

**Robin Mathews And The Canadian Dialectic:
Forms Of Nationalist Thought In Canada**

Robert Williams

B.A., University of Northern British Columbia, 2005

Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of

The Requirements For The Degree Of

Master Of Arts

in

Interdisciplinary Studies

The University of Northern British Columbia

January 2009

©Robert Williams, 2009



Library and
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

ISBN: 978-0-494-48736-5

Our file Notre référence

ISBN: 978-0-494-48736-5

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Table of Contents.....	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Chapter 1 – The Canadian Dialectic and Nationalist Theoretical Discourse	1
Chapter 2 – Robin Mathews and Margaret Atwood: The Nationalist Debate.....	30
Chapter 3 – Robin Mathews, Postmodernism and Postmodern Nationalism.....	49
Chapter 4 – Some Concluding Remarks.....	69
Works Cited	75

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks go out to my thesis committee – Linda MacKinley-Hay, Kristen Guest and Don Munton – for their many comments and suggestions on this thesis project.

Special thanks also go to Robert Budde, my thesis supervisor, for his undying enthusiasm for the project and for his detailed and fair criticisms of the draft thesis. Not many people would have tackled such a controversial topic and maintained a positive and supportive attitude.

Thank you also to Professor Ron Dart of the University of the Fraser Valley. If it was not for his Political Science 320 course, I probably would never have come across Robin Mathews' various works.

This page would not be complete without a thank you to Robin Mathews himself who, despite a very busy schedule, was kind enough to engage in lengthy correspondence about various issues discussed in the thesis and provide some of the works cited.

Lastly, a very special thank-you to Vanessa for providing great moral and spiritual support during extremely challenging times. *La Lotta Continua!*

Abstract

Robin Mathews' vision of a Canadian dialectic is a valuable practical concept because it works within a moral framework, inviting discussion at the same time as it creates a specific positive Canadian nationalism. This Canadian dialectic does not presuppose a single, unifying view of "Canadian identity," nor does it produce claims to finality. In espousing a view that results in a dialogue between two competing visions, the dialectic fleshes out historic debates which increase their cultural and historical significance and promotes difference. What Mathews argues is that what is important to Canada and Canadian identity is the fact of an ongoing dialectic that is a valid counterpoint to traditionally dominant views of Canadian literature and culture.

CHAPTER I: The Canadian Dialectic and Nationalist Theoretical Discourse

Robin Mathews' work, when viewed within the broad "dialectical" framework within which it is written, acts as a philosophical "corrective" towards individualism (as expressed by Warren Tallman), survivalism (as expressed by Margaret Atwood) and postmodern ahistoricism (as illustrated by Linda Hutcheon and her key work on postmodernism in Canada, *The Canadian Postmodern*). Because Robin Mathews works explicitly within an ideology that could rightly be called "communitarian," his reading of a "Canadian dialectic" as it exists within Canadian history and identity demands and foregrounds questions of individual existence in relation to the community. Survivalism, while a key term in the 1970s and 1980s when defining a Canadian identity, presents a static and negative definition of what it means to be "Canadian." Working from within the Canadian dialectic, Robin Mathews – through a combination of nationalism and advocacy of "struggle literature" – advanced a corrective in the form of a more positive realization of Canadian identity; in essence, balancing Atwood's negative connotations while at the same time accepting it as a part of the Canadian psyche. In a very real sense, the Canadian dialectic acts as a corrective to postmodern ahistoricism in that it demands anchors – both historical and social – to a specific place and its ideas.

What follows is a discussion about the literary and cultural criticism of Canadian critic Robin Mathews. Mathews is often considered a maverick, but when someone like Russell Brown suggests that Mathews "needs to be reread and freed from his own excesses" ("Canadian Literature"), he is clearly pointing towards something of value in Robin Mathews' theoretical work. This thesis project will focus primarily upon what Mathews has called the "Canadian dialectic" and how it relates to a more general

historical sense of dialectic; that is to say, while the Canadian dialectic is not necessarily unique or distinct it still plays an integral part with respect to Canadian identity within a Canadian context. While Robin Mathews played a significant role in the social movement sphere with his involvement in the “Canadianization Movement,” this aspect of his career exceeds the scope of the current project. This thesis will not focus on Mathews the “social movement entrepreneur” (Cormier 20), nor on his short fiction or poetry. Instead, what will be argued – in relation to Margaret Atwood and postmodernisms – is that the Canadian dialectic is valuable as a theoretical concept because it points towards a positive realization of Canadian literature and nationalism while at the same time making no claims towards a concrete definition of “Canadian identity.” Robin Mathews states the importance of this last point bluntly: “Living in a continuum characterized by contradictions, by opposites in open tension, Canadians may be excused for being unable or unwilling to nail down their identity in simple, summary form” (*Canadian Intellectual Tradition* 45). Thus, Robin Mathews realizes the complex and contradictory social history of Canada, its relation to imperial powers, and the very important fact that “Canadian identity” is itself a complex set of forces – a dialectic – that can help unpack such an identity.

Recognizing the complex history of Canada, the model I chose for my examination of Mathews is adopted from Robin Mathews’ own explanation of “dialectic” he provides in *Canadian Identity*. In this particular work, he uses the first chapter to broadly define the “Canadian dialectic.” From there, the following chapters examine his concept through *narrative*: “The Conservative Vision,” “The Liberal Vision,” “The Left Vision of Canada.” In these chapters of Mathews’ analysis, the term “dialectic” is rarely

used, but the point becomes clear: Canada, as Mathews sees it, has been defined through tensions between forces – this is what his analysis shows. Indeed, this thesis follows the same model used by Mathews in his 1988 publication. It examines those various “tensions” as they are seen in the dialogue Robin Mathews had with Margaret Atwood in the mid 1970s and, later, in Mathews’ criticisms about Postmodernism. The overall effect of this method is not to show Robin Mathews as a mere critic of Margaret Atwood or postmodernism; rather, it is to demonstrate the “Canadian dialectic” *in process*.

Robin Mathews is not one to separate culture from politics. His position in this area has remained consistent from the publication of his book of poetry *This Time, This Place* (1965)¹ to the current day. Add to this the fact that Robin Mathews was a part of the “Waffle” group in the NDP, and a part of the “Canadianization Movement” of the 1960s and 1970s – a part of formal politics – and his position with respect to the absolute necessity of culture and politics as intertwined, as one, should come as no surprise. For that matter, Mathews’ role in the “Canadianization Movement” can – and needs – to be seen in the context of politics and literature in Canada because they provide the context for his position on the politico-cultural issue.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, Mathews – alongside James Steele – played a key and defining role in the Canadianization Movement, which had as its chief goal the hiring of qualified Canadians within the Canadian university system. Both men remained strong and firm in this cause despite facing a lot of criticism from the University administrators and faculty at Carleton University (where the movement essentially began) and abroad from public officials and the news media in Canada (Frumhartz 52; Macpherson 109-

¹ Political Scientist Ron Dart has suggested this book is highly significant because it “signals the dawn, in Canada, of Mathews as a distinct political poet” (*Crown Prince* 31).

10).² To support their claims that Canadians had been discriminated against in their own institutions, Mathews and Steele provided various statistical figures, which demonstrated that the majority of recent hirings were indeed going to non-Canadians (*Universities* 20).³ After years of hard work from within the “public movement community” and assistance from the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association and some political officials (most notably Lloyd Axworthy), the movement “had succeeded” (Cormier 190).⁴ Thus, the Canadianization Movement, and other political battles fought by Mathews, can be said to form “the ‘base’ of Mathews’ ‘vulgar Marxist’ insistence on treating the nationality of interpreters as an equivalent to their class position” (Dean 157).

Literary critic E. D. Blodgett fully recognizes the significance of this position: “Mathews has one theme. . . . a clear perception of a national culture depends upon how the bases of economic power are controlled” (“54 40” 262). For Mathews, then, one cannot even begin to understand Canada or Canadian literature in the absence of a political position because, as he understands Canadian literature and its production, it mirrors life – has a didactic purpose. It is for this reason, when speaking specifically about the novel and its relation to economics and culture, Mathews is able to write that “the hero of the novel is passionately aware that the choices about economics are choices about culture and social values” (*Canadian Literature* 6). The point is significant because it alludes to the very real political condition under which literary and cultural texts are

² For a controversial article documenting some of the hardships Mathews and Steele endured during their Canadianization efforts see “Izzy Asper, Barbara Frum, Warren Davis and the Robot Right” by Robin Mathews, written on October 15, 2003 for *Vive le Canada*: <http://www.vivelecanada.ca/article.php/20031015220022959>

³ Based on figures obtained from immigration statistics and other University sources, for instance, Mathews and Steele showed that upwards of up to 72% of jobs had gone to “foreign” professors (*Universities* 20).

⁴ For a different view, see Robin Mathews’ article “Media, Colonial-Mindedness, and the Culture of Canada (Part Three: Higher Education)” for *Vive le Canada*: <http://www.vivelecanada.ca/article.php/200502281235444>

produced. The author(s) writing a text write out of a given environment and a given political culture. Therefore, in any text, according to Mathews, “[w]e can know something of those experiences [“being born, loving, suffering, seeking a home, desiring community”] in other societies by reading their literatures” (*Canadian Literature* 9). Here, Mathews is stating very clearly that the production of texts (and poetics) in Canada has been “highly political and ideological” (149). Stating such a point so directly forces one to consider such production in terms of political and cultural power, not as mere aesthetic. Furthermore, in raising the issue in his typically direct way, Mathews eliminates the conventional avenues of debate. The technique or “vituperation” used by Mathews here is designed to relate culture and politics to “real” political issues, incapacitating any form of argument of the text as autonomous and as having no social meaning. But if the point has been missed, Mathews – never mincing words – offers clarification: “we are invited to believe that poetic [and other literary] styles, subjects, theories arise from the uninfluenced poet [or writer] seeking in the wide world for the models and ideas which suit him or her best in the fulfillment of the art. Poetry [and literature] – in that view – is quite separate from economics, power, and the political lives of people. . . . But such is not the reality. Nor has it been” (*Canadian Literature* 149).

Having stated all of that, it should come as no surprise that Robin Mathews differs in terms of ideology from former UBC English Professor Warren Tallman who, in contrast to Mathews, espouses a very liberal and individualizing view of politics as being something personal, especially as it relates to political poetry in Canada. For example, in his book *In the Midst* Tallman makes a reference to poet Charles Olson and his idea of the “polis.” He then goes on to say that the word “polis,” which is the Greek word that

also gives one and all “city” and “politics,” is also “individuals, is I” (13). For Tallman, this individual form of the “polis” is much more significant than the politics of parties, governments, and prime ministers, which Mathews argues is the more significant aspect of “politics” to discuss because of the traditional roles these institutions have played in Canadian society. In fact, Tallman declares government and its formal institutions to be redundant when he states that these organizations and the groups of people that run them – MPs, backbenchers, civil servants, and the Prime Minister – have become nothing more “than managers in the huge hospital of the world as the atomic virus continues to spread” (13), advocating a very individualist position. By declaring formal government to be mere “managers” of life and country, Tallman delegitimizes the political and economic base of cultural production and therefore delegitimizes any sort of “communal” reading of texts.

Similarly, when writing about Victor Coleman of Coach House Press, Tallman calls him a “political poet” because he exemplifies Tallman’s liberal individualist definition of politics. Victor Coleman writes and talks extensively about “psychic time” as a tool to be used when one reads and presents poetry because it is far more effective than standard “clock time.” When one emphasizes psychic time over clock time, the poet is able to drum an image in, and drum it in “until it breaks through resistance and gets into the psyche of the listener” (Tallman 55). This effect is caused exactly because psychic time is very different than clock time. For example, if an individual happened to choke on a piece of bread, the “psychic time” would probably feel like hours and hours; however, real “clock time” may actually just be a few seconds. With his “drumming” tool – psychic time – Coleman is then able to write about a number of city, social, and sexual

disturbances – over and over again, drumming the images into the readers’ minds. As a result, one enters “a time limbo in which there is no time, only the disturbances he [Coleman] is projecting” (Tallman 56). According to Warren Tallman, this form of writing and presentation is a form of “political action” (56). Through such “political action,” Tallman notes that Coleman is able to transverse clock time and even psychic time to make real contact with the individuals of the community in the realm of the abstract. And it is at this point where Tallman’s liberal individualist side comes visibly into play and Coleman’s “psychic time” technique gets revealed for the U. S.-inspired model that it is because, as Tallman writes, Coleman becomes a “citizen of a human community rather than of some programatic [sic] political community in which Mao, Trudeau, Nixon, Brezhnev are all simply business men” (56). Indeed, the word association used by Tallman readily emphasizes the differences – in dialectical terms – between himself and Robin Mathews. For Tallman, the only meaningful “community” is an abstraction, an idealized community of individualized perception outside of reality. Anything else is apparently communist and “evil” (“community in which Mao, Trudeau, Nixon, Brezhnev . . .”). Real community located in geographical space, which Mathews would readily acknowledge as being the more important, is euphemistically treated.

What becomes clear here is Robin Mathews is reflecting a very communitarian perspective of the Canadian dialectic while Warren Tallman is reflecting an individualist side of the Canadian dialectic – those terms of reference within which both authors work. To further the point, this distinction and its underlying importance is found quite explicitly in the way the two authors define, in one way or another, “political” poetry. For Tallman, the personal and individualistic becomes political: “The only political program

worth any attention whatsoever is that which concerns individual disturbance. Your share in the state is YOU” (57). In contrast, Mathews suggests that political poetry is “poetry that involves class, capitalism, and – latterly – their implications for imperialism as it affects Canada” (*Socialism* 5), placing him directly in the formal and collective political sphere. For Mathews, class as a concept plays the role of primary indicator or sign.

Unlike the liberalized poetry approved by Warren Tallman (and others), which deals with personalist issues (locating primary value and meaningful reality in the individual), Mathews believes that the issue of class in political poetry “is *really* political” in that it points towards moral issues such as “the unequal distribution of wealth” in the community (*Treason* 81). Indeed, the point offered here by Robin Mathews is not to be taken lightly for it emphasizes, again and again, an obvious fact that is often missed: that “concentration on mere ‘individual difference’ won’t do” when it comes to socio-political analysis in poetry or any other form of literary text (*Treason* 81).

What the differences between Robin Mathews and Warren Tallman demonstrate, beyond their differing worldviews, is the complexity of Mathews’ thought. At a more practical level, the exchange also alludes to why Mathews has faded into obscurity in literary and cultural Canada: A) he is communitarian; B) he is critical of the American empire; and C) he is a nationalist. All three of these ideas and terms relate and give depth to his central, controlling idea: what he has called the “Canadian dialectic.” While formulations A, B and C are intertwined with Mathews’ argument and help to give it meaning, it is perhaps necessary to articulate the term enough so as to provide a historical overview of the term “dialectic” before showing how Mathews makes it his own.

In historic and philosophic terms, the concept of “dialectic” has its roots in

ancient Greece, especially in the Socratic method of questioning whereby one attempts to find “truth” through dialogue and debate. While Plato never used the word “dialectic” in any of his surviving dialogues, the basic principle was indeed there. From a historic perspective, however, Hegel is generally acknowledged to be the first major philosopher to develop the term, giving it (abstract) meaning. For Hegel, the dialectic – although he very rarely used the term himself – was used as an abstract framework to establish a connection between those events that make up an individual’s historical experience. On a grander scale, the dialectic was used by Hegel to describe the movement of human history towards a transcendental absolute “Idea.” While having some connection to the Socratic Method, the Hegelian dialectic sought, through the movement of forces and ideas, to combine the contradictions into a synthesis, existing within one another, without contradiction. In order to do this in an abstract manner, both sides of the dialectic are to be held as “true.” In using the one side of dialectic, the “other” side of dialectic is used as well (since both are held to be true), creating the synthesis in which all contradiction is apparently removed, forming the unified idea. In Hegel’s words, this process

implies a gradation – a series of increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of Freedom, which result from its Idea. The logical, and . . . the dialectical nature of the Idea in general, *viz.* that it is self-determined – that it assumes successive forms which it successively transcends; and by this very process of transcending its earlier stages, gains . . . a richer and more concrete shape. (479-80)

Thus, the Hegelian dialectic “actualizes itself by alienating itself, and restores its self-unity by recognizing this alienation as nothing other than its own free expression”

(Bottomore 122). In philosophical history, the Hegelian dialectic was followed most recently by Karl Marx and his “dialectical materialism.” Although he agreed with Hegel that world history can be seen through dialectic process, Marx disagreed with Hegel about the idealist nature of the dialectic. Whereas Hegel sought to identify “truth” through various elements of human experience leading to the Absolute Idea, Marx viewed the dialectical process as a process concerned with class struggle and social relations. According to Marx, his dialectic

is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly the opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of ‘the Idea’, is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought. (102)

Thus, for Marx, the material world and the concrete idea of contradiction lie at the heart of his dialectical philosophy, influencing generations of critics, including Robin Mathews.

In *Canadian Identity*, Mathews begins by stating a broad and general definition of the dialectical process, pointing out that “a dialectical condition means the constant movement of ideas and forces” (17-18). Later on in the same text, he defines his terms of reference in more detail, giving the reader a sense of what he means by a Canadian dialectical process when he further states: “The Canadian identity is blessed and cursed with the character of dialectic, and it is fated to work out its destiny as a moving hand

that writes the sentence of our being, a sentence that is never finished and one that will be filled with surprisingly unexpected clauses and interjections” (122). In critical terms, the statement is significant because it highlights the important fact that the use of dialectic, when applied to Canada, brings to light important aspects of the Canadian identity that would otherwise go unnoticed by most postmodern criticism. For example, in preserving at least some aspects of both sides of the Canadian dialectic, Mathews acknowledges in the above statement that certain kinds of failure can be *morally* important. This particular aspect of Mathews’ thought can be seen quite clearly in relation to his criticisms of Margaret Atwood discussed in more detail later (*Canadian Literature* 128).

An important aspect made apparent in Mathews’ definition of dialectic in Canada is the fact that, as a leftist thinker, he sees the world in largely social power terms. For Mathews, Canadian history has always been within the arms of Empire. Mathews writes: “Canada has a three-part history of colonialism, first as a French colony then as a British colony, and now as an economic colony of the U.S.A.” (*Canadian Literature* 1). Indeed, the preceding quotation is significant because from a very early stage, it begins establishing the idea of Canadian history as a history of colliding forces in the form of the various Empires that Canada has, at one time or another, endured. In very general terms, when the French Empire was defeated in 1760, the British Empire then took over what was then British North America as the shapers of that culture and, by extension, literature; however, after World War II, British power in the world began to wane (a point beautifully highlighted in Hugh MacLennan’s *Barometer Rising*), and the United States began “operating a *pax americana* and acting in its own interest under a rhetoric of altruism: ‘working for the defence of the Free World’” (*Intellectual* 97). As the United

States began replacing Britain as the imperial power (according to Mathews), the very terms of dialectic began shifting. For example, it was just fifteen years after the Second World War that American literary models and types began to heavily “influence” Canadian poetics and fiction – as is evidenced by the Warren Tallman and Robin Mathews differences above where Tallman clearly favoured American poetics in the Black Mountain group and Mathews favoured earlier Canadian writers who attempted to work within Canadian space. With that, Robin Mathews – following dialectic and nationalism – does believe in an identifiable Canadian literature that expresses itself clearly in the face of American cultural expansion.

According to Robin Mathews, this form of distinctive Canadian literature exists within the “dialectical condition” of “the constant movement of ideas and forces” (*Canadian Identity* 17-18). The implication here, of course, is that the literature found within this condition is always changing, always moving – never static, but always constant. What is of value in this statement is in the phrase “constant movement of ideas,” for in this phrase, it is implied that while the two sides of the Canadian dialectic are jostling for position, no one side permanently overtakes the other. The dialogue between the two sides continues, creating a synthesis between the two (which would also bring Mathews’ definition of “dialectic” somewhat in line with the classical definition of that term alluded to above). Therefore, it can then be argued that the Mathews-defined Canadian dialectic, through synthesis, suggests that when conflicts of literature, identity, influence, community, and philosophy are articulated in Canada and in a Canadian context, they can be *clearly* distinguished from their American and British counterparts. In particular, the synthesis of dialectic can be said to create something new out of

something old or transplanted. Put in abstract terms, a novel like Hugh MacLennan's *Barometer Rising*, while borrowing from the English literary tradition, creates something new out of it – through the death of Geoff Wain (a representative of Britain), a “new” Canada is born by novel's end. Because of the very functional nature of Mathews' synthesis of dialectic, *Barometer Rising* creates two “sets” of texts. Both “sets” remain in tension with one another, collide, and create a new text out of that collision. In other words, the English literary models used by MacLennan are not necessarily transformed nor are they destroyed by the forces of the Canadian dialectic; rather, one reading of the text collides with the other – forming one – creating a new image out of something old – something distinctly “Canadian,” as it were.

At the same time as “the constant movement of ideas” creates a space within which Canadian writers can express themselves, the Canadian dialectic also illustrates, by way of synthesis, that “there is a Canadian place which is more or less constant . . . WITHIN THE PERSONS OF CANADIANS” (9 April 08, Mathews e-mail). Indeed, the preceding statement by Robin Mathews suggests two separate items: First, Mathews' statement acknowledges the fact that while his theoretical framework is one based upon neo-Marxist theory – a theory largely conservative and patriarchal – he has adopted and modified it to fit what might loosely be termed the “Canadian experience.” Second, the dialectic as interpreted both embraces communitarian and individualist thought in an *equal* philosophic manner as is evidenced by Mathews' statement that the “constant” Canadian place is to be found “WITHIN THE PERSONS OF CANADIANS.”

Given the implications of what has been stated above as it relates to the Robin Mathews' interpretation of dialectic and the fact that he sees much of the world in terms

of power relations, his position within the Canadian dialectic would have him – embracing the synthesis – reject both the British and U. S. interpretations of culture in Canada. For Mathews, what concerns him is *This Time, This Place* (to play off of his 1965 book of poetry). It is in this way, when one speaks of Mathews being a “corrective,” that he can be seen as such in a way that does not present him as attacking other literary critics like Margaret Atwood; rather, he is simply pointing out the other side of the Canadian dialectic – pointing towards areas of theory and examination that would otherwise be missed. Again, here is where the real value of a Mathewsian definition of “dialectic” becomes clear: he *explicitly* grants that there is a Canadian dialectic – and that it exists within history, identity, letters; that there is debate, not prematurely closing a given discussion. Inherent in such a position is a firm belief in a sense of community (this time, *this place*) – an important concept as it relates to Mathews’ definition of the Canadian dialectic.

The very belief in the term “communitarianism” sets Mathews at odds with the general academic population. It does so because on the one hand, the term is often dismissed as some unattainable, asymptotic ideal; on the other hand, it is often dismissed because the “communitarian versus individualism” debate is thought of as a subject of debate in the 1980s. As a result, communitarianism as a term is often given less serious treatment than other political concepts like “multiculturalism” or “corporatism.” A direct result of this lack of serious treatment has resulted in communitarianism receiving various, usually negative, definitions. It has also resulted in important aspects of communitarian theory being forgotten in favour of far more “progressive” and liberalized theories (i.e.: something akin to Charles Taylor’s “The Politics of Recognition” which

combines liberal discourse with communitarian theory, creating a sort of “pluralistic” liberalism).

When Robin Mathews speaks of the community in all of his work, he is clearly not advocating an oppressive or imperialistic version of community or communitarianism that would efface difference and diversity; rather, his theory is moral-philosophical with a nationalistic bent, indicating that his definition of “community” is one based on values that people share in common. In short, it is not a communitarianism that sees certain traits as constitutive of “community.” Such incarnations of the term are merely instrumental. While a group (ethnic or cultural) may work with one another in order to achieve a certain end, that does not necessarily make them a community in the moral sense as Mathews would have it. For it is common knowledge in communitarian theory that in order for there to be any sort of community at all, there must be some sort of uniting idea or concept, which could range from the general in the form of a shared history, language, or culture to the specific in the form of place, race or values. Indeed, Mathews certainly recognizes this, for he emphasizes throughout his texts that Canadians share a variety of things, ranging from a shared history, inherent values, and intellectual traditions. In *The Canadian Intellectual Tradition* Mathews makes the point clearly: “there are and have always been Canadians (or people in the place that came to be called Canada) who believed in and wanted to share a society based upon concepts of human equality and human kinship with nature in forms of community that required compassionate relations and a strong sense of interdependence” (223). The quotation from Mathews is significant because it sets him and his definition of communitarianism apart from most others who claim to be communitarian, yet who fail to recognize the *moral* implications inherent in

the concept itself. At another level, too, Robin Mathews is re-affirming his belief in the existence of Canadian dialectic and the absolute importance in shared traditions as it relates to a Canadian concept of community.

In reading the above, the astute critic might be quick to point out that seeing the world in dialectical terms is a contradiction to the very concept of community via shared “concepts of human equality and human kinship with nature” (223). Yet, Mathews sees things in quite the opposite way. For example, when speaking about the title of his text, *The Canadian Intellectual Tradition: A Modern People and Its Community*, Robin Mathews writes: “That title suggests that nations have intellectual traditions that are both visible and significant” (xi), emphasizing a broad sense of community in Canada. Furthermore, in discussing the text’s subtitle, Robin Mathews further states: “Since the title says, moreover, ‘a modern people and its community,’ rather than ‘a modern people and their community,’ it implies that, over time, people gathered into nations usually develop some ways of being and seeing in common” (xi). In other words, Canada – as community – has shared intellectual traditions, which by the very fact of their existence in history, implies a set of shared moments of conflict and, indeed, tensions amongst a people. This fact does not suggest divergence nor does it suggest a contradiction in Mathews’ communal philosophy, for an argument coming from both sides of dialectic can still constitute a shared experience.⁵

Yet even here, Robin Mathews seems to realize that such a notion of “community” in and of itself does not necessarily lead to a positive realization of community; that is to say, he is well aware of the fact that even under such ideal

⁵ While this does appear to be somewhat of a contradiction, Mathews does note and emphasize in a number of areas that the experiences of, say, himself and those of a new immigrant or Aboriginal peoples are not the same (*Treason* 83; *Canadian Literature* 140).

conditions, there is still the possibility that the community in question – here the Canadian community – could, in theory, fragment into a series of Epicurean atoms. For this reason, Mathews takes the term a bit farther, placing himself squarely within the Canadian “socialist tradition” (McDonald 214), by requiring that those involved in the community be “*mutually concerned*” with one another (217). Indeed, this final point is one he emphasizes a number of times throughout his various critical texts. In *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution*, for instance, Mathews ends that text by emphasizing that he writes primarily because he is “concerned” about “Canadian survival” (228). This same emphasis on mutual concern is also alluded to in Mathews’ 1988 publication *Canadian Identity* (55). Similarly, in his later *Treason of the Intellectuals*, Mathews notes that his notion of dialectic in Canada and community relies substantially upon the idea of mutual concern: “of which a *concern for the people* and quality of life in Canada may, indeed, be a portion” (115, emphasis added). In stressing the fact that in order to be a community in a moral (and therefore philosophical) sense, Mathews sets himself apart from various other “communitarian” theorists.

Political scientist Ronald Beiner defines communitarianism as being an ideology that “emphasizes the cultural or ethnic group, solidarity among those sharing a history or tradition, the capacity of the group to confer identity upon those otherwise left ‘atomized’ by the deracinating tendencies of a liberal society” (30). G. B. Madison defines “community” stating that “What above all makes a community is the communication that exists among its members” (11). The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor similarly defines a sense of communitarianism as simply being a set of individuals “bound to their fellow citizens in common projects and allegiances” (*Malaise* 112-13). Canadian “Red

Tory” philosopher George Grant, often considered on the “left” side of the political spectrum (Lipset 55; Corse 2; Miller 85-87; Horowitz 77), defines community in the following way:

The end which any society should be working for is the elimination of . . . relations of superiority and subordination in all aspects of life. . . . It is often argued that by maintaining a wealthy and privileged [sic] class certain ‘finer things’ are kept alive. What are these ‘finer things’ that owe their survival to the rich, and which would not continue in a more egalitarian society? (“Ethic for Community” 71-3)

What all of these definitions (and others) have in common is a lack of moral-philosophical connection of concern. Beiner’s definition simply suggests that a “community” is a grouping of *individuals* who happen to have something in common like a “cultural or ethnic group.” Madison and Taylor do not fare any better in their definitions, suggesting that a community is simply a grouping that communicates or is a group of individuals who band together as a result of “common projects.” Just as significantly, the definitions offered are appealing in that they fail to challenge – fail to “deconstruct” – neo-liberal values calling for reductions in the state and the autonomy of the individual, allowing peoples to be free-floating atoms. For Robin Mathews, however, a “concern” for the Canadian community, its future and its people is key and central because, as he is well aware, any grouping of peoples can share common goals or even share a culture, but even then there is no guarantee that the members of that community will share a concern for each other – a point one of Mathews’ recent articles makes all too clear (“Colonial Canada”).

Granted, the sense of community offered by Mathews may seem to be an “idyll” in that the community cannot be said to exist unless there is no form of exploitation on the part of its members (Grove 25), and all involved must demonstrate that mutual concern so central to the philosophic theory. But such a realization is not enough to dismiss the theory, for as Mathews argues, “To suggest the existence of intellectual traditions, of a Canadian Intellectual Tradition [as community], is not to suggest that a people necessarily develops unity and harmony. It does mean . . . that matters of unity, harmony, disunity, and disharmony often have peculiar and continuing characteristics” (*Intellectual* xii). What the preceding quotation from Mathews means is that while no such idealistic community may exist in “real” life, the ideal is still necessary and workable insofar as it exemplifies a level to which Canadians (and others) may strive to achieve. Furthermore, the very fact that Mathews’ own worldview is that of dialectic entrenches a certain level of respect for individuality in cultural relations and literature, but not unfettered individualism. In Mathews’ colourful words, the distinction between what constitutes “individualism” and what constitutes “individuality” can be stated as follows: “Individualist as it is given to the Canadian is usually U.S. anarchist, fake egalitarianism, presented in anti-intellectual, defeatist, and sensationalist terms” (*Canadian Literature* 161). “Individuality,” on the other hand, “is the natural difference from poet to poet and . . . from community to community. To reject individualism is not to accept regimentation . . . True individuality rejects such regimentation, requires difference” (161). Thus, Mathews can be said to fully recognize the importance of the self in relation to the community. Both, when working from a view of dialectic, build off of, and feed from one another, allowing the individual to “[find] his or her greatest

freedom in an enlightened alliance with society and the social order” (*Canadian Literature* 134).

When Robin Mathews discusses his theory of community in terms set forth by the Canadian dialectic, he is using the term not in an instrumental way, but in a philosophical-moral sense in which each member of the community is attributed moral value and concern – in both the political and cultural spheres. Moreover, “community” is not confused with the more generic term “society” when discussing a people and the relationships they have with one another. In this sense, Mathews would not agree with G. B. Madison, who confuses the two terms when he states that “Canada is a nation of many communities, and it would be stretching the bounds of meaningful discourse to speak of a single, well-defined Canadian community” (12).⁶ Nor would he agree with fellow writer Robert Kroetsch who, while admitting that there “is a communal language” which Canadians “are responsible to,” implies that the communal voice is repressive: “I get uneasy about that surrender to It [the communal voice]” (qtd. in Thomas 116). Instead, in his writings, Mathews is searching for morally grounded principles that all people, in one way or another, are equally concerned about and have an interest in maintaining exactly because those individuals within the community have a concern for one another, and are therefore assumed to have moral worth both in thought and deed.

⁶ GB Madison is something of an anomaly. Following his attack on communitarianism, he states even more ahistorical banter in a footnote, making reference to the communitarian nature of Canadian community: “Myths of course they are, since multiculturalism and communitarianism are at least as prominent on the American cultural scene as they are on the Canadian scene” (73). Of course, Madison cites no examples or references, nor does he define what he means by “communitarian.” In failing to define his terms, he commits a gross scholarly act, presenting his own opinion as if it were fact. But he then goes on to denigrate Canadians even further: “[W]hen Canadians appeal to such things as multiculturalism and communitarianism as defining characteristics, they are doing what they so often do: *adopting the latest American fashions*” (73, emphasis added). In other words, Canadians are simply the colonial mimics they have always been, at least in Madison’s view.

The Mathews philosophic-moral model is attractive on a number of levels, then, because it does not nullify difference, homogenize and call for “sameness”; rather, as a philosophical-moral doctrine it embraces difference amongst peoples while at the same time suggesting that there are certain values which people would agree are fair and equitable. This sense of value, then, serves to legitimize the communitarian perspective in a neo-liberal world, avoiding the stigma of atomization which would result if everyone had nothing in common, forming a state that resembles something akin to Thomas Hobbes’ “state of nature” whereby “the life of man [is] solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short” (89). This very important fact is probably summed up best by Mathews who, in capsule form, summarizes the importance of the communitarian perspective philosophically as it exists within dialectic: “The dialectic in Canada is a real part of individual personality. Canadians embody *both* forces” (*Canadian Identity* 121, emphasis added). While a communitarian perspective serves as one of the key pillars upon which Mathews’ thought stands, it is by far not the only one, for intertwined with a communitarian belief is also a strong sense of anti-Americanism.

Canadian historian J. L. Granatstein offers up a Canadian definition of anti-Americanism, which is useful. According to Granatstein, anti-Americanism can be defined as “a distaste for and a fear of American military, political, cultural, and economic activities that, while widespread in the population, is usually benign unless and until it is exploited by business, political, or cultural groups for their own ends” (*Yankee* 4). Granatstein’s definition is useful because not only does it apply to Canadians and situate itself within a definite historical context, but it also makes clear one of the pre-requisites of nationalism as Mathews understands it: that to be a nationalist in Canada one

must also be an anti-American and resist the American empire and its Americanization. Simply put, to be a Canadian nationalist one must also be an anti-American because “Canadians were the first and the model anti-Americans because the *habitants* and the Loyalists both wanted to remain free of the United States” (*Yankee* 8). Second, Canadians “were the ideal anti-Americans because . . . they actually understood the United States and appreciated its idealism and passion while simultaneously rejecting much of the American ethos” (8). Third and lastly, Canadians were also the “archetypal anti-Americans because . . . Canadians had set the terms of the debate--virtually everything that is said of the crassness and violence of American society today . . . was first uttered by nineteenth-century British North Americans” (*Yankee* 8). Therefore, one could almost say that it is “natural” for a Canadian nationalist to also be anti-American.

Indeed, it is quite easy to speak of the “Americanization” – anti-Americanism’s cousin term – of Canada, the Canadian economy, art, literature, politics, and other cultural items, but it is quite another to define what the term “Americanization” means – at least within a Canadian context. When the term is defined within a Canadian context, according to Mathews, it essentially means “the grasp of policy-making power by Americans and by those who co-operate with the imposition of the United States reality upon Canadian reality” (*Canadian Literature* 220). To that end, Americanization “erases, denigrates, obscures the Canadian fact and replaces it with the terms of life in the United States” (221), highlighting American imperialist-expansionist tendencies. In becoming Americanized, moreover, Canadians learn contempt for their own community and its values – relegating those like Mathews who speak of “communal” values to the margins as being racists, fascists, or parochial nationalists (Edwardson 140). Nationalism, in this

instance, while being defined in a wholly negative way, reflects and re-affirms the importance of the Canadian dialectic. For instance, with respect to the various definitions of “Americanization,” Mathews’ particular definition of the term works not so much as an instrument in proving the others to be “wrong” in some way; rather, if it is generally agreed that “culture, then, is the great guide of human life” (Hume 44), then Mathews here is working in a corrective capacity in so far as he is “awakening” others to *his* cultural experience as it exists within power relations – the other side of dialectic in Canada. Indeed, this is significant because, as Mathews states himself, “[s]ince literature and cultural analysis [rarely] present such views, people get very angry if they are told they have their views foisted on them . . . by an outside force” (Mathews e-mail 9 April 08). The implication here is that if a people do not see, or are not aware, of the other side of the Canadian dialectic, the realization of that other side is a painful shock and realization, but a necessary one. For this reason, nationalism and “anti-Americanization” as Mathews defines it within his theoretical framework is significant as a general non-aggressive corrective. Indeed, without this realization, the subsequent Americanization of Canadian literature teaches Canadians to believe in foreign excellence and local inferiority; that is, Canadians are made to feel as if what is produced within the country is inferior to that of the imperial country. When literary critics like Northrop Frye denounce Canadian literature,⁷ the colonized mind and the continued assimilation of Canada is well on its way to being firmly rooted as the one side of the Canadian dialectic grows stronger (*Educated* 22-23; “Narrative Tradition” 151-52; “Canada and its Poetry”

⁷ At the beginning of his “Conclusion” to the *Literary History of Canada*, Frye thanked the authors for considering a wide variety of works and authors because had “evaluation” been a core principle of the critics, “criticism of Canadian literature would become a poor naked *alouette* plucked of every feather of decency and dignity” (821).

133). Thus, without recourse to the Mathews corrective, Canadians are taught “to aspire to a condition we can never really achieve, the condition of being someone from another country” (*Canadian Literature* 221). For important reasons such as these – to resist turning into mere American mimics – Mathews believes that anti-Americanism⁸ coupled with nationalism is essential for Canadian survival as a distinct community and people because the Canadian dialectic, as he understands it, demands this.

However, many in the current academic landscape do not share Robin Mathews’ belief in the necessity of nationalism. Instead, much like other political terms, “nationalism” as a definable concept gets blurred and is given a variety of seemingly contradictory meanings. For instance, Gibbins defines no fewer than *five* types of Canadian nationalism: “defensive nationalism, or anti-Americanism”; “international nationalism, or Canada as global peacekeeper”; “state enterprise nationalism, or ‘the ties that bind’”; “two-nations nationalism, or the nationalism of bilingualism and biculturalism”; and “Trudeau nationalism, or multiculturalism in a bilingual framework” (2). Of the Mathews brand of nationalism (“defensive nationalism”),⁹ Gibbins says that it “seems, and indeed is, out of step and out of tune with the rush to embrace globalization” (4). Furthermore, according to Gibbins, Mathews’ brand of nationalism also “seems increasingly dated and passé within the brave new world of NAFTA, Internet and the World Wide Web, globalization, and a rapidly decentralizing federal state” (4). Aside

⁸ It is perhaps necessary to note that even though Mathews typically presents a very anti-American stance, the fact that he is “anti-American” is only coincidental. For as he has stated in *The Struggle for Canadian Universities*, he is “not anti-American but pro-Canadian” and that had any other country been alongside Canada’s border threatening its cultural survival (40), he would attack it just as hard.

⁹ It should be noted that while Mathews’ nationalism does (coincidentally) include anti-Americanism, Gibbins’ formulation is much too broad. Mathews adds: “nationalism in Canada insists Canadians make up a recognizable polity, that they have a significant identity, that they validly may claim the wealth and resources of the country, and that they have a culture peculiar to themselves which they may - indeed must – protect” (*Betrayal* 14). Nationalism is thus a political term implicitly recognizing difference as a cultural value.

from the right-wing rhetoric employed here by Gibbins, it is simply enough to note that the quotation is the accepted wisdom of the day, mirroring a shift in dialectic that Mathews identified in *Canadian Identity* (121-23). Such a view, unlike the Mathews conception of identity, forecloses any discussions of nationalism as being simply parochial and unimportant.

In *Diverse Landscapes* Karin Beeler and Dee Horne cite with approval some advice given by Robert Kroetsch about nationalism when he suggests that Canadian writers should address and develop recent changes to the Canadian literary landscape “without recourse to an easy version of national definition” (Kroetsch vii) because, say Beeler and Horne, somewhat recent developments in Canadian literature have demonstrated “that Canada’s writing community is culturally diverse and suggest that models of a national literature do not necessarily address some of the concerns raised by contemporary writers” (1). Similarly, Paul Fairfield claims that “[n]ationalists the world over continue to dream of homogeneity while privately regretting the real diversity of their populations” (100). According to Fairfield nationalists in Canada “continually fail to recognize . . . that peoples and cultures, despite their characterizations as communities, are not internally homogeneous but are essentially contested and inclined towards reconstitution” (100). Michael Williams would apparently agree with the above formulations about nationalism, suggesting that it habitually categorizes people into “us” and “them” categories according to their country of origin or their ethnicity, “more and more intoxicated by nationalist fever, in some extreme cases the nationalist ends up wallowing in a blatantly racist state” (88). In short, it is often argued in the contemporary society that nationalism should be shed and ignored because it is a thing of the past and

that, under nationalism, a transcendent and idealist unity is created that glosses over differences between ethnic and cultural groups. Since the majority rules, critics of nationalism argue, the sense of Canada that is usually espoused is that of the English-speaking majority (Beiner 11-14; Cook 190-95; Corse 52; Crowley 149; Vickers 361; S. Cook 589-92; Miller 86; Perkins 28-29).

Nationalism in its various forms can be broken down into two generalized camps: ethnic nationalism and “pan” nationalism. Ethnic nationalism fragments peoples according to ethnicity, producing racist societies and – at its most extreme – genocide like that found in the former Yugoslavia. Similarly, “pan” nationalism suggests a unified country, society and culture; in effect, difference is erased (or downplayed) in favour of those qualities – whatever they may be – in order to promote unity amongst its members. Since regional, ethnic and sexual differences are erased, nationalism should be avoided when discussing articulations of identity, social and political issues. Yet, much like the confusion between “society” and “community” noted above, there also seems to be confusion between “unity” and “uniformity.” In his “Preface” to *The Bush Garden*, Northrop Frye makes a helpful distinction between the two terms: “Uniformity, where everyone ‘belongs,’ uses the same clichés, thinks alike and behaves alike, produces a society which seems comfortable at first but is totally lacking in human dignity.” Unity, on the other hand, “tolerates dissent and rejoices in variety of outlook and tradition, recognizes that it is man’s destiny to unite and not divide, and understands that creating proletariats and scapegoats and second-class citizens is a mean and contemptible activity” (xxvi). Thus, because most arguments against nationalism confuse “uniformity” – suggesting sameness and loss of difference – with “unity” – which suggests an embrace

of difference and human morality – political scientist Ron Dart has been able to write: “Robin Mathews has argued for a healthy and moderate nationalism (not an ethnic nor imperial nationalism) in which Canada acts as a beacon to the world, but he is ignored by most” (*Crown Prince* 2). Because of the very structure of the Canadian dialectic – with its reliance on moral-philosophic principles and progressive point of view – the nationalism advocated by Mathews is not “pan” or “ethnic,” but one in which difference, change and debate is welcomed and encouraged.

While the concept of dialectic as understood by Mathews relies upon the definitions of community and nationalism described above, it is also much more complex. In his latest book of cultural and literary criticism, *The Canadian Intellectual Tradition*, Mathews elaborates upon his definition of the Canadian dialectic in the following way:

Canada, as I see it (my worldview) has always been defined by a conflict between individualism and communitarianism. It has, that is to say, always moved through history arguing whether reality is made up of a condition in which the individual is released, with the fewest inhibitions, to develop power and wealth or whether reality is made up of a condition in which community well-being must be secured – the individual secured as a part of the general security. (45)

The definition not only highlights the fact that for Mathews communitarianism and nationalism go hand in hand, but it also demonstrates that he situates himself within *real* history and a *real* place: “It [the Canadian dialectic] has . . . always moved through [Canadian] history” (*Intellectual Tradition* 45). Unlike most other critics in the current

day, Mathews does not shield himself from the conditions of “real life” by imposing abstract notions of time and space. For instance, while Northrop Frye and Margaret Atwood define Canadian literary and cultural identity in myth,¹⁰ which downplays any sort of real history from literary analysis exactly because “literature can only derive its forms from its self” (*Educated* 22), Mathews firmly believes that literary history can teach real social meaning because the literature itself is rooted in a real history and is involved in historical events and peoples. In short, literature as political and full of social meaning is in a never-ending dialectical debate just as the hand of history never ends and is full of debate itself.¹¹

In a very philosophical sense, then, Mathews’ work is of value exactly because it is not explicitly searching for a single version of an elusive “Canadian identity” because, as he suggests, the dialectic in Canadian thought forbids this; therefore, his theory is one that suggests many Canadian identities, be they ideological, cultural or political. The form and character of the Canadian dialectic has predetermined this. People within the dialectic in Canada, while autonomous, contribute one part to the whole.

What follows is an elaboration on Robin Mathews’ understanding of Canadian dialectic. The following chapters, in their own ways, contribute to the unpacking of this complex term while making no claims to finality. Chapter II, dealing with the Atwood-

¹⁰ Frye defines “myths” as being “expressions of concern, of man’s care for his own destiny and heritage, his sense of the supreme importance of preserving his community, his constant interest in questions about his ultimate coming and going” (“Silence in the Sea” 196). Frye highlights the fact that his idea of “myth” falls outside of reality when he speaks of the role of the poet in relation to society as founded in myth: “[the poet] ‘does not deal in facts at all . . . what he deals in are myths, that is, stories of gods, historical reminiscences, and concepts founded on metaphors’” (196).

¹¹ It is perhaps important to note that Mathews does not deny the importance of dialectics to other countries. In his own words: “By saying that this [dialectic] condition is peculiar to Canada, I do not deny the existence of contradictions in other countries or of major inter-defining opposites in those countries. I simply wish to assert that beyond argument, the forces meeting, the way they have met and meet, and their emphases in Canadian history are peculiar to Canada” (*Intellectual* 47).

Mathews debate via thematic criticism, further highlights how and why “nationalism” is far from a static concept while simultaneously demonstrating that the Canadian dialectic, through its very conversational structure, is far from being a clear-cut binary oppositional system. Chapter III of the thesis, while dealing primarily with postmodernism, uses the postmodern debate to articulate how and why the “synthesizing” effect of the Canadian dialectic works as a general and non-confrontational corrective to postmodern theories. Finally, the concluding remarks end on a note of hope about the possibility of a renewed interest in Robin Mathews and his version and understanding of a Canadian dialectic.

CHAPTER II: Robin Mathews and Margaret Atwood: The Nationalist Debate

Thematic criticism presents a useful framework through which to explore Robin Mathews' moral-philosophical approach – as it is presented in the terms set forth by the Canadian dialectic – in relation to Margaret Atwood's concept of survivalism. Doing so should present some insights with respect to the diversity of the Canadian literary tradition and the dialectical forces behind that tradition. More specifically, the overall significance of Robin Mathews to that tradition will be highlighted in his non-static dialectic response to the literary criticism of Margaret Atwood. The end result will be to illustrate the role Mathews plays as a corrective towards literary criticism in Canada that does not adequately consider the social and political impact of texts upon Canadian identity.

During the 1960s – and especially during Canada's centennial year – great nationalist sentiment began to build up within Canada. Proof of this statement is in the number of “nationalist” texts produced during the late 1960s and early 1970s: Al Purdy's *The New Romans* (1968), Robin Mathews and James Steele's *The Struggle for Canadian Universities* (1969), William Killbourn's *Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom* (1970), Ian Lumsden's *Close the 49th Parallel etc.* (1970), John Redekop's *The Star-spangled Beaver* (1971), Northrop Frye's *The Bush Garden* (1971), W. L. Morton's *The Canadian Identity* (1972)¹², Margaret Atwood's *Survival* (1972), and Robin Mathews' *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution* (1978), to name a few. In this regard, given the high nationalist feeling in Canada at the time – and the growing questions about

¹² Morton would seem to have much in common with Mathews. In his text, Morton defines Canadian identity in what can be interpreted as dialectical terms: “Canadian destiny is an evolution in progress. It has not yet been defined. It cannot yet be defined . . . Canada is united at the top by allegiance . . . [which is] the moral core of Canadian nationhood” (83-5).

the possibility of a distinctive “Canadian identity” – Northrop Frye’s *The Bush Garden* and, later, Margaret Atwood’s *Survival* became key texts in helping literary and cultural Canada articulate and define some form of a Canadian “identity.” Frye affirmed this with his “garrison mentality” and Atwood with her “survival” thesis.

Indeed prior to Frye and, especially, Margaret Atwood, the attention paid to Canadian literature was almost non-existent. Atwood’s comment about the Canadian literary experience during the late 1950s and 1960s speaks volumes about this: “Novels by Canadians were almost unheard of . . . When I reached college . . . I spent many arcane hours reverently grubbing the pages of the handful of Little [Canadian] Magazines then in existence” (“Messianic Stance” 86). In the same article, she further notes the growing nationalism amongst Canadians at the time and the growing need to define a sort of Canadian identity, almost always in opposition to Americans (87-88). All of these feelings would eventually culminate, in Canada, under the literary guise of thematic criticism and, ultimately, *Survival*. Thematic criticism in Canada was usually defined by its focus on a single theme, relying “on paraphrase and plot” (MacKendrick 277), having a “strong nationalist agenda” (Brown 656), and attempting to articulate some sense of continuity in literature. Yet, while it is admitted that thematic criticism in Canada played a useful political and cultural role at the time, such literary texts did have their shortcomings. For example, most were usually descriptive in nature, emphasizing plot summary as opposed to textual interpretation. Thus, Barry Cameron and Michael Dixon point out that such criticism “consists simply of theme – and a single theme at that” (137), suggesting that thematics were reductive in nature, exclusionary and, perhaps most significantly, very static in terms of creating any form of a Canadian identity. But

be that as it may, a lot of the above readings come from just one side of the Canadian dialectic, ignoring the other side – the side dealing with community and struggle values. It is only when the two sides of the Canadian dialectic engage in discussion, emphasizing differing points of view that the real value of thematic criticism, and especially that of Robin Mathews, becomes clear. For that reason, the Atwood-Mathews dialogue is significant because it reveals “an insistent force of interrelation” between “philosophic ideas of human meaning” (17).

Margaret Atwood is being compared with Mathews in this general discussion about “Canadian identity” because they share many views. For instance, Margaret Atwood and Robin Mathews are both Canadian nationalists, both were honing their craft in the 1960s, and both have spoken much about the need for a distinct Canadian literary and cultural identity. For these reasons, Atwood and Mathews have both written essays and fiction concerning Canadian literature and culture, have realized the dangers of Americanization, and have continued to be active in the literary and cultural arena. While Atwood tends to take a more liberal nationalist route in dealing with Canadian literary and cultural identity, Mathews remains a “radical democratic socialist” in terms of his position (*Crown Prince* 61). Why both Atwood and Mathews take their different paths is perhaps best illustrated with their respective books of literary criticism. Margaret Atwood suggests that the unifying symbol for Canada is “undoubtedly *Survival*, la Survivance” (41, italics added). By contrast, Robin Mathews argues that there is a distinct type of “struggle literature” in Canada that, instead of seeing Canada as a mere victim as Atwood’s text does, emphasizes instead the “possibility of a distinct Canadian sense of community” (120). In stating that, the difference in approach by the two authors already

begins to make itself apparent from within a dialectical perspective. On the one hand, Margaret Atwood emphasizes the defeatism and “failure” of Canadian literature, placing greater emphasis on the liberal “right” side of the Canadian dialectic (*Survival* 44), while Robin Mathews emphasizes a much more positive and powerful view of Canadian literature with his emphasis on the communitarian side of the dialectical framework (*Canadian Literature* 135-6).¹³

A critical examination of the Mathews-Atwood dialogue, however, demands a precise understanding of some terms that have commonly been used to refer to Robin Mathews and Margaret Atwood. First, both literary and social critics have been labelled as “cultural nationalists.” When the term is used, critics and social commentators who use it often fail to give any sort of definition of who constitutes a “cultural nationalist” or what their goals might be. Roger Frank Swanson defines “cultural nationalism” simply as “a euphemism for the overall Canadian concern about the U.S. cultural impact” on Canadian life and Canadian culture in general (57). Swanson rightly argues that the term “cultural nationalism” is much too vague to be useful in any type of policy analysis because one can include under the rubric of “cultural nationalism” anything ranging from concerns about American spelling, textbooks, and teddy bears to chewing gum. For this reason, he suggests a new term that can be better defined and, in the long run, is much more useful in a study dealing with cultural nationalism: “cultural retrofitting” (57). Indeed, to understand the use of this term, it is perhaps necessary to define “retrofit” and then show how and why it can be incorporated into the broader theme and analysis of

¹³ In stating this, Robin Mathews no doubt fits into the “socialist” Canadian literary tradition Larry McDonald wrote of in his article “Socialism and the English Canadian Literary Tradition.” In the article, McDonald notes that “socially conscious writing remains a key characteristic of the mainstream of Canadian modernism” of which the socialist tradition is a part (228).

cultural nationalism, especially with regards to Mathews and Atwood and their differing points of view. In the broad industrial sense of the term, “retrofit” simply means to substitute new or modernized parts or systems for older equipment. For example, if an individual were to upgrade to a tin roof instead of a tiled one so as to protect the roof from constant high winds, the house would be “retrofitted”; that is, upgraded and made better so as to prolong its life.

When the term “retrofit” is applied in a political and cultural sense – applied to cultural nationalism – one can see how Swanson’s term is appropriate. Unlike the vague term “cultural nationalism,” which could theoretically include practically anything a nationalist or slandering critic would want it to include, “cultural retrofitting” speaks directly to and for the purposes of a people wishing to engage in policies (formally or informally) of national cultural protection and, as an added bonus, the term also escapes the stigma of nationalism as dated, infusing it instead with an aura of “progress.” Thus, the term becomes progressive and gains a deeper meaning for those concerned negatively or positively with “nationalist” politics. For example, in the late 1970s when the Canadian government implemented the two-tier hiring system in Canadian universities (after much hard work and campaigning by Robin Mathews, James Steele, and a host of others), it was taking steps to improve and strengthen that particular part of the “Canadian cultural infrastructure.” “Cultural retrofitting” can therefore simply be defined as those actions in politics or the public sphere “which serve to upgrade and further a distinctive Canadian culture by encouraging a hospitable economic and social-psychological environment for its production” (Swanson 58). Based on this definition,

one can easily surmise that the overall objectives of “cultural retrofitting” are to make the process of cultural growth operate to the benefit of the “home” country.

As “cultural retrofitting” relates to the Atwood-Mathews dialogue in the context of the Canadian dialectic and literary identity, the goals and objectives of “cultural nationalists” like Mathews and Atwood should be fairly clear. Both Atwood and Mathews sought, throughout the years of struggle (especially the 60s and 70s), to articulate and define – to “retrofit” – a unique sense of Canadian character that differed from both the American and British literary traditions. Doing so, both believed, would not only help Canadians to understand themselves better (“To know ourselves, we must know our own literature; to know ourselves accurately, we need to know it as part of literature as a whole” [*Survival* 24]), but it would also help Canadians to wake up out of their colonial slumber and call forth a “revolution – violent and/or other” if necessary (*Canadian Literature* 228). Indeed, even within the statements just given the differences between the views of Atwood and Mathews can be seen. Atwood, unlike Mathews, sought to “retrofit” Canadian culture and literature in a fairly negative way – a point often raised by literary critics. In response to such criticisms, Margaret Atwood has always noted that she does not say Canadian literature is a literature of “failure”; rather, it is a literature of “survival.” Yet, one cannot help but notice the negative connotations inherent in Atwood’s articulation of Canadian identity in *Survival*. Speaking about the Canadian hero, for example, Margaret Atwood writes that “Canadian history and the Canadian imagination . . . conspire to make a plausible heroic death -- a death that accomplishes something, means something in terms of its society – almost impossible” (*Survival* 204). About Canadian literature in general, Atwood articulates a similar

negative view: “a reader must face the fact that Canadian literature is undeniably somber and negative, and that this to a large extent is both a reflection and a chosen definition of the national sensibility” (*Survival* 291). Because of statements like these, Alan Twigg – when interviewing Atwood – pointed out the dangers inherent in her position: “Either way, being victimized politically has created a nation that is lacking in self-respect” (130). Mathews, while acknowledging Atwood’s position,¹⁴ emphasized what he has called the “struggle literature” (*Canadian Literature* 120), which emphasizes the communitarian side of the Canadian dialectic. According to Mathews, “struggle literature” is everything the “literature of surrender” is not. Unlike the “literature of surrender,” “struggle literature” is not wholly negative, does not emphasize victimization, and it does not potentially lead into a world full of fragmentation and dis-unity. In other words, the “struggle literature” advocates a sense and view of a positive Canadian community (in a moral and practical way) and it does not submit to foreign theoretical models. For this reason, political scientist Ron Dart was able to write that “Atwood remains the moderate nationalist and social liberal and Mathews represents the more radical democratic socialist” (*Crown Prince* 61). What Dart is alluding to here is of key importance as it relates to Atwood and Mathews. Both literary critics, while emphasizing a need for nationalism and dialogue, do so in very different ways, emphasizing the power of dialectical forces within Canada.

The differences in approach between the two thinkers as writers, while partially illuminated here, is perhaps articulated more fully in the historic dialogue that Robin Mathews and Margaret Atwood had in the mid-1970s shortly after Atwood had published *Survival* in 1973. *This Magazine* had asked Mathews to write a critical review of

¹⁴ See *Canadian Literature* 119

Atwood's text and Mathews readily agreed, thus beginning the dialogue. Once Mathews had written his piece on Atwood's book (called "Survivalism"), Atwood was asked to respond to Mathews, which she did. At the beginning of her long reply, she lets it be known that she was initially pleased that *This Magazine* had asked Robin Mathews to review her book. After a few short lines, however, Atwood makes it abundantly clear that she disagreed strenuously with Mathews' reading of her text. While the debate has long since passed, it remains significant because in terms of the Canadian dialectic, it articulates the different views of both Mathews and Atwood and how they see the Canadian literary identity in their criticisms. In doing this, the Canadian dialectic articulates itself further within the encounter between the two literary critics, pointing towards a framework within literary criticism that ultimately suggests that a definition of "Canadian identity" is not yet completed, nor will it ever be as it is "filled with surprisingly unexpected clauses and interjections" (*Identity* 122).

For Robin Mathews, questions of identity are clearly important. As was discussed in the opening chapter of this volume, Mathews firmly believes that Canada's unique colonial condition – having been and remaining in the arms of empires – makes the question of identity of prime importance. It is of such high significance because Canada, having been within the arms of empire – and especially the American empire – for so long has created a fundamental shift in the dialectic. If we agree with Mathews in saying that "[t]he conflict between a balanced communitarianism and an unleashed competitive individualism has been evident throughout Canadian history" and that "[t]he two sides incarnate the root dialectic in the country" (*Identity* 6), it should naturally follow, given Canada's post-cold-war history, and the "influence" of Americanization, that an aspect of

the Canadian dialectic should see itself as being sort of American. Robin Mathews certainly recognizes this: “But that is a fact of the Canadian dialectic [that part of the Canadian psyche sees itself as American]. U.S. sensibility has become so insistent a part of the Canadian life it has become a real part of Canadian being” (*Identity* 3). The preceding quotation is significant. It alludes to a very important point that has huge implications for any discussions of Canadian identity – be they literary, cultural, political or social. Simply put, the statement by Mathews points out that Canada is a colony. As a colony, it is a country that is “*done to* rather than doing or doing to” (*Canadian Literature* 1), according to Robin Mathews. The result of this imperial realization is that Canada-as-colony of the United States is one that contains “a sense of helplessness, of uncertainty, and of complicity with the imperial power” (1). More significantly, writes Mathews, such a psychological feeling “hampers and obscures definitions of identity” (1), putting powerful pressure on the inhabitants to adopt the imperial belief system, which in this case is radical liberal individualism. Therefore, it is exactly for this reason – that the terms of the Canadian dialectic have created, fundamentally, a colonialist position and that this position has gained greater advantage since the 1960s – that definitions and articulations of a Canadian identity are so significant. Robin Mathews’ answer to such a fundamental issue is a position built upon dialectic and an idea of moral concern.

Stated in concept form, Mathews’ response is his “struggle literature” (*Canadian Literature* 120). While the concept itself has been defined negatively above, against Atwood and the literature of “survival,” it is far more complex than has been demonstrated thus far. For example, Mathews’ struggle literature is a very significant part

of his understanding of the Canadian dialectic. But even more importantly, it is heavily integrated and intertwined with Mathews' moral-philosophical position outlined earlier. Such integration, then, implies concern (otherwise it does not fit the theory). Indeed, Mathews does not write without it: "I do so [write] as part of a consideration of the failure of Canadians to deal with serious threats to the quality of life here *for all Canadians*" (*Treason* 121). Clearly, the concern, and maybe even a little bit of frustration, is evidenced in the preceding statement. In all of his writings, Robin Mathews never writes without a concern for the Canadian community, its people or its culture. To that end, his concept of struggle literature has, as a fundamental base, a philosophical moralism and level of concern inherent in its functioning.

Thus, Mathews' approach towards defining a form of Canadian identity makes itself radically different from the approach and methodology used by Margaret Atwood. Mathews, in taking the moral-philosophical approach, ensures that his articulations of Canadian identity are grounded in politics and culture and, perhaps most importantly, that they act as a sort of corrective to normative views of the subject; that is to say, they seek to deconstruct Canada's colonial mentality, relating the roles of the individual to the political and economic sovereignty of the Canadian community (*Canadian Literature* 138). In doing that, Mathews partakes in a very important task as it relates to the Canadian colonial condition. In foregrounding the importance of the moral and political, Mathews engages the reader and challenges him or her to see and read texts socially, as having social meaning and implications for the community. He does not, in short, endorse a view that would see the text as being autonomous, a thing unto itself. The view advocated by Robin Mathews is *socially* significant, and theoretically positive.

In relation to Mathews, there can be no doubt that Margaret Atwood articulates a certain kind of identity for Canada; however, unlike Mathews, Atwood generally does not explicitly acknowledge that texts, as a result of their very production, are political. In fact, her very definition of what constitutes the Canadian identity is negative, further entrenching Canada's colonial, dependent condition upon other forms.¹⁵ Indeed, it is for this reason that Mathews writes of Atwood that while *Survival* "attempts to establish our literature in relation to colonialism, [this attempt] becomes mired in a celebration of 'the need to be a victim'" (119). Thus, Mathews does not deny that Atwood's position exists; he openly admits it (*Canadian Literature* 129). However, in his view, "the Canadian artist, the Canadian writer" as someone who "has been one of the fighters for humanization of Canadian life, for life lived with nature and not over it, for exposing imperial capitalism and the fundamental danger of a colonial" plays a far more prominent role in Canadian literature than Atwood seems to allow in her analysis (129). Mathews, in arguing for the struggle literature thesis, which explicitly acknowledges both the individual and the community, allows for movement and malleability or, in brief, a moral view that does not deny either side of the dialectic in Canada. In stark contrast, Margaret Atwood consciously or unconsciously forecloses the question of identity, creating a sort of stasis in her model. This is accomplished by the (denied) method of evaluation used in *Survival*. According to Robin Mathews: "[W]hat Atwood puts in, she obviously selects as valuable to put in, to quote, to analyse. What she leaves out (or barely mentions) is, for

¹⁵ For example, Bonnie Lyons, when responding to Atwood's claim that Canadian literature is "undeniably somber and negative" (*Survival* 291), points out that this is not necessarily the case – especially with Atwood's own writing. To that, Atwood responded: "I was writing about classic Canadian literature, everything before 1970, and it was. . . . The earlier books were produced by a colony, a colony without very much cultural self-confidence. It was somber and negative" (232). Of course, for this statement to hold up in the face of Canadian literary history, Atwood would have to ignore authors like Archibald Lampman, William Kirby, Stephen Leacock, Susanna Moodie, TC Haliburton, EJ Pratt, FR Scott, and a whole host of others.

the reader, not there” (119).¹⁶ In other words, at a very basic level, Atwood does what Mathews does not: she denies a side of the Canadian dialectic. At a more fundamental level, too, Atwood, in selecting her “literature of surrender,” “surrenders the possibility of a distinct Canadian sense of community” (*Canadian Literature* 120). Atwood surrenders the possibility of Canadian community because her terms of reference dictate it.

According to Robin Mathews, Atwood selects “liberal individualist” solutions for each of the selections she studies in her text (*Canadian Literature* 122). Because of this psychological acceptance of U. S. terms of existence and experience, Robin Mathews further postulates that Atwood “cannot read the literature, cannot read what much of Canadian literature is saying” (122). Her “survival” thesis dictates that success in English Canadian fiction “is the gaining of money or power” (122). For this reason, Atwood is apparently unable to see what Mathews is referring to – when talking about struggle literature – when he says that most Canadian writers (at least pre-1960), when writing about success, see it as “the ability to work through adversity to a comprehension of human purpose and human limitations” (122).¹⁷ Again, the statement is important because it places Mathews’ struggle literature squarely within the Canadian dialectic and firmly roots it within a moral-philosophical base. The statement suggests that while humankind may feel free to go after and achieve material ends, the “instruments of modern technology” must be channeled towards communal ends (*Canadian Literature*

¹⁶ Russell M. Brown makes a similar observation about Atwood’s text in his lengthy article “The Practice and Theory of Canadian Thematic Criticism: A Reconsideration” published in the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Volume 70, 2001. Significantly, in this same article Brown notes that while Mathews’ *Canadian Literature* has “many limitations,” it should nonetheless be praised because it “attempted to look at Canadian literature” in an uncommon way at the time.

¹⁷ Appearing to prove Mathews right, Atwood states, when writing about the victim, that “we have to consider the relationship between victim and society. . . . The thing about Canadian victims is that they tend to be representative of society” (“Misrepresentation” 132).

67), ensuring a thriving of community and imagination. According to Mathews' struggle literature, then, it would seem as if "success" implies an even greater moral character.

If English Canadian writers see "success" as more than the mere gathering of money and see it as a "comprehension of human purpose and human limitations," then it must be readily acknowledged that struggle literature, as it exists within Mathews' Canadian dialectic, contains a strong moral element that is generally absent from most other formulations of Canadian identity, including Margaret Atwood's. For Robin Mathews, this "moral fact" as it were is what separates him, making him unique amongst Canadian literary and cultural critics. In this, Mathews does not disappoint. Talking about "struggle literature," dialectic and its relation to community, Mathews states: "English Canadian writers are always interested in the kind of spiritual, material and social participation that creates community. Canadians, therefore, undertake what is an anti-imperialist rejection of the domineering 'other' even while attempting forms of reconciliation" (*Canadian Literature* 1-2). Furthermore, "[t]he English Canadian writer, not yet having broken through to a revolutionary consciousness which rejects the sell-out compromise, often rejects, warns and yet attempts to reconcile within the same works" (2). What that means is that the struggle literature creates something new out of a reconciling of opposites. It works within the Canadian dialectic, combining, separating, and overlapping. In that sense, Canadians can be said to be undertaking "an anti-imperialist rejection" of the "other" even while attempting some sort of synthesis because the very nature of Mathews' position demands this. In Mathews' words, "[f]acing the United States as a large and powerful other, Canadians would take from it and add their own structures of thought and creation rather than submit to it as *centre* in the face of

Canada as *region* or hinterland” (*Treason* 96). Significantly, Mathews is not doing what Atwood and others have done with respect to literary and social forms; that is to say, he is not adopting “elsewhere community” ideologies and applying them to Canada.¹⁸ To do so, for Mathews, would be to delegitimize the Canadian community, enhancing the colonial condition.

Clearly, for Robin Mathews, then, struggle literature involves a strong sense of community; the individual becoming self-aware of his or her role in relation to the community; a strong sense of concern; an anti-imperialist bent, and a need to reconcile opposites. In Mathews’ book of literary criticism, *Canadian Literature*, he names a number of individuals whom he believes fairly represents his definition of Canadian identity and experience: Major John Richardson (13-25), Susanna Moodie (27-44), Charles G. D. Roberts (45-62), F. P. Grove (63-74), and Hugh MacLennan (75-90) are named as major examples. Also named in the text, but studied to a far lesser degree, are Stephen Leacock, William Kirby, Harold Innis and Irene Baird. To that list, it might also be appropriate to list Mathews himself and another contemporary writer, Jacqueline Baldwin.¹⁹ Mathews’ reasoning for selecting these authors (and my reasoning for including some) is that “[his] tendency is to look for quotations [and texts] that are examples of recognition, decolonization and struggle – seeing Canada positively and making space for its imagination” (124). In this regard, Stephen Leacock’s *Sunshine*

¹⁸ Atwood does this with a trivialization of community: “There are certainly communities in Canadian literature; so are there in almost all other literatures” (“Misrepresentation” 133). Similarly, GB Madison has recently written (2000) that communitarianism in Canada is a mere “myth” because “multiculturalism and communitarianism are at least as prominent on the American cultural scene as they are on the Canadian scene” (73).

¹⁹ To cite just one example of Baldwin’s, her poem “C’est la situation tragique.” In this work, Baldwin explores Canada’s colonial condition with special reference to cultural items like music discs and film. The clerk asks the speaker if the artist she seeks is “new” (line 5). Later, in the search for film, the speaker finds Canadian movies “are displayed in an obscure corner / under a sign that reads: / ‘foreign’” (40-42).

Sketches of a Little Town serves as a fine representative example, illustrating through process, the functioning of Mathews' "struggle literature" through dialectic.

Of Leacock, Mathews writes, his humour "is ironic because it knows that civilized virtue does not exist without an admixture of 'natural' energy – that the letter and the spirit must somehow be reconciled. . . . [Leacock's] humour, moreover, insists upon a whole view of life, and in doing so must recognize and manage the Wacousta in our nature" (*Canadian Literature* 109-10). The statement clearly places Leacock within Mathews' moral-philosophical outlook. It also places him squarely within the Canadian dialectic and "struggle literature." At a more significant level, Mathews is pointing out that Leacock, much like the other "struggle" writers listed above, fully realizes that material success should not be the driving force within the Canadian ethos, a point also made by David Lynch (131). It does need to be noted, too, that when Mathews is referring to "the spirit," he is not necessarily referring to God; therefore, "the spirit" is not "an escape from society, a flight to idealism. Living in the spirit had to involve the building of the highest possible civilization" (*Canadian Literature* 68). In that sense, Leacock's defense against unrestricted individualism is not only a turn to a much more "conservative" ideology, but also a selective recovery of past events because if one were to forget the past, the meaning of life and preservation of the self within the community would be lost forever much like that "little Town in the Sunshine that once we knew" (Leacock, *Sunshine Sketches* 156). While Leacock's conclusion here is somewhat idealistic, it is still representative of Mathews' struggle literature because the narrator, the "I," fully realizes by the end of the text, "L'Envoi: The Train to Mariposa," that he must

accept a compromise between the town and the city in order to advance morally and meaningfully in relation to the community.

While Stephen Leacock may have been writing about a specific region and place (a thinly disguised Orillia, Ontario), his themes were universal in the sense that they can be applied (with some modification) to other areas of Canada, something Mathews says is true of most “classics”: “These experiences are universal. . . . We can know the uniqueness of our own society only when we come to understand our own genius and can read our own classics” (*Canadian Literature* 9). Mathews also recognizes that pre-1960, “writers were unashamedly regional without rejecting a necessary national centre” (*Treason* 175). In other words, most English Canadian writers pre-1960 wrote about region, but did so with recourse to the larger national community, realizing that they could find and understand his or her full identity only in conjunction with the larger Canadian community and its moral language demanding compromise. Thus, when Margaret Atwood accuses Robin Mathews of completely manufacturing his concept of “struggle literature,” referencing Leacock’s *Sunshine Sketches*, as an example of its non-existence,²⁰ one is left fairly baffled because Mathews himself acknowledges a certain strain of regionalism inherent in the struggle literature, which is, for the most part, a byproduct of the Canadian dialectic itself.

While the approaches of Mathews and Atwood differ significantly both in design and methodology, the two critics do nonetheless share some affinities. For example, both have realized and agreed in a general sense that Canada went from being a British colony to a colony of the U. S. A. (“Canada-US Relations” 377; *Intellectual Tradition* 97), both

²⁰ According to Atwood, Leacock does not qualify as a candidate for “struggle literature” because of his “condescension and portraits of quaint provincials” (“Misrepresentation” 141).

have pointed out that the United States only sees its nationalism as “good” while Canadian nationalism (and the nationalisms of other countries) is often perceived to be “communist” (“Canada-US Relations” 388; “Canadian Responses to U.S. Torture”), both have agreed that there is a need to define and articulate a uniquely Canadian identity, and in articulating that, both work within the broad dialectical framework argued for by Mathews. Nevertheless, even in these similarities there are differences to be noted. In terms of the idea of “Canada as colony,” Atwood sees the U. S. influence as coming much more from cultural items like comic books and magazines whereas Mathews blames U. S. policies and Canadian “compradors”²¹ in general. Similarly, in terms of the question of Canadian identity both Mathews and Atwood differ on how to read the Canadian literary landscape. While Mathews concurs that there is a “literature of surrender” and that “survivalism” is important (*Canadian Literature* 129), he does not agree that they should be the defining “myths” in Canada or that the Canadian literary identity should be defined by myth alone. Rather, he tends to view Canadian literature and society in dialectical terms; that is to say, he sees Canadian society and literature as being defined by a sort of conflict between individualism and communitarianism – a battle between those who see the reality of peoples being defined by the release of the individual (as a sort of Epicurean atom) into society to do as he or she sees fit and those individuals who believe that the commonweal secures and benefits one and all. Atwood, on the other hand, does not explicitly acknowledge the Canadian dialectic, which is not to suggest that her views are wrong, but to point out that Mathews’ theory is valuable

²¹ “Compradors” are those individuals born in the native country who, in one way or another, seek to be in an “elsewhere” community – here in Canada that community being the United States.

exactly because it does not deny the validity of Atwood's myth. Instead, it is flexible and incorporates it.

Having said that, the view advocated by Mathews is appealing because not only does it ask difficult questions, but it also allows for both sides of the Canadian dialectic to have a voice and engage in meaningful dialogue with one another. The dialectical view does not set out to misrepresent ideas, nor is it "just interested in defining [its] own purity as opposed to the evils of everybody else" (Twigg 129). In other words, the Canadian dialectic, built as it is upon layers of meaning and past dialogue, recognizes that it is not perfect and not without its problems, but as a practical tool in literary theory, it offers an alternative view that places a greater emphasis upon the moral and social meaning in literary texts.

On the surface of things, the Atwood-Mathews dialogue should give some preliminary insights into the minds of both authors and how, despite some similarities, the two differ in approach and ideology. At a deeper and more meaningful level, however, the debate should illuminate the fact that "nationalism," as Mathews understands it, is not necessarily narrow-minded nor is it a static concept. Instead, it has been proven to be a very flexible concept with numerous meanings and connotations, depending on how the concept is examined. Thus, it can be said that the Robin Mathews and Margaret Atwood discussion reveals a great deal about the nature of the Canadian dialectic. The dialogue between the two literary and social critics has illuminated the fact that discussion and debate is important and that it is indeed *acknowledged* through the process of dialectic itself. Further, the two literary critics advance the concept of a forward-moving, inclusive and open nationalism and "Canadian identity" through a

process of moral-philosophical debate, refusing to foreclose the question of identity.

Indeed, it is here – within the “third space” provided by the Canadian dialectic – that the real value of the Mathews-defined Canadian dialectic can be found: it provides a valid space through which Canadians can study and analyze movements and theories within a Canadian space without completely closing off the possibility of including outside theories and influence.

CHAPTER III: Robin Mathews, Postmodernism and Postmodern Nationalism

The preceding chapters have shown Robin Mathews to be a significant figure in Canadian literary and cultural life in the 1960s and 1970s, and have shown his “Canadian dialectic” to have some theoretical value. The following chapter examines Mathews and his theoretical framework in light of recent developments in literary theory. It takes the form of a broad overview of Robin Mathews’ theory in relation to postmodern ideas and methodology. In stating that, the structure of this chapter is not so much “Mathews as central” to the discussion; instead, Mathews’ argument for the existence and importance of the Canadian dialectic as it is expressed philosophically will serve as a framework in relation to various representative postmodern thinkers, illustrating the overall value of Mathews as moral corrective.

The Mathews-defined Canadian dialectic is still highly significant in the postmodern ethos because it offers a potential framework in which Canadian specifics are deemed an essential element. In particular, in shifting to international theories of literature without due diligence shown to place and situation, Canadian history and its cultural differences get lost. The shift to postmodern theories helps to explain how and why Mathews and his dialectical approach have diminished in importance with respect to the study of Canadian literature. Whereas Robin Mathews might have played a key and pivotal role in the 60s and 70s when questions about nationalism and “Canadian identity” were at their peak, the shifting to postmodernism has necessitated a turning away from Mathews and his ideas in favour of those ideas seen as being without borders or “universal.” Therefore, in a very real sense, Mathews and his brand of what might be termed “moral nationalism” loses significance exactly because it places its emphasis,

first, on a specific place (Canada) before moving to the international arena. Again, Mathews and his Canadian dialectic – as intertwined as it is with a sense of concern for national place – can be seen as a sort of “corrective” to postmodern theories as they are related to Canada through the work of literary theorist Linda Hutcheon.

Granted the malleability of the term “postmodernism,” it is perhaps necessary to arrive at some kind of understanding of its premises and implications. In her text, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, literary theorist Linda Hutcheon traces the beginnings of the postmodern discourse to the late 1960s, suggesting that it was a sort of offshoot and continuation of the revolutionary spirit of the times and that it was also a conscious rejection of modernism. She defines postmodernism as “self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining” and working to “de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as ‘natural’ (they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact ‘cultural’; made by us, not given to us” (1-2). In *Reading Canadian Reading*, Frank Davey defines what he calls “sociological postmodernism” as being characterized by “fragmentation and multiplication, by the relativity of authority, by the problematic growth of global ‘multi-national’ structures which paradoxically both alienate local humanity . . . and demand its assent and participation” (106). Within the literary sphere, Davey suggests that this postmodernism is “characterized by a multiplicity of aesthetics and discourses, by decentred, discontinuous forms, by process rather than structures” (106). E. Ann Kaplan makes a further distinction between two types of different (yet related) forms of postmodernism. Kaplan defines what she calls “utopian” postmodernism as being a type of postmodernism that “involves a movement of culture

and texts beyond oppressive binary categories” (4), and she defines what she terms “co-opted” postmodernism as “radically transforming the subject through its blanketing of culture. Inside is no longer separate from outside; private cannot be opposed to public space; high or avant-garde culture no longer stands in stark contrast to the all-consuming popular” (4). The Marxist critic Frederic Jameson, in contrast to Hutcheon, Davey, Kaplan, suggests that postmodernism is “a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of the new formal features in the culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order” (15). Speaking from a democratic socialist position, Robin Mathews has suggested that postmodernism “is a secular attempt to find a basis for reality in a rejection of all former ‘grand narratives,’ ‘meta-narratives,’ and other apparently superimposed . . . explanations for social structure, belief, and meaning” (*Intellectual* 56). In other words, postmodernists deconstruct traditional beliefs, literary myths, and concepts that have supposedly provided “totalizing” views of Canada – “views that assume logical meaning can be given to history and event” (56). In terms of the Canadian dialectic, the above mentioned points are significant because they allude to an often un-stated fact which implies that postmodernism as a theory sits outside of the dialectical forces – outside of history. It does this in its attempt to question “both” sides of the Canadian dialectic. However, even given these shortcomings, Robin Mathews – emphasizing dialectic – does not outright dismiss postmodernism. Perhaps seeing potential in the theories, he states that postmodernism(s) can be “stimulating and informative” (*Intellectual* 56). In a sense, then, Mathews’ criticisms of postmodernisms are not so much to de-legitimize the theories, but simply to illustrate and emphasize theoretical differences within the Canadian dialectic – moral-philosophical

(communitarian) and individualist-postmodern.

The various and varying definitions above give a glimpse into the contradictory and paradoxical world that is the postmodern. While postmodernism does have many attractive qualities that can be said to play an integral role in the Canadian dialectic (particularly its use of subversive humour, Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction and significant use of intertextuality), the definitions reveal a number of un-stated premises about postmodernism (especially the latter two), namely that it is a homogenizing metanarrative, that it is ideologically political and therefore advocates a certain world view while consciously excluding others, and that it does not really place history within a historical context. In contrast to the contradictions listed above, the Mathews definition of "Canadian dialectic" has much to offer in terms of stability. For example, Robin Mathews does not deny the fact that his vision is based on ideology ("Canada, as *I* see it (*my* worldview) has always been defined by a conflict between individualism and communitarianism" [*Intellectual* 45, emphasis added]), nor does he exclude other voices from shaping the Canadian dialectic and its processes because the very nature of the concept denies the ability to eliminate, demonstrated in the previous chapter. Perhaps most significantly, Mathews, in contrast to postmodernism, situates history within a specific place; that is to say, Canadian specifics are not erased and Canada's unique place in history is acknowledged when considering Canadian history and culture (*Identity* 23-30). For Mathews, this situating of the self within a specific place and space is of significant importance because for him it "forces us to recognize a fundamental consciousness in Canada of unique relation between the individual, the community" and the "human condition" (*Canadian Literature* 63). There is no doubt that this is, in some

respects, an idealist statement, but it is a statement that Mathews wants to be taken seriously. He wants it to be taken seriously because it points towards those areas – philosophical, moral and specific – of meaning that construct and give life to Canada and Canadian identity – areas that current postmodern analysis displaces.

Perhaps a part of the problem comes from the very term “postmodernism” itself. As “postmodernism” the concept is singular, speaking about a single “postmodernism,” a single theoretical critical school. To critics like Hutcheon, it is strictly an aesthetic concept concerned with art as self-reflexive, art as conscious of its constructed nature, art as political parody, and art as critical to authority. For Davey, postmodernism is all of those things Hutcheon describes and it is also related to the growth of multinational or transnational corporations, implying a sort of periodization. For Kaplan postmodernism is all of the above in two separate forms (utopian and co-opted), and Jameson sees it specifically as a periodizing concept, as a form of the capitalist homogenizing that postmodernism claims to deconstruct.

For Mathews, the postmodern project places itself outside of social history when it displaces the “grand-narratives” of society, displacing social meaning and embracing unencumbered fragmentation of society and the individual as he or she is related to that society. This is made clear when he suggests that the postmodern “disconnects from sources of humane evaluation as traditional anchors of value are dislodged, and it permits at best trivialization of values, at worst outrageous human desecration” (*Treason* 18). Whereas the dialectic, as defined by Mathews, refuses to “disconnect from sources of humane evaluation” exactly because it works within a moral framework and therefore does not endorse fragmentation or a re-writing of language. It does this because Robin

Mathews, being on the “left” side of the Canadian dialectic, and working within a nationalist discourse, recognizes the inherent dangers of re-writing language, erecting new meaning. For Mathews and the vision he represents, if language (and social meaning) is declared “bankrupt,” it becomes “an inadequate instrument with which to formulate the reality of Being now” (*Treason* 76). Therefore, without a stable base upon which to place meaning, “evaluation – and . . . meaningful response – become impossible” (76). Because of this – the recognition of the importance of Canadian place, history and culture – Mathews offers a progressive alternative to postmodern theory.

One of the unstated problems of postmodern theories makes itself visible: that it is in fact its own metanarrative. Time and time again in the literature, statements such as these are seen: “[postmodernism] often presents radical philosophical and political concepts . . .” (Deer 9), “post-modern[ism] may be a *perednovok*”²² (Onufrijchuk 3), “. . . postmodernism may perform its enlightening magic” (*Canadian Postmodern* 12), “The postmodern . . . searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable” (Lyotard 79-81). Postmodernisms, in contrast with the much more antiquated modernism (or any other social theory or movement), present views that are revolutionary in their liberating, deconstructionist ways with reference to all of the grand or metanarratives, binarisms, imposed superstructures and colonialism and gender relations. But postmodernism in taking on such importance in the universities has no doubt marginalized those views that believe in social and communal agency and that therefore believe that society and its traditions (whatever those may be) have socially agreed upon meaning. In place of such solid

²² A *perednovok* being “a time in the spring when food stored for the winter is gone, yet the winter wheat is only just turning the fields a promising green” (Onufrijchuck 3-4). Postmodernism is thus seen in a promising light, bringing something new and wonderful along the horizon.

concepts – real objects and relations – the postmodernists place abstract ones, essentially arguing that all is relative. With imperialism denied in the form of postcolonial and gender relations, such ideas, based as they are in history and culture, can be replaced by abstract ideas that perhaps redeem the imperialist cause. Indeed, it is observations such as these that have allowed Ziauddin Sardar, offering a non-Western perspective on postmodernism, to comment: “postmodernism avoids, by glossing over, the politics of non-western marginalisation [sic] in history by suddenly discovering Otherness everywhere, and arguing that everything has its own kind of Otherness by which it defines itself” (13). In other words, the vast and complex cultures of the “Other” – that is, of non-western societies – becomes homogenized within the theory of postmodernism, becoming “simply a new wave of domination riding on the crest of colonialism and modernity” (Sardar 13). This point is significant because it points to a problem inherent in the postmodern project that is often ignored. That problem is that, rather than supporting a diversity of views, of “Otherness” (in its numerous nuances and meanings), postmodernisms – because of its own theoretical structures – adopt such terms for its own ideological usage showing that the term itself is without significant meaning. As all things are considered relative, so too is the identity of the non-western “Other.” A similar point is made by Warren Montag when he suggests that postmodernism is a crypto return to totalization in the form of “a mode of exposition” that is problematic because the various “overviews” created by critics like Lyotard and Hutcheon on postmodernism “are situated at such a great distance from the diverse objects they seek to describe that real specificities resolve into one blurred, harmonious totality” (91-92). Robin Mathews echoes this observation when he comments on postmodernist

methodology: “The methods of the post-modernists, generally, reduce distinction, erase moral factors, and relativize information” (*Treason* 34). These key observations work on two interrelated levels. First, Sardar, Montag and Mathews all point out that social elites (the academic class) are prescribing models to de-naturalize, deconstruct and undermine various metanarratives. Second, and metaphorically speaking, the vast distance from “the people” clouds judgment. Most academics are socially and financially so far from the people they attempt to speak for (appropriating their voices), that difference becomes indivisible.²³ Third, the methods employed by postmodernism are generally outside of society in some transcendental space, denying its very role in the creation of a metanarrative designed to end all metanarratives and create a world of fragmented and baseless individualism; or, in Linda Hutcheon’s words: “[postmodernism] does not reject or exemplify, lament or celebrate, the result of our decentralized, post-industrial, communications-obsessed age. It does both – and neither” (*Canadian Postmodern* 183). Postmodernism thus seeks to question the self as it is defined by culture and society; that is, the self in culture as being some kind of coherent and unified whole. Of course, if postmodernism “laments” and “celebrates” the current age while doing “neither,” that implies that it is without ideological loyalties and that it does not advocate a certain political position, which is clearly not the case as Mathews, in his *The Treason of the Intellectuals: English Canada in the Post-Modern Period* makes all too clear.

One of the stated and sometimes unstated claims of postmodernists is that they are outside of ideology – without political loyalties. The very fact that some postmodernists will admit to ideology while others deny it, some might claim, is just a part of the

²³ After all, one could hardly call academics, professors and well-known authors of postmodern theories an “average” citizen.

postmodern paradox and “playfulness.” Many critics of postmodernism have noted this tendency to contradiction, including Glenn Deer. In his book, *Postmodern Canadian Fiction and the Rhetoric of Authority*, Deer notes that postmodernists in Canada and elsewhere are “distrustful of political conservatism, or indeed, *distrustful of politics in general*” (9, emphasis added). The fact that postmodernists are distrustful of “political conservatism” should indicate the political ideology postmodernists are generally loyal to. That ideology would rightly be called “liberal individualist” in the terms set forth by Mathews. However, many postmodernists will still deny any political loyalties. For instance, “Mr Canadian Postmodern” (*Canadian Postmodern* 160), Robert Kroetsch has said that he is “quite aware of being without ideology” (Neuman and Wilson 33). Similarly, Linda Hutcheon has avoided politics by claiming that postmodernism can do “both” and “neither” in its analysis (*Canadian Postmodern* 183). Frank Davey, on the other hand, while seemingly recognizing the contradiction,²⁴ still offers a position that escapes direct political implication when he says that there is not a “direct correspondence between style and politics but that style necessarily has political implications whether or not these come under an author’s conscious control” (*Reading Canadian Reading* 44). It is thus implied by Davey that the author of the text is not completely responsible for what he or she writes, further highlighting a point made by Mathews earlier when he suggested that postmodernists escape moral implication with their methodologies. Tellingly, though, Hutcheon states in *The Politics of Postmodernism* that postmodernism is inherently political exactly because of its realization that all forms are ideological and therefore cannot avoid being engrossed in political issues. She then

²⁴ Writing about ideology in *Reading Canadian Reading*, Davey later says that “All writing is informed by ideology [and] . . . any argument that ‘good’ literature is non-ideological will normally serve to divert attention from its ideological indicators” (71).

states that the belief that the postmodern is non-political or absence of ideology is “politically naïve, and, in fact, quite impossible to take in the light of the actual art of postmodernism” (3). Hutcheon is indeed right here. The postmodern is inherently political, but not for the reasons she suggests (i.e.: that the postmodern is grounded in history and culture); rather, it is political exactly because it presents itself as sort of anti-ideological. Adopting a very liberal position without openly admitting it allows postmodern theories to “have the appearance of progressive radicalism at every point but the ones in which challenge class, capitalism, and imperialism” (Mathews 36). Paradoxically, it might even be possible to agree with the postmodernists when they claim to be non-political and without ideology because – as far as ideology as a concept goes – the only form it takes is the most anti-political of all ideologies insofar as it is agreed that ideologies in general refer to some form of social concepts of community or individual as “free” within community: the liberal individualist ideology.

Postmodernism works within a liberal ethos that not only supports the continued secularization of society but also its increasing fragmentation. This point is something the Canadian philosopher George Grant foresaw when he wrote his *Lament for a Nation* back in 1965: “the United States supports a large beat fringe. Joan Baez and Pete Seeger titillate the status quo rather than threaten it. Dissent is built into the fabric of the modern system. We bureaucratize it as much as everything else” (78). The status quo, built as it is within the liberal ethos, has worked to smudge history and frame everything in false or semi-false terms so as to suit the liberal capitalist project. That is why, for instance, critics like Robin Mathews have suggested that the postmodern is ahistorical in its research. On numerous occasions, he points out, postmodernists smudge and appropriate

history to suit their needs while at the same time – especially in Canada –work to deny the existence of American imperialism. To that end, in contrast to the view(s) offered by postmodernism, Mathews and his definition of Canadian dialectic as it relates to history and identity clearly situate literary and theoretical study within the specific Canadian place. Indeed, this is significant in terms of offering an alternative to postmodern paradigms of thought because, as Mathews writes, “For the Canadian, a reasonably strong sense of self grows from a reasonably perceived sense of place” (*Canadian Literature* 222). In other words, when theories are situated within a specific place – in *dialectic* – Canadian history and identity grow and flower, increasing relevance to researchers and enhancing a sense of Canadian pride.

Within the Canadian context, Linda Hutcheon provides an excellent representative example of postmodern ahistoricism while Mathews works as her counterforce on the “leftist” side of the Canadian dialectical spectrum. For example, in the first few pages of *The Canadian Postmodern*, Linda Hutcheon not only ignores the existence of American imperialism, but she begins with the odd claim that “The 1960s are generally accepted as the years that saw the flowering of Canadian fiction” (1). This date is questionable at best and is arbitrary. This has been pointed out by a number of critics, some of whom are postmodernists themselves. For instance, Frank Davey has noted many authors in “prefaces” (he includes himself in this group) have, in one way or another, announced that Canadian literature has somehow matured and “flowered” from the period of the 1960s onwards (*Reading Canadian Reading* 253-54, 264). Similarly, Stephen Henighan has pointed out that while it is true that after the 1960s more Canadians were writing, publishing, and living off of their writing, “To claim that this

signals an advance for *literature* (as Toronto-based commentators are fond of doing) is to confuse *art* with *commerce*" (165, emphasis added). Reading the selection of the year 1960 from a Mathewsian perspective, it becomes clear that selecting the 1960s as the "flowering" point for Canadian literature allows Hutcheon to downplay those Canadian fictions and authors not associated with the liberal individualist side of the Canadian dialectic. As a result, gone from her study (or hardly mentioned) are people like Susanna Moodie and Stephen Leacock, to name just two well-known Canadian authors. No doubt Hutcheon is relying here on the assumption that it was not until the 1960s that Canada received a national consciousness – especially after the Centennial Celebrations of 1967 – and began to create a "national" literature, inserting people like Leacock and Moodie into the "canon" only retroactively,²⁵ but to do this is to denigrate the accomplishments of those who came before the postmodern period; that is to say, the preceding generations are viewed as being a mere process towards the setting up of the postmodern. If Hutcheon had said that the 1960s was the "flowering" point of Canadian postmodern fiction, she would be right. In choosing the authors she does for study, Hutcheon is unintentionally prizing those "mainstream" writers who take their cue from literary models that are completely alien to the Canadian experience – a danger that has been pointed out by numerous critics.²⁶ Therefore, it may be said that Hutcheon is manifesting "a depressing

²⁵ See Sara M. Corse's *Nationalism and Literature: The Politics of Culture in Canada and the United States*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1997, chapter three.

²⁶ Ironically again, Frank Davey, a fellow postmodernist, points out the danger of applying critical theories developed in other countries to Canada without due regard for social and cultural circumstance: "Most of Canadian literary criticism . . . view[s] the critical theory activities of other countries as occurring in some academically pristine dimension uncontaminated by interests or contention" (*Reading Canadian Reading* 8). Following such an "internationalist" perspective, these theories are seen to exist outside of a cultural context, decontextualizing and dehistoricizing them. Martin Allor has pointed out something similar in his article "Projective Readings: Cultural Studies from Here to There" in which he states that using theories in this way cut them off "from the specific political and epistemological debates in which they emerged" (135), forcing Canadian experience to fit the imported theory.

alienation from Canada and an equally depressing enthusiasm to identify with U.S. [and Continental] imperialist ideas” exactly because she applies the theories she uses without due regard being paid to the Canadian historical experience (*Treason* 10). That is to say, Hutcheon, in applying the theories as she does to Canadian texts, fails to acknowledge that there is an “other” view – ignores the existence of dialectic in Canadian experience.

Indeed, the various ways postmodernism was defined above speaks volumes about Mathews’ assertion that postmodernisms in Canada and elsewhere generally tend to shy away from traditional elements and history in their respective societies. To reiterate a statement from earlier, while Hutcheon defined postmodernism above as being “self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining” and working to “de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as ‘natural’ (they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact ‘cultural’; made by us, not given to us” (1-2), she defines it slightly differently for the Canadian context in *The Canadian Postmodern*:²⁷

[Postmodernism] would seem to designate art forms that are fundamentally self-reflexive – in other words, art that is self consciously art (or artifice), literature that is openly aware of the fact that it is written and read as part of a particular culture, having as much to do with the literary past as with the social present. Its use of parody to echo past works signals its awareness that literature is made . . . out of other literature. (1)

On the surface of things, the new definition claims to want to be engaged in a serious way with Canadian history, society and culture, offering perhaps a glimpse of light. But at the

²⁷ It might be worth noting that even in the preceding definition Hutcheon seems unsure if postmodernism can properly deal with the capitalist discourse and liberalism: “they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism.” The word “might” indicates the very unsure nature of Hutcheon’s statement.

same time, Hutcheon silences this possibility by saying that her views on “history” are fragmentary via her comments about the self-reflexivity of art (i.e.: historiographic metafiction).²⁸ Thus, Hutcheon not only upholds the ideological status quo within Canada, but she obfuscates Canadian history and its dialectical foundational framework, rejecting at the same time any sort of national framework upon which to work and base some form of identity.

According to Robin Mathews, the very postmodern process of displacing traditional values and meaning has significant implications for Canadian society and history. He points out that it suggests, amongst other things, “a process of atomization in society because people believe they are invited to shape their own value systems, and so, in fact, it furthers the power of thug aristocracies” (*Treason* 18). The individual becomes prized over and above the community, essentially embodying liberalist values while at the same time denying a solid communal historical perspective. In contrast, the Canadian dialectic as defined by Mathews prizes neither the individual nor the community, instead seeing both entities as equal players in the cultural field while at the same time situating both within a historical perspective.

One of the key criticisms often brought up by critics like Robin Mathews, then, is the claim that postmodernism is “ahistorical” and that it is divorced from any real sense of history. For example, while Linda Hutcheon claims at the outset of *The Canadian Postmodern* to want to “deconstruct” imperial myths and traditions in Canadian literature, she does not do what she says she will in that regard. She only acknowledges British imperialism as having influence over Canada: “[Canadians] have first . . . had to

²⁸ For instance, Hutcheon states that historiographic metafiction is those works that “are intensely self-reflective but that also both re-introduce historical context into metafiction and problematize the entire question of historical knowledge (285-86).

deconstruct *British* social and literary myths in order to redefine their colonial history”

(6). In making this statement, Hutcheon does not address or even acknowledge the impact of American imperialism and American cultural myths on Canada and Canadian fiction.

In so doing, she paints what can only be called a very Wordsworthian view of history, acting as if there is no such thing as U.S. imperialism, despite the obvious fact that American imperialism existed and exists in Canada, not only in literary form, but also in numerous cultural and fiscal policies as well (Granatstein 50; Levitt 61-64; Resnick 97-109). For this reason, Hutcheon ignores “what is potentially the most interesting aspect of the Canadian post-modern [sic] – U.S dominance and influence” (*Treason* 40-1).

One last point about postmodernism’s ahistoricism as it relates to the Mathewsian dialectic and the Canadian context is necessary because it will highlight the claim investigated above that modernism has much to learn from postmodernism (demonstrating postmodernism’s need to set itself apart from its predecessor). Again, in *The Canadian Postmodern*, Linda Hutcheon states most clearly: “But gone now is the modernist belief that art can really be autonomous or separate from the world. . . . For many Canadian novelists, from Timothy Findley to Audrey Thomas, the act of making fiction is an *unavoidably* ideological act” (10). This claim perhaps epitomizes postmodernism’s ahistoricism better than any other because it, again, places emphasis upon Canadian literature written *after* the 1960s onwards as being superior to what had gone before it. Indeed, Robin Mathews argues otherwise in *Canadian Literature*, dedicating whole chapters to writers who wrote well before the 1960s (Major John Richardson, Susanna Moodie, T. C. Haliburton, Hugh MacLennan, to name a few) about

explicitly *political* issues, creating what he termed the “social-political novel” (134).²⁹ Mathews is certainly not alone. Literary critic Larry McDonald, speaking more from the communitarian side of the “Canadian dialectic,” states the matter boldly when he says that Hutcheon’s claim “is an ahistorical travesty of modernism in Canada, which got a late start and was shaped in the 1930s and 1940s” (43). McDonald goes on to note that most of the Canadian writers who “led the break from residual Victorian conventions of writing were deeply influenced by the Depression and by the Marxist challenge to established ways of thinking and writing” (43). For example, FR Scott assisted in the formation of the CCF partly because “the social decay of the Depression altered his ideas about politics and economics” (Bennett and Brown 335). This change in perception had also altered Scott’s views on poetry, which came to reflect his socialist ideological underpinnings.³⁰ Poet Dorothy Livesay can also be included in this group because, much like FR Scott, she was very active in the CCF and, as a result, her social democratic leanings inevitably led her to write modernist poetry dealing specifically with what Robin Mathews has referred to as the “location of real power” (*Treason* 10): poetry that challenged the ideology of social and cultural relationships in Canada,³¹ pointing towards the other side of the Canadian dialectic. Alex Callinicos makes very much the same point (without the Canadian references) about postmodernism’s attempt to carve out for itself a distinct niche within the contemporary world, citing numerous examples of modernist works that have engaged in political dialogue and a challenging of so-called

²⁹ Mathews defines the social-political novel as being “a novel with a purpose. It may be a thesis novel involving politics, religion or social theories. It may have as its basis party propaganda, ideological advocacy, a desire for reform or the furtherance of policy” (*Canadian Literature* 134).

³⁰ See for example FR Scott’s poems “WLMK” and “Trans Canada.”

³¹ See for example Livesay’s “Letter from Canada” and “Improvisations on an Old Theme” or her 1947 publication, *Poems for People*.

metanarratives in their own way acknowledging the very pluralist world of which they were/are a part (10-16). When Mathews (and others) suggest that postmodernism is ahistorical, he is not necessarily suggesting that postmodernism is wrong; rather, he is pointing towards the fact that place is essential when it comes to studying Canada (or any other place). For instance, with respect to language as signifier of place, Mathews has pointed out that it becomes useless as an “instrument of expression . . . when its foundation of meaning is declared bankrupt” (*Treason* 75). For Hutcheon to imply that Canadian modernists have much to learn from the Canadian postmodernists about how writing “is an unavoidably ideological act is a claim that says more about postmodernism’s levelling accommodation of our history to foreign models than about Canadian modernist poetics” (McDonald 44). Such a statement, no doubt, is one with which Mathews would rightly agree because it emphasizes the fact that – according to him – postmodernisms neglect not only the dialectical process, but “history” as specific space.

When Robin Mathews is thus attacked in *The Canadian Postmodern* for apparently making “a very common – if undefended and indefensible – claim that the . . . postmodern is apolitical and ahistorical” (77), one would have to disagree. Robin Mathews has pointed out that the postmodern is very much apolitical because it does not take a firm stance on political issues (*Treason* 34) – something Hutcheon mentions herself in both *The Canadian Postmodern* and *The Politics of Postmodernism* (*Canadian Postmodern* 18; *Politics* 16). Attempting to have it both ways and attempting to downplay postmodern ideological underpinnings, the postmodernist is forced into a form of stasis whereby questions are asked, but no solid answers are given. While this still is a

form of argument within dialectical terms, it is the most apolitical of all ideologies because it calls for the *destruction* of the traditional political process, of politically meaningful questions. When Hutcheon attacks Mathews for claiming that postmodernism is “ahistorical,” Canadian history just does not bear this claim out (nor European history as Callinicos has demonstrated). Rather than present her readers with a sense of historical analysis, she instead presents them with a supposedly detached, “objective” view of fragmented history whereby history serves as a mere backdrop for the postmodern. For instance, because there is much ambiguity about the nature of a “Canadian” identity (i.e.: whether it is regionalist, anti-American, political, multicultural), Hutcheon appropriates this ambiguity to make a common rhetorical claim amongst literary (and some non-literary) theorists: that history has been a mere process of setting up the postmodern. Hutcheon states this in the following manner: “Canadian writers, then, may be primed for the paradoxes of the postmodern by their history . . . and also by their split sense of identity, both regional and national” (4).³²

Thus, postmodernism attempts to paint itself through various complex arguments as a new and liberating theory while at the same time downplaying its own homogenizing tendencies. It similarly paints itself as being deeply concerned with historical analysis and political culture while simultaneously denying these two concepts through its position within the Canadian dialectic, undermining its own subverting tendencies because it encourages and emphasizes the relationship of Canadian texts to transnational theories. In doing this, the Canadian texts and culture become lost because they are

³² For a similar claim see Neuman and Wilson’s interview with Robert Kroetsch (112); also, see Robert Fulford’s essay “A Post-Modern Dominion: The Changing Nature of Canadian Citizenship” in *Belonging* where he talks about the constant shifting of Canadian meaning over the last few decades, resulting in Canada becoming a “post-modern dominion” (118).

incorporated into these deconstructionist theories that are more cosmopolitan in scope in comparison to the Canadian thematic criticism discussed earlier. Simply demonstrating – as Hutcheon and others do – how numerous texts conform to various aspects of postmodernist theory does nothing “to balance a legitimate sense of transcultural similarity with a sense of cultural difference” (McDonald 49). In other words, demonstrating conformance to an international set of postmodern theories does nothing to temper a healthy “influence” or protect a certain level of cultural autonomy.

Given all that has been said, it is possible to conclude that just as postmodern analysis (in whatever form it may take) seeks to deconstruct metanarratives of society into atomistic pieces – essentially creating its own homogenous form of neo-liberal ideology – so too does postmodernism dismiss Robin Mathews and other “leftist” critics with a sleight of hand. In setting up its own binarism against nationalism (Dean 154; Polan 51), postmodernists are able to reduce the complexity of Mathews’ thought down to that of a supposedly reactionary nationalist and anti-American. The underlying assumption to this logic, though, is that since postmodernism seeks to remove all metanarratives, Mathews and his theoretical framework should be dismissed. To that end, since he writes from the left side of the dialectic in Canada, those terms associated with it should also be erased from the socio-cultural vocabulary. While Robin Mathews may have occasionally been referenced in works of the past, he is largely absent within postmodernist discourse because his work is politically ideological and therefore part of a metanarrative (something Mathews does not deny). Gone from postmodern views of Mathews is the complexity of the Canadian dialectical process in which he works and articulates being, the theory underpinning it, and the values he fights for. But to all of

this, Mathews and other critics who follow his ideological line could say, following John Pocock, that the various fragmented pluralities advocated by postmodernists “while conceding that each and every allocation of allegiance is partial, contingent, and provisional, is denying one the freedom to make a final commitment which determines one’s identity, and that is plainly the post-modern danger” (47). While postmodernists thus advocate fragmentation and inclusion at the same time, Mathews can rightly ask what this inclusion actually means, what sort of substance is behind the idea? Can there be inclusion within a society that has become atomized and particular? In order for any sort of national community to exist, there must be some sort of universality; otherwise what exactly is it that the marginalized voices postmodern theory claims to speak to trying to gain entry? It is here where Mathews has something to offer. In pointing towards potential problems within postmodernism, the Mathews-defined Canadian dialectic implies, overall, that while Canadian writers and theorists may borrow from postmodern and U. S. theories of place and region, they should not “submit to it as *centre*” nor should they accept such theories as “universal truth” because “to do so would be a lie and would deny Canadian reality and integrity” (*Treason* 96). Robin Mathews offers a ground upon which to theorize what is lost by the shift to postmodernism that is not offered or evident in the various models and variations of postmodernism mentioned here. In advocating research and theory with a Canadian base that does not exclude the “influence” of outside theories, the Canadian dialectic can be said to offer a valid nationalist perspective in contrast to the more “cosmopolitan” view advocated by postmodernism.

CHAPTER 4: SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

The inherent complexity of Robin Mathews' work and ideas is revealed through an examination of the Canadian dialectic, which itself illustrates how various forces in Canada work to create some semblance of a Canadian identity. This dialectic as shown through an analysis of the Margaret Atwood and Robin Mathews dialogue and a look at postmodernism is far from being monolithic and exclusivist; rather, as a positive corrective to individualism, survivalism and ahistoricism, the Canadian dialectic has shown itself to be a very malleable concept, allowing for a wide variety of positions but demanding a foregrounding of specific place within Canadian history, identity and literature. Frank Davey – of whom Mathews is well aware – has suggested that a dialectical vision of society is “bi-polar” (*Reading* 47), and therefore, by its very nature, oppositional. For him, “The conflicts among ideologies,” therefore, “are not strictly dialectical” (47). Yet, as has been shown, a dialectical vision is not inherently oppositional. There are, after all, numerous small nuances and shades in political ideologies. The Canadian dialectic's very design makes dialogue, debate and compromise a pre-requisite. At an even more significant level, it is through such a structure that the real value to Canada becomes self-evident: while the construction of the political and ideological production of texts is hardly considered a Canadian innovation (something Mathews never denies), he does argue that the Canadian dialectic – through creating two separate yet interrelated readings of texts – articulates something “new” and relevant to Canadian experience. Mathews' definition of a Canadian dialectic and its importance to Canada and Canadian history would lose its shape and meaning if one side of the dialectic were to significantly overpower the other.

What Mathews and his idea of a Canadian dialectic demonstrate, amongst other things, then, is that it is possible to work within a moral theoretical framework that does not wholly rely on imported theories like those of postmodernism. It also clearly illustrates that nationalism is still a viable concept in contemporary Canada within a theoretical and practical context. To that end, Mathews and his critical texts can still teach the curious Canadian and international scholar a great deal about this country, its attitudes, psychology, culture and history.

In that sense, the overall importance of the Canadian dialectic can be summarized as follows: In adopting and modifying a classic Marxist term to suit the Canadian situation, Robin Mathews has articulated a stable theoretical framework that acts as a sort of counter-measure to culturally pervasive positions.

The chapter dealing specifically with the Atwood and Mathews dialogue, for instance, focused primarily on the importance of thematic criticism in relation to the concept of Canadian nationalism and identity. Throughout the discussion, emphasis was placed on the very different nature of nationalism in Canada according to Mathews and Atwood, creating what might rightly be called “nationalisms” in Canada. The dialogue, in using the Canadian dialectical perspective, illuminated the two critics’ points of view as it relates to thematic criticism in Canadian literature. Through the process of dialectic, Mathews was able to develop a concept of thematic criticism (through his book *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution*) that allowed Canadians to study in a specific geographical space at the same time as it allowed for the “influence” of other literary methodologies. In demonstrating such a point, Mathews and his dialectic re-enforced the importance of political “values” in relation to place. Lastly, the chapter on

postmodernisms demonstrated how and why Mathews, while a very important figure in the 1960s and 1970s, has become less prominent in recent years. Yet, at the same time as the Canadian dialectic suggests reasons for Mathews' less significant role in Canadian literature, it also alludes to how the Canadian dialectic and Mathews can still be of "value" in the modern day.

Given that Mathews' theory is that of a Canadian dialectic of a certain bent, inherent within this concept is an assumption of dialogue, debate and synthesis. This synthesis, while providing a stable "third space" within which to articulate Canadian experience as interpreted by Mathews, also works towards elaborating upon its role with respect to alternative theories to dialectic. For example, in the "Introduction" of this project, the synthesis was used to explain the communal nature of Mathews' world views and elaborate upon how "nationalism" could still be seen as a valuable concept in the modern era. In particular, the theory introduced the Mathews communitarianism as being one that worked within a moral-philosophical framework, suggesting that while people themselves are agents in society contributing to the whole, the people themselves consciously or unconsciously agree that certain value-laden principles are necessary for the realization of a common, yet different sense of identity. This paradox of dialectic, it was suggested, was what held community together. Yet, at the same time, this holding together of community also acknowledged that individualism has just as much a right to existence and debate – a point made tellingly clear by Robin Mathews and his abstract notion of Canadian place within the individual. With this acknowledgement, the dialectical theory – as argued by Mathews – attempts to "awaken" peoples into realizing that the Canadian dialectic itself exists.

The title of Robin Mathews' 1978 book of literary criticism *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution* is useful in summarizing what the Canadian dialectic does in terms of being a corrective. At the conclusion of this text, Mathews ends on what can only be called a very militant note. Discussing the need for Canadians to wake up out of their colonial slumber, Mathews writes that a "revolution – violent and/or other" may be needed (*Canadian Literature* 228). Granted, this is an extreme position (and historically dated), but if one reads into Mathews, it makes perfect sense. For example, as he pointed out in a recent e-mail, the Canadian dialectic, in his view, "is a war because people define themselves by what they think the world outside them is all about and what a true definition of the individual human being is" ("9 April 08"). If people "define themselves" by the world they see outside, and the Canadian dialectic is largely absent from such an interpretation, it stands to reason that there is no imperial war being fought. This, of course, is where the Canadian dialectic comes in and is emphasized, pointing out that "other" side in the literature and culture. Indeed, this was the point of Chapter III of the thesis project which dealt mostly with postmodernisms. The intent was not to prove postmodernisms "wrong," but simply to rearticulate the role of dialectic as alternative, complimentary, and previously under-represented modes of thought.

In stating that, it must be emphasized that what Mathews is advocating when he suggests that Canadians need to ground themselves in Canadian experience is not that it is "wrong" to study and apply international theories to other contexts. In fact, Robin Mathews would be one of the first to point out that to limit oneself to the study of one's own country is a very parochial activity. The Canadian dialectic, as it has been

articulated, welcomes outside “influence,” but points towards the dangers of downright “dominance.”

What has been written, however, has only begun the long task of, in Russell Brown’s words, “resuscitating Mathews” (“Canadian Literature”). There is still much work to be done. Still left largely untouched are the many books of poetry by Robin Mathews, his short fiction, letters, and his colourful academic career. When Mathews wrote his *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution*, he was recognized as having done something very uncommon (and still uncommon) – providing a view of literature grounded in politics, culture, economics, and history. In doing that, Mathews not only questioned many of the socio-political assumptions of the day, but he also provided a sort of corrective in his critique of the inherent relationship between literature and politics via a moral framework of dialectic. This dialectical structure is often missing from literary and cultural analysis here at the start of the twenty-first century.

When Robin Mathews is eventually freed of his rhetoric, perhaps he will one day be granted significant inclusion in literary and cultural works like W.H. New’s *A History of Canadian Literature* where he currently receives a cursory and largely forgettable mention (171). After all, it usually turns out to be those marginalized voices in society that prove to be amongst the most valuable, since innovation and originality tend to begin at the periphery. Robin Mathews recognizes this all too important fact. He has, in his various books of cultural and literary criticism, written – and continues – to write about the importance of those marginalized voices. In Mathews’ words, Canadians “have engaged in major arguments and major collisions of values that are recognizable as

certain kinds of basic philosophical differences about the definition of humankind and human community. That is what I have called the *Canadian Dialectic*” (*Intellectual* 223).

Works Cited

- Allor, Martin. "Projective Readings: Cultural Studies from Here." *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 11 (1987): 134-38.
- Atwood, Margaret. "The Messianic Stance: *The West Coast Seen*." *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose 1960-1982*. Toronto: Anansi, 1982. 79-82.
- . "Mathews and Misrepresentation." *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose: 1960-1982*. Toronto: Anansi, 1982. 129-50.
- . "Canadian-American Relations: Surviving the Eighties." *Second Words: Selected Critical Prose 1960-1982*. Toronto: Anansi, 1982. 371-92.
- . *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. 1972. Toronto: M&S, 2004.
- Baldwin, Jacqueline. *Threadbare like Lace*. Prince George: Caitlin, 1997.
- Beeler, Karin, and Dee Horne. Introduction. *Diverse Landscapes: Re-Reading Place Across Cultures in Contemporary Canadian Writing*. Eds. Karin Beeler and Dee Horne. Prince George, BC: U of Northern British Columbia P, 1996. 1-7.
- Beiner, Ronald. *Liberalism, Nationalism, Citizenship: Essays on the Problem of Political Community*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2003.
- Bennett, Donna, and Russell Brown. Eds. *A New Anthology of Canadian Literature in English*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 2002.
- Blodgett, E. D. "54 40' or Fight." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 12 (1978): 261-73.
- Bottomore, Tom. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995.
- Brown, Russell M. "The Practice and Theory of Canadian Thematic Criticism: A Reconsideration." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 20 (2001). 654-89.
- . "Canadian Literature." 27 January 2006. Personal E-mail.

- Callinicos, Alex. *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*. New York: St. Martin's, 1990.
- Cameron, Barry, and Michael Dixon. "Introduction: Mandatory Subversive Manifesto: Canadian Criticism vs. Literary Criticism." *SCL* 2 (1977): 137-45.
- Cook, Ramsey. *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1971.
- Cook, Sharon Anne. "'Patriotism, Eh?' The Canadian Version." *Phi Delta Kappan* 87 (2006): 589-93.
- Cormier, Jeffrey. *The Canadianization Movement: Emergence, Survival, and Success*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004.
- Corse, Sarah M. *Nationalism and Literature: The Politics of Culture in Canada and the United States*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Crowley, David, and David Mitchell. "Communications in Canada: Enduring Themes, Emerging Issues." *Canada: Theoretical Discourse / Discours théoriques*. Eds. Terry Goldie, Carmen Lambert, and Rowland Lorimer. Montreal: ACS, 1994. 133-52.
- Dart, Ron. *The Red Tory Tradition: Ancient Roots, New Routes*. Dewdney, BC: Synaxis, 1999.
- . *Robin Mathews: Crown Prince of Canadian Political Poets*. Dewdney, BC: Synaxis, 2002.
- . *The Canadian High Tory Tradition: Raids on the Unspeakable*. Dewdney, BC: Synaxis, 2004.
- Davey, Frank. *Reading Canadian Reading*. Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1988.
- . *Post-National Arguments: The Politics of the Anglophone-Canadian Novel since*

1967. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993.

Dean, Misao. "Canadian 'Vulgar Nationalism' in the Postmodern Age." *Canada: Theoretical Discourse/Discours théoriques*. Eds. Terry Goldie, Carmen Lambert, and Rowland Lorimer. Montreal: ACS, 1994. 153-66.

Deer, Glenn. *Postmodern Canadian Fiction and the Rhetoric of Authority*. Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 1994.

Edwardson, Ryan. "'Kicking Uncle Sam out of the Peaceable Kingdom': English-Canadian 'New Nationalism' and Americanization." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 37 (2003): 131-50.

Fairfield, Paul. "Nationalism and the Politics of Identity." *Is there a Canadian Philosophy? Reflections on the Canadian Identity*. Eds. GB Madison, Paul Fairfield and Ingrid Harris. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2000. 89-116.

Frumhartz, Muni. "Item 21: Memorandum to Mathews from Professor Frumhartz, January 7, 1969." *The Struggle for Canadian Universities*. Eds. Robin Mathews and James Steele. Toronto: New, 1969. 50-52.

Frye, Northrop. *The Educated Imagination*. 1963. Toronto: Anansi, 2002.

---. "Conclusion." 1965. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. Toronto: Anansi, 1995. 215-54.

---. "Canada and its Poetry." 1943. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. Toronto: Anansi, 1995. 131-45.

---. "The Narrative Tradition in English-Canadian Poetry." 1946. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. Toronto: Anansi, 1995. 147-57.

---. "Silence in the Sea." 1968. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*.

- Toronto: Anansi, 1995. 183-99.
- . "Author's Preface." 1971. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. Toronto: Anansi, 1995. xxi-xxx.
- Gibbins, Roger. *The New Face of Canadian Nationalism*. Kingston, ON: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1995.
- Gibson, Graeme. "Dissecting the Way a Writer Works." *Margaret Atwood: Conversations*. Ed. Earl G. Ingersoll. Firefly, 1990. 3-19.
- Granatstein, J. L. "Cooperation and Conflict: The Course of Canadian-American Relations since 1945." *Canada and the United States: Enduring Friendship, Persistent Stress*. Eds. Charles F. Doran and John H. Sigler. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1985. 45-68.
- . *Yankee Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1996.
- Grant, George. *Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism*. 1965. 40th Anniversary Edition. Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 2005.
- . "An Ethic of Community." 1961. *The George Grant Reader*. Eds. William Christian and Sheila Grant. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998. 59-75.
- Greenfield, Liah. *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992.
- Grove, Frederick Philip. *Fruits of the Earth*. 1933. Toronto: M&S, 1989.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. "Introduction to the Philosophy of History." *Classics in Political Philosophy*. 3rd ed. Ed. Jene M. Porter. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000. 446-80.
- Henighan, Stephen. *When Words Deny the World: The Reshaping of Canadian Writing*. Erin ON: Porcupine's Quill, 2002.

- Horowitz, Gad. "Commentary." *By Loving our Own: George Grant and the Legacy of Lament for a Nation*. Ed. Peter C. Emberley. Ottawa: Carleton UP, 1990. 75-82.
- Hutcheon, Linda. "'The Pastime of Past Time': Fiction, History, Historiographic Metafiction." *Genre* 20 (1987).
- . *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1988.
- . *The Politics of Postmodernism*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism and Consumer Society." *Postmodernism and its Discontents: Theories, Practices*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York: Verso, 1989. 13-29.
- Kaplan, E. Ann. "Introduction." *Postmodernism and its Discontents: Theories, Practices*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York: Verso, 1989. 1-9.
- Killbourn, William. Ed. *Canada: A Guide to the Peaceable Kingdom*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1970.
- Kroetsch, Robert. "Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue." *Beyond Nationalism: The Canadian Literary Scene in Global Perspective*. Ed. Evelyn J. Hinz. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 1981. v-xi.
- Leacock, Stephen. *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. 1912. Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2002.
- Levitt, Kari. *Silent Surrender: The Multinational Corporation in Canada*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1970.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin. "Reflections on Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy." *Journal of Democracy* 4 (1993): 43-55.

Lumsden, Ian. Ed. *Close the 49th Parallel etc: The Americanization of Canada*. Toronto:

U of Toronto P, 1970.

Lynch, Gerald. *Stephen Leacock: Humour and Humanity*. Montreal: McGill-Queens

UP, 1988.

Lyons, Bonnie. "Using other People's Dreadful Childhoods." *Margaret Atwood:*

Conversations. Ed. Earl G. Ingersoll. Firefly, 1990. 221-33.

Lytard, Jean-Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*.

Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.

MacKendrick, Louis K. "English-Canadian Fiction and Poetry." *Profiles of Canada*.

Ed. Kenneth G. Pryke and Walter C. Soderlund. Toronto: Copp, 1992. 276-99.

Macpherson, C. B. "Item 2: Letter in reply to Mathews from Professor Macpherson,

March 7, 1969." *The Struggle for Canadian Universities*. Eds. Robin Mathews and James Steele. Toronto: New, 1969. 109-10.

Madison, G. B. "Nationality and Universality." *Is there a Canadian Philosophy?*

Reflections on the Canadian Identity. By GB Madison, Paul Fairfield and Ingrid Harris. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2000. 9-88.

Manson, Andrew. "Liberalism and the Value of Community." *Canadian Journal of*

Philosophy 23 (1993): 215-40.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: Volume 1*. New York: Penguin, 1990.

Mathews, Robin, and James Steele. Eds. *The Struggle for Canadian Universities*.

Toronto: New, 1969.

Mathews, Robin. *This Time, This Place*. Edmonton: Pioneer, 1965.

---. *Canadian Literature: Surrender or Revolution*. Toronto: Steel, 1978.

- . *Canadian Identity: Major Forces Shaping the Life of a People*. Ottawa: Steel, 1988.
- . *The Death of Socialism and other Poems*. Prescott ON: Voyageur, 1995.
- . *The Treason of the Intellectuals: English Canada in the Post-Modern Period*. Prescott ON: Voyageur, 1995.
- . *The Canadian Intellectual Tradition: A Modern People and its Community*. Burnaby: Centre for Canadian Studies, 2002.
- . "Izzy Asper, Barbara Frum, Warren Davis and the Robot Right." *Vive le Canada* 15 October 2003. 11 August 2005
< <http://www.vivelecanada.ca/article/220022959-izzy-asper-barbara-frum-warren-davis-and-the-robot-right>>.
- . *George Grant's Betrayal of Canada*. Vancouver: Northland, 2004.
- . "Canadian Responses to U.S. Torture." *Vive le Canada* 28 December 2005. 20 November 2006 <<http://www.vivelecanada.ca/article.php/20051227132029795>>.
- . "Canadian Dialectic." 9 April 2008. Personal E-mail.
- . "Colonial Canada Now (Part Five): The Boulevard of Lies." *Vive le Canada* 01 July 2008. 19 July 2008 < <http://www.vivelecanada.ca/article/235930214-colonial-canada-now-part-five-the-boulevard-of-lies>>.
- McClintock, Anne. "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism.'" *Social Texts* 31 (1992): 84-98.
- McDonald, Larry. "I Looked for It and There It Was – Gone: History in Postmodern Criticism." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 56 (1995): 37-50.
- . "Socialism and the English Canadian Literary Tradition." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 68 (1999): 213-41.

- Miller, David. "Community and Citizenship." *Communitarianism and Individualism*. Eds. Shlomo Avineri and Avner de-Shalit. New York: Oxford UP, 1992. 85-100.
- Montag, Warren. "What is at Stake in the Debate on Postmodernism?" *Postmodernism and its Discontents: Theories, Practices*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York: Verso, 1989. 88-103.
- Morton, W. L. *The Canadian Identity*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1972.
- Neuman, Shirley, and Robert Wilson. *Labyrinths of Voice: Conversations with Robert Kroetsch*. Edmonton: NeWest, 1982.
- New, W.H. *A History of Canadian Literature*. 2nd ed. Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 2003.
- Onufrijchuk, Roman. "Post-modern or Perednovok: Deconstructing 'Ethnicity.'" *Ethnicity in a Technological Age*. Ed. Ian H. Angus. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1988.
- Perkins, Don. "Dramatizing Canada's 'Regions of Shared Anxiety.'" *Diverse Landscapes: Re-Reading Place Across Cultures in Contemporary Canadian Writing*. Eds. Karin Beeler and Dee Horne. Prince George, BC: U of Northern British Columbia P, 1996. 28-35.
- Pocock, J. G. A. "The Ideal of Citizenship since Classical Times." *Theorizing Citizenship*. Ed. Ronald Beiner. Albany: State U of New York P, 1995. 39-52.
- Polan, Dana. "Postmodernism and Cultural Analysis Today." *Postmodernism and its Discontents*. Ed. E. Ann Kaplan. New York: Verso, 1989. 45-58.
- Pratt, EJ. "Towards the Last Spike." *A New Anthology of Canadian Literature in English*. Eds. Donna Bennett and Russell Brown. Toronto: Oxford UP, 2002.

286-313.

Purdy, Al. Ed. *The New Romans: Candid Canadian Opinions of the U. S.* Edmonton: Hurtig, 1968.

Redekop, John H. Ed. *The Star-Spangled Beaver.* Toronto: Peter Martin, 1971.

Resnick, Philip. "Canadian Defence Policy and the American Empire." *Close the 49th Parallel, etc: The Americanization of Canada.* Ed. Ian Lumsden. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1970. 93-116.

Sardar, Ziauddin. *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture.* London: Pluto, 1998.

Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity.* Reno: U of Nevada P, 1993.

Swanson, Roger Frank. "Canadian Cultural Nationalism and the U.S. Public Interest." *Canadian Cultural Nationalism: The Fourth Lester B. Pearson Conference on Canada-U.S. Relationship.* Ed. Janice L. Murray. New York: New York UP, 1977. 55-82.

Tallman, Warren. *In the Midst.* Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1992.

Taylor, Charles. *Radical Tories: The Conservative Tradition in Canada.* 1982. Toronto: Anansi, 2006.

Taylor, Charles. *The Malaise of Modernity.* Toronto: Anansi, 1991.

---. *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism.* Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 2003.

Thomas, Peter. *Robert Kroetsch.* Vancouver: Douglas, 1980.

Twigg, Alan. "Just Looking at Things that are There." *Margaret Atwood: Conversations.* Ed. Earl G. Ingersoll. Firefly, 1990. 121-30.

Vickers, Jill. "Liberating Theory in Canadian Studies." *Canada: Theoretical Discourse /*

Discours théoriques. Eds. Terry Goldie, Carmen Lambert, and Rowland Lorimer.

Montreal: ACS, 1994. 351-71.

William, Michael. "When the Nationalist Frenzy Strikes." *Semiotext(e): Canadas*. Ed.

Jordan Zinovich. Peterborough, ON: Marginal Editions, 1994. 88-89.