below the surface. Black bears on railway trestles, avalanche tracks filling in with slide alder. It is spring so a murmur of green has washed branch tips. You are getting closer to Prince Rupert, hugging the narrow sides of Highway 16, you are passing the tight left hand turnoff to Port Edward, history of canneries, skeletal Skeena Cellulose, crab traps piled high, almost consuming a horizon of green islands in misty fiords. Now you can taste the salty air, the highway edged with red muskeg bogs, tiny contorted pine trees, and there... it seems absurd, but you turn a corner and after two hours of nothing but river trees mountains, a city, a high-rise hotel (the Highlander), brightly painted houses from the early years of the twentieth century, a time when fishing was good, when

log booms were fat and thick on ocean waters, when cannery floors were slick with guts and the air seemed rich.

We have arrived. I have a small story to tell, follow my arm, and look in the direction I am pointing. See that hotel? The Neptune? Bright blue paint, cheerful dialogue with an imagined sunny sea. Readjust your vision and envision a bed, Sunday morning, white sheets, my bed, my sheets. I am applying calamine lotion to my partner's back, the sheets polka dotted with blood, at least two hundred bed bug bites swelling and bursting on his skin. He had gone to work on fishing boats, monitoring the Coho catch, coming in off the docks late at night and falling into bed. Of course the next night he moved – there, to the highest building in the city, twenty stories of concrete. The second night he awoke just after 2:00 am, sounds of smashing windows, police sirens and bullhorns. Look down from the hotel window, fourth story. Below men are brawling on the streets, the bars have just let out, fights rupture on the streets, fights over fishing license allocation, over catch allocation, deckhands, wives, Federal Fisheries, stealing fish, stealing netting ground, edging people out of prime water.

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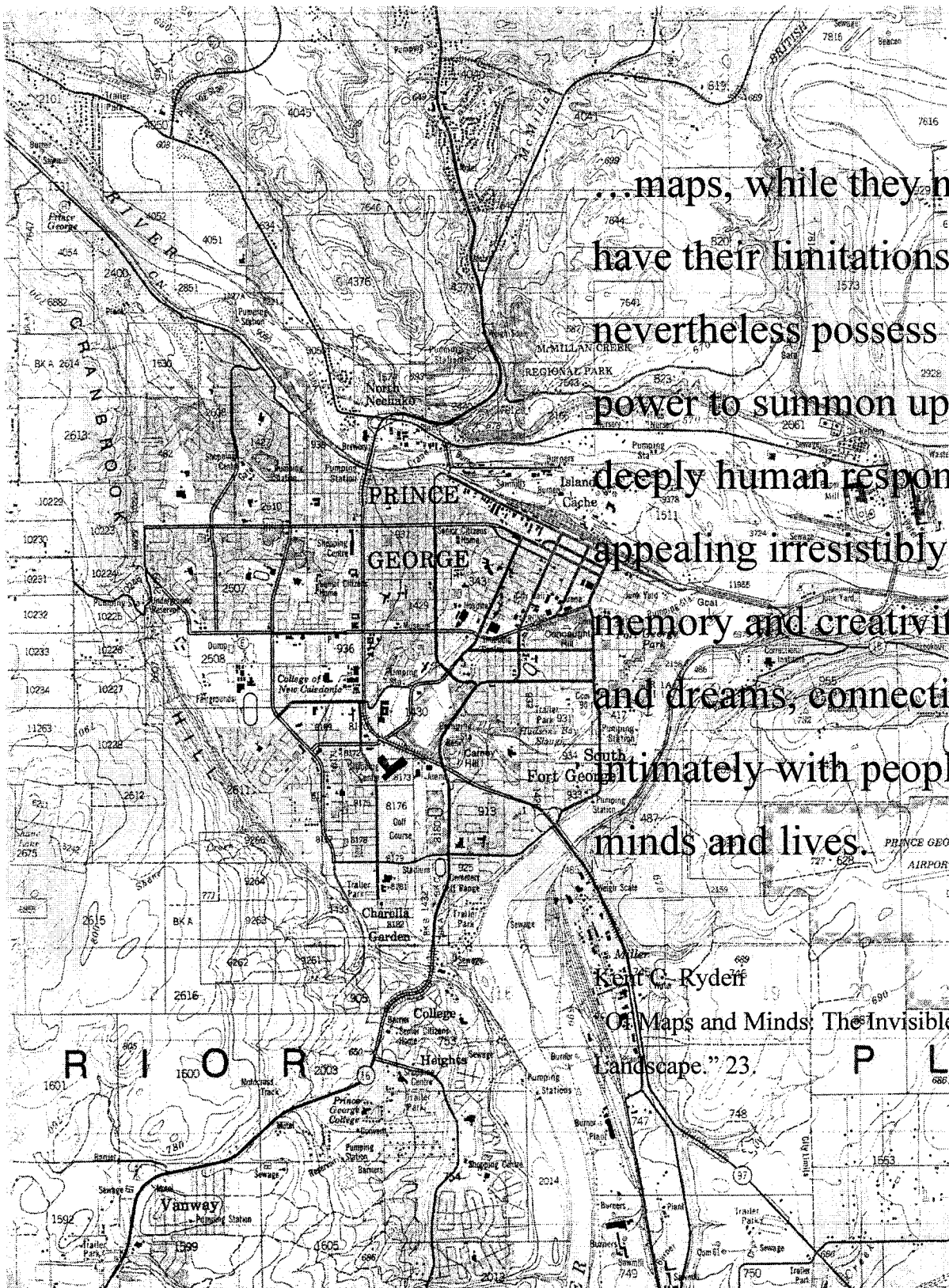
Follow my finger that way. A windowless building on the corner of Fourth Avenue, back alley against back wall, rusting green dumpsters behind. The employees

inside have mounted a camera on their wall, to deter injectors from using the site. Inside are the home support workers; the counsellors for anger management, family skills workers and the community nurse who gives away free condoms.

Their schedules are overbooked, their waiting room filled to capacity most days. They are paid to work with pain, employed to assist the broken hearted. Prince Rupert is overflowing, flooded. There is no shortage of work for social workers and counsellors. If only the city could attract more, things might get better, workloads might lessen, exodus might be stayed. But the rain deters professionals; the isolation is off-putting to young skilled workers.

People are frightened of a place like Prince Rupert, frightened to travel that highway of monsters, a landscape of gun mounts aimed at mountains.

CONCLUSION: PRINCE GEORGE AND BEYOND



...maps, while they may have their limitations, nevertheless possess the power to summon up a deeply human response, appealing irresistibly to memory and creativity and dreams, connecting intimately with people's minds and lives.

Kent C. Ryden

"Of Maps and Minds: The Invisible Landscape." 23.

In late August of 2000, I arrived in Prince George to begin a Masters degree. A Williams moving truck had followed my partner and me from Terrace, 650 kilometres west of Prince George, where we had lived and worked for the previous three years. Procuring the moving truck has been a feat in itself. Due to the great population decrease in Terrace, and other northwest resource communities during the late 1990's, moving trucks were difficult to find. They came into town at a much lesser rate than they left, and virtually as quickly as they arrived, families leaving the region claimed them. In the end, we were successful in hiring a truck only because the wife of our landlord worked for the Williams moving company, and the company manager agreed to save us space at the back of a container already booked by another family.

We had four hours to unload all our possessions in Prince George before the moving truck thundered on across the Alberta border and into Edmonton with the original family's belongings.

Our rented Prince George house is located on a small side street within walking distance of the city's downtown core. We are situated behind the Sikh Temple, and at night from our kitchen window we can see the great flagpole at the temple's front light up and shine its methodical blue flashes. Our house was built in the mid-1950s, and it is one of many identical bungalows found the length of our street. We are one of the few houses in front of which is not parked a pickup truck. We are located within four minutes walking distance of a shopping plaza in which one of the city's eight main grocery stores is located. The northern end of our street, as with many other north-south running streets near Prince George's downtown, ends in an embankment leading down first to the railway tracks and then to the Nechako River. Throughout the day, and often during the

night, great trains of one hundred cars or more, loaded with lumber or pulping chips, rumble along the tracks heading west towards the coast from the city's five mills. These same mills cause one of Prince George's most notable features, a deep sweet rotting smell of pulp effluent that engulfs the city several times a month.

To this city, and its new university, I came to begin a Master's degree. When I began the project of writing a thesis, I had in mind several things. I wanted to combine the elements of Geography concerned with culture, landscape, and place with Creative writing and personal narratives. I was curious to know if creatively produced knowledge could transmit and convey geographic concepts (spatially grounded ideas) with the same relevance and strength of more traditional modes of geographic representation, the map, for instance. In addition, I was eager to contribute to a still small (but growing) body of writing about rural remote communities in Northwestern British Columbia. Finally, while I knew the discipline of Geography was open to, and supportive of, viewing works of art and literature as sources of geographic information, I was disappointed with the lack of creative works being published *as* works of geography, or by geographers. Search as I might, journals of Geography yielded virtually no works of literature or art.

I have learned a great many things in the process of researching the original questions motivating my thesis. An emerging discourse on interdisciplinarity has opened possibilities of merging, conflating or paralleling disciplines with each other. These processes are not without resistance, and the result is often not simply two unaltered single disciplinary concepts situated in parallel to each other. Rather, the outcome of interdisciplinary work can be something new and divergent from the disciplines begun with. Creating in an interdisciplinary context is not easy, and is oftentimes

uncomfortable. As Donna Haraway writes, “[a]rticulation is not a simple matter...The surfaces of this kind of world are not frictionless curved planes. Unlike things can be joined – and like things can be broken apart – and visa versa” (Monsters 324). I had known for a long time that the communities I grew up in were far from frictionless curved planes; they were rough places on edges and borders, and my project was an attempt to communicate these surfaces of rural northwestern communities. The essays are perhaps ‘surficially’ concerned with the bleak existence in these hinterland communities. My hope, though, was to depict that while on the one hand these communities contain barrenness and violence, there nonetheless remains by residents a deep commitment to place and sense of ‘here’. This I think speaks to a sense of resilience and adaptability found in both the physical and cultural landscapes of remote northern communities. Through the process of producing creative geographic non-fiction about these communities, I attempted to bring initially unlike (disciplines) together in order to fully represent the places of my upbringing.

The more I investigated Geography and Creative writing, though, the more overlap and dialogue between the two disciplines I found. This held true not only for literary arts, but also for visual arts. In texts like *The Desert Is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women’s Writing and Art*, place, region and geography are read and understood through the creative interpretations about them. Poet and author Gloria Anzaldua has been understood by geographer Edward Soja as a significant contributor to discussions occurring in the discipline of Geography, particularly with regard to what Soja calls “the overlapping spheres of spatial feminist and postcolonial critiques....[and] the spatial theor[izing] of the borderlands and *mestizaje*” (127-129). Reading creative

renderings of place and landscape, like those of Anzaldua's in *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, provided me inspiration to write creatively about my communities, hoping these narratives might also be understood as conveying information of worth to the discipline of Geography. Finally, I discovered within the discourse of Geography, a prevalent and established demand that the discipline not only avail itself of creative knowledge, but also embrace its production. Some geographers have taken up this challenge, most notably to my mind geographers like S. Quoniam and W.J. Watson, whose painting and poetry have appeared in established journals of geography, published as Geography papers, not contributions from another field. Geographers like Cole Harris, who has advocated a dismantling of strict disciplinary divisions, and geographers like Delores Hayden who have advocated for the roles of artists in geographic discourse, particularly with regards to regeneration of urban landscapes. Hayden writes, in her essay "Story Telling with the Shapes of Time," that "[a]rtists can work with missing pieces, or erasure of important aspects of history, so as to re-establish missing parts in a story, from the scale of a coast line...to the presence of women...to the destruction of a barrio" (331-334). In this way, my narratives are an attempt to work with missing pieces, the gaps of stories about rural Northwestern British Columbia.

The other areas from which this project draws are literary studies and creative writing, primarily from the perspective of reviewing Canadian literature concerned with rural landscapes. Through an investigation into works of creative literature, novels, novellas and personal essays, I was able to identify themes of a geographic nature, including land use and settlement patterns, boom and bust cycles in resource dependent communities, and social interaction with the land. It was also an instructor of Literature

and a creative writer who introduced me to van Herk's wonderfully interdisciplinary term of 'geografictione', a term perfectly suited to the narratives I was engaged in producing.

The production of creatively informed geographic knowledge, through the creation of personal narrative about the places and landscapes of Northwestern British Columbia, comprised the core of this project. The narratives represent not only an insertion of myself on a landscape I have lived and worked in for more than twenty years; the narratives also represent a merging of perspectives and disciplinary views about community. I have written essays about events uncaptured in traditional scholarly inquiries into towns. While the events are contained within place and region, my goal was for them to convey more than conventional quantitative or even qualitative information. My objective was to create something new through these narratives, to document both memory and lived experience in conjunction with something less tangible altogether, the imaginary. I began with concepts from the disciplines of Geography and Literary Studies, and I continued on with tools from the discipline of Creative writing. The end result is, I hope, interdisciplinary in nature and in part a testament to the complexities of the communities along Highway 16 in Northwest British Columbia.

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