

**The Protean Prairie:
Examining Identity Constructions in Contemporary Canadian
Literature**

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Abstract

This thesis examines processes of identity construction as they are represented in four contemporary prairie texts. In his book *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation*, Robert J. Lifton describes a process of identity formation that he terms proteanism, which denotes a certain “responsive shapeshifting” (Lifton 9) that allows the self to maintain fluid or malleable relationships with the various forces that affect or influence its construction. Through this analysis I intend to show how the authorial personae created in *The Kappa Child* by Hiromi Goto, Esi Edugyan’s *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, *Steppe: A Novel* by John Weier and *City Treaty* by Marvin Francis demonstrate, in their identitarian struggles, protean forms of resilience when dealing with the forces of genre and formal convention, as well as with the politics of postcolonialism, ethnicity, authenticity and authority that impress upon their identities and surge within their narratives.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Andrew Young. It saddens me that I can only wonder at how you might have received this project and hope that you would have approved.

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Introduction

In crafting this work I have three objectives in mind: I want to highlight literary works that are close, both geographically and temporally, to my own agrarian prairie upbringing; to accurately reflect their complex thematic engagements; and to explore the more liberated forms of representation and identity construction that frequently, though not necessarily or exclusively, characterize Canadian prairie literature. Though my search for primary texts did not produce an avalanche of results I did discover two wonderful books, Esi Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, and John Weier's *Steppe: A Novel*, which reflected many of the qualities that were already of interest to me in Goto's *The Kappa Child* and Francis' *City Treaty*. What fascinates me about the authorial personae constructed in these four prairie texts is the way that they each engage with a traumatic history not in anger or resentment, but through humour, sometimes irony, and with a degree of compassion that demonstrates an extremely nuanced understanding of the complexity of the histories with which they engage. I choose to employ Lifton's theory as the theoretical backbone for this analysis because the protean self displays a particular relationship with convention, idea systems, and concepts of space and power that is characterized by fluidity, malleability, hybridity, and an absence of distinct and rigid boundaries, which accurately reflects the engagement with these themes in these four prairie texts. However, the protean self, by its very nature, is difficult to grasp. We might begin by considering the obvious reference to Proteus, the Greek god of many forms, but Lifton's theory is much more complex and far reaching. Proteanism, or the protean self, is an extremely large, all-encompassing theory and over the course of the

next four chapters I will repeatedly attempt to bring clarity to its particular functions and parameters within the relevant sections.

A psychiatrist and author, Lifton is most famous for his work in Holocaust research and his studies on the psychology of war. In his research Lifton notes that some individuals are particularly resilient to the experience of trauma and in his book *The Protean Self* (1993) he seeks to identify and characterize the psychological trait that facilitates this resilience. However, in *The Protean Self*, Lifton expands his analytic purview beyond the traumatic experiences of war by focusing, in individual case studies, on specific traumas experienced by individuals from a variety of cultural and socio-economic positions within the American social landscape. Lifton demonstrates how trauma can be conceptually equated with fragmentation, or a combination of fragmentations (political, cultural, familial, interpersonal, or intrapersonal), and that the most resilient people are those who demonstrate what he describes as protean characteristics when encountering these traumatic forms of fragmentation.

Lifton sees proteanism as, among other things, the essential attribute or capacity that facilitates the progress of human kind. Since evolution itself is a protean process all animals are to some extent protean; however, according to Lifton, *Homo sapiens* are a particularly protean species. Proteanism is adaptation, a process of “responsive shapeshifting” (Lifton 9), but it is also much more. Lifton states that “Proteus suggests [...] a particular human evolutionary achievement, the capacity for flexible imagination and action. The appearance of this ‘*open-ended behavioural repertoire*’ is related to a perception of time. That perception includes a concept of death, [and] a concern about the future” (13 emphasis author's). While this examination does not intend to debate the

validity of Lifton's division of human and animal, for I am not sure that we have the ability to determine the attributes of the animal self (protean or otherwise), his description of the most primordial manifestations of proteanism serve as a good starting point for the following analysis. According to Lifton the primitive protean human lives in a realm of potentialities, a world of possibilities, perceiving a future in constant flux that is dependent on or dictated by actions in the present. Lifton states that this perception is enabled by the protean "capacity for bringing together disparate and seemingly incompatible elements of identity" into a cohesive whole (5). Lifton asks us to consider primitive humans who discover a river barring their path. The protean individuals "look both ways" (13) in an attempt to gain information that will help them imagine a variety of potential outcomes from a foray into the waters. Based on the information available, and in a truly protean fashion, the individuals alter themselves in some way; we can imagine them looking for an alternate route, mounting a log etc., in an attempt to achieve the most desirable outcome. This is the essence of the protean self, that process of "responsive shapeshifting," that "capacity for flexible imagination and action," which allows the protean individuals to navigate the world, to anticipate and to respond to the various forces that might affect them, while maintaining a certain cohesivity of self.

Like other texts this analysis seeks to complicate simplistic conceptions of prairie identity¹, but more specifically this thesis focuses on representations of the protean process of identity construction in *The Kappa Child* by Hiromi Goto, Esi Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, *Steppe: A Novel* by John Weier and *City Treaty* by Marvin Francis. The first chapter, "Gauging Genre: Identity Construction, and Representational

¹ Calder and Wardhaugh, *History, Literature and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2005).

Convention,” will investigate problems of genre and definition, asking how we might responsibly group these texts, and shall elucidate the narrators’ negotiations of the politics of convention. By examining points of resistance, assimilation, and appropriation this chapter will demonstrate that these texts each maintain a protean relationship with the conventions of the *kunstlerroman*. The second chapter, “Postcoloniality, Postcolonialism, and the Protean Prairie: Fundamentalism Resistance in an Age of Entropy,” will explain how postcolonial discourse follows the cyclical or dialectic process of entropy, proteanism, and fundamentalism. Ultimately, this analysis will elucidate the way that these texts, while simultaneously embracing and promoting many issues central in postcolonial discourse, demonstrate a protean reaction to postcolonial fundamentalism. The third chapter, “Protean Space: Foundation, Form, Fragmentation and Fundamentalism,” relies heavily on Deleuze and Guattari and their concepts of smooth and striated spaces in order to show how spaces are figured within these four prairie texts, and demonstrates that the process of smoothing and striation described in *A Thousand Plateaus* parallels the protean dialectic. This chapter will examine the treatment of form in these fictions in order to demonstrate how the Riemannian qualities of protean space have been imparted to the textual spaces of these works. This chapter will also demonstrate how this concept of protean space can be extended to accurately reflect the constructions of racial, textual and historical spaces presented within these four prairie texts. The final chapter, “Narrative Negotiations: Authorial Authority and the Absence of Authenticity,” will examine the way power relations are represented in these texts. Relying heavily on Foucault’s concept of power relations, as described in *The History of Sexuality*, this chapter shall examine the representations of, and engagements

with, currents of power within these texts. Finally, this chapter will highlight how these texts disrupt hierarchical conceptions of power relations and posit instead a protean matrix of power inter-relations. Ultimately, though Lifton characterizes the protean self as a strongly American phenomenon, this thesis will reveal the prevalence of proteanism on the Canadian prairies.

Chapter One:
Gauging Genre: Identity Construction,
and Representational Convention

In the twelfth century both European and Islamic artists looked to Graeco-Roman art as a model of artistic accomplishment and considered themselves the natural heirs of that tradition. In Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* this process of mutual inheritance is described as resembling "two fierce beasts tugging at the carcass of Graeco-Roman art," stretching and pulling it "out of [...] or perhaps [...] into shape" (44). As these prospective heirs conform their styles to Graeco-Roman convention, blending and mixing it with pre-existing conventions, they do so while focusing on and following the aspects of the Graeco-Roman tradition that best suit their respective representational needs, and, consequently, they produce very disparate results. I employ Clark's description of the evolution of Graeco-Roman style not to engage in a historical analysis of Classical art, but because this process of pulling and stretching not out of but into shape accurately describes the protean capacity for responsive shapeshifting as well as serves to illustrate the type of relationship to convention that will be under discussion in this chapter.

It is my intention in this chapter to show how the authorial personae of *The Kappa Child*, *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, *Steppe: A Novel*, and *City Treaty* maintain a protean relationship with the conventions, or forces, of genre. First this analysis will cause us to examine questions of how to group these texts together responsibly, under the rubric of what common theme or by what theoretical paradigm, and to engage with the problems that this process of grouping engenders. Then, by following the convergences with, complications of, and divergences from the standards of the *kunstlerroman*, among other literary conventions, we will begin to perceive the protean qualities of these texts.

Each of these texts not only follows or borrows from established conventions but significantly reworks and personalizes those conventions in an effort to explore new and transformative forms of expression and representation. However, if we look closely at this process of reworking it is clear that it is neither submissive assimilation nor aggressive appropriation, but a form of personalisation that attempts to sidestep the postcolonial politics of mimicry by positing a protean rather than antagonistic relationship with literary convention. The textual results of this protean reaction to convention are not uniform because proteanism is inward-looking; it is “responsive shapeshifting,” rather than outward-looking and paradigmatic in nature. And so, these texts resemble a brood as discordant and cacophonous as the sources that spawned them and my analysis begins to look as protean as the texts it seeks to examine.

The act of grouping texts is a precarious business. The process of grouping presupposes some form of cohesion between texts, but that connection might be dubious, contested, secondary, or obscured by other, more prominent or obvious relations to different texts and discourses. Thus it seems important at this point to assert some of the more general parallels between these texts so as to align them within the same discourse. Each of these texts, *The Kappa Child*, *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, *Steppe: A Novel*, and *City Treaty*, are prairie texts, that is, they are about the prairies and written by prairie dwellers. Each text is concerned with ethnicity, the process of identity construction, the forces that affect this process and the praxis of literary representation. Each text is self-reflexive, demonstrating awareness both of its textual constructed-ness and the discourses in which it exists. These texts might be considered auto-ethnographic in nature, since each text is concerned with self-representation and constructions of ethnicity. However,

the value of the term auto-ethnography has been challenged by Eva Karpinski in her article “‘Do not exploit me again and again:’ Queering Autoethnography in Suniti Jamjoshi’s *Goja: An Autobiographical Myth*.” Karpinski notes that there is “a space of resistance between the individual (auto-) and the collective (-ethno-) where the writing (-graphy) of singularity cannot be foreclosed” (Karpinski 228). In this sense conceptualization by auto-ethnographic means is problematic because auto-ethnography is itself an inherently conflicted and paradoxical concept. In many ways these texts resemble *kunstlerromans* - most striking is their concern for depicting the genesis of an artist - but reading these texts strictly within this framework might seem to ignore their politically-charged nature, since political investment is not a central tenet of the *kunstlerroman*, as well as their concern about representations of ethnicity.

However, the *kunstlerroman* and ethnic writing are not so mutually exclusive. Ethnic writing, as described by Graham Huggan in his article “Exoticism and Ethnicity in Michael Ondaatje’s *Running in the Family*,” “involves much more than an expression of the social experience of otherness. It also concerns alternative ways of inventing oneself, one’s past, one’s family – and of finding, or failing to find, a space between others’ words, others’ fictions, others’ languages” (“Exoticism” 124). And likewise, Carl D. Malmgren in “‘From Work to Text:’ The Modernist and Postmodernist *Kunstlerroman*” perceives within the *kunstlerroman* the same concern for creating alternate means of representing the self, family, and history, as well as a need to discover new ways for conceiving of the relationship between other texts (familial, historical and literary) and the self-narratives in which they surge. However, this is not to assert that the *kunstlerroman* and ethnic writing are equivalent or synonymous nor does it suggest that

these texts represent a merging of the two genres. Rather my intention is demonstrate how each text maintains a fluid relationship with the conventions of these genres, performing a type of protean synthesis, in order to create personalized and liberated spaces for, or means of, expression.

In the more general aspects, as well as the more specific, which will be discussed shortly, each of these four prairie texts conforms to the parameters of the *kunstlerroman*. Each of these texts is concerned with representing the genesis of the artist. Goto's *The Kappa Child* is an unambiguous example of this as the text chronicles the narrator's progression from youth to adulthood and makes plain her artistic ambitions of self representation. Francis' *City Treaty* and Weier's *Steppe: A Novel* both openly, and self-reflexively, seek to represent the process of artistic genesis. However, the artistic, or authorial, protagonist of Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* is slightly more obscure and necessitates a little illumination. The retrospective third person perspective of Edugyan's narrator at first seems disembodied and omnipresent, but we soon realize that she is also limited, as she leaves large and integral portions of plot blank. Only with the return of the one remaining twin to her family home at the end do we understand that these conspicuous absences, which always revolve around the twins, are created by Yvette, in retrospect, to force readers into the same assumptive position as the townspeople. In this way it is clear how all four of these texts, in a very general way, conform to the parameters of the *kunstlerroman*. However, to say this with any degree of certitude we must explore the more specific *kunstlerroman*ic aspects of each text in greater detail.

Malmgren's article describes certain prominent, almost archetypal features which serve to distinguish the artistic, or authorial, protagonist of the *kunstlerroman*. He states that "the artist's name itself or the act of naming sets the artist apart" (6) and this is certainly true of the authorial personae of these four prairie texts. In Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, as Maud stares out the window in consternation at the restlessness of her infant daughters, a small voice suddenly emerges from the crib: "You don't have to name me. I am Annalia" (Edugyan 17). As this assertion of control over representation of the self is executed at six days of age this selection clearly demonstrates how the act of naming distinguishes the twins, or sets them apart from others. Moreover, it is interesting that, while their linguistic proficiency serves to differentiate the twins from other characters in the text, the fact that the speaker remains ambiguous renders the division between the twins more obscure. However, while the reason for the prominence of this ambiguating process within the text, for the consistent confusion of the twins, viewing or constructing them as one entity – "The twins" – does not become fully clear until later in the text, it is evident that one of the twins is the authorial protagonist of the *kunstlerroman*.

As the narrator of Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child* finds herself and her siblings submerged in the Canadian prairie she endures the alienating experience of constant mispronunciation of her name. However, rather than internalize the experience as some form of trauma the narrator is able to use it to discover a more personalized form of self-representation. The narrator muses: "What's in a name? some people say. A great deal, was my conclusion. So when it was apparent no one could utter us intelligibly, I made up new names, based on the animal of our birth year. Names that would disguise and protect

us” (Goto 15). In this selection we can see that both the narrator’s name itself, as she is left unnamed, and the act of naming, as she “anoints” (16) her sisters with names to “disguise and protect” them, distinguishes her within the text. However, there is much more to this passage. The act of naming in this selection is reminiscent of Huggan’s conception of ethnic writing in that “it also concerns alternative ways of inventing [or reinventing] oneself.” While it is clear that, in this selection, Goto’s narrator is conforming perfectly to the *kunstlerroman*’s parameters, in so doing she is also articulating “the social experience of otherness.” The experience of racialization is articulated through the phrase “no one could utter us intelligibly;” however, it is important to note that in this project of renaming her sisters, so as to make them more “intelligible,” she does not choose Euro-Canadian names but ones “based on the animal of [their] birth year[s]” within the Japanese zodiac. The narrator, in true protean fashion, executes a complex deliberating process in choosing and conferring these names, first asking her mother for Japanese words and analysing their effectiveness, then choosing names rooted in Japanese but articulated in English, and finally bestowing them in a Christian manner despite their Buddhist heritage. In choosing names that reflect certain qualities the narrator perceives as inherent to each of her sisters – though she admits some difficulty with P.G., Mice is mousy and Slither sensual (16)– and by renaming herself and her sisters with names that are easily pronounced by Anglophone Canadians the narrator demonstrates her ability to bring together “disparate and seemingly incompatible elements of identity” (Lifton 5). This involved process is interesting in as much as it demonstrates a consciously protean, personalized, ethnic identitarian balancing act.

In Marvin Francis' *City Treaty* the interest in the practice of naming is more overtly politicized. Francis' narrator, Joe tb, illustrates how the process of naming has worked, and continues to work, to keep Aboriginal peoples in marginal positions. In the end of the section titled "Court Transcripts," directly before the section "treaty names," Joe states: "those red names white language / they all share / the same last / name: / HIS MARK" (Francis 11). Through this selection Joe demonstrates how legal discourse, specifically treaty language, is intertwined with the power of naming as an act of self representation. The employment of the phrase "HIS MARK" is reminiscent of those early land speculators who dupe the illiterate, and legally inexperienced, into signing away their land titles. By stating that the First Nations' signature of treaties all bear this last name Joe calls into question the circumstances that surround treaty signings as well as the fairness, and maybe even the legality, of adhering to contracts signed under such uneven relations of power.

The authorial narrator of Weier's *Steppe: A Novel* is also concerned about names in a historical sense. After searching in vain, through stack upon stack of archival material for evidence of his family's history prior to immigration Weier's narrator asks:

What do I do now? Who am I looking for? All the volumes I've read, all the memoirs, diaries, letters, pages and pages I've turned. Names: Weibe, Thiessen, Friesen, Koop, Toews, Dyck, Janzen. I find no record of our name. I read more books. Where is my family? What is my past? Were we even there? Do I belong in this story? Switzerland, Germany, the Vistula Delta, Ukraine, Canada. Where is my home? I was lost in Canada growing up. Was I lost in Ukraine too? How long have I been spinning to the edge? (Weier "2.14 Journal: November 26, 1992")

Here we can clearly see the characterization of the narrator, longing to discover his ethnic origins and experiencing a sense of homelessness or displacement. Moreover, in this selection we see the importance not only of historical connectedness for the development

of a cohesive sense of self but also of naming in tracing connections across time and geography. However, just as Weier's narrator finds his name absent from history, so he remains unnamed throughout the text. In essence, the narrator's deliberate refusal to reveal his name reflects the absence of his family name from historical records. In this sense we can see how the process of naming is central to Weier's text and how this process, or the lack thereof, distinguishes the narrator within it.

Malmgren's article describes certain physiological parameters which also serve to distinguish the artistic authorial persona of the *kunstlerroman*. He states that the author of a *kunstlerroman* normally "ascribe[s] to the adolescent certain salient, ultimately *typical*, features, which can be gathered under the following rubric: the artist is a *marked* [person]" (Malmgren 5-6). While each of the texts under consideration here demonstrate some adherence to this convention, the manner in which this adherence manifests itself is varied and diverse. It might seem as though Weier's text cannot adhere to this convention, since the narrator's physical body is as absent as his nomenclature. Yet we can also see how the narrator's lack of physical disposition is the very quality that distinguishes him. Moreover, as "Ukraine's postcolonial status seem[s] a precarious, even fictive thing," (Keefer 96) we see that the narrator's lack of physical presence in the text also reflects the absence of Ukrainian considerations within the postcolonial political arena. In this way it is clear how Weier's narrator not only works within convention, but also reworks these conventions, in order to engage with the issues of representation that form the impetus of his text.

In *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* Edugyan's narrator describes the young twins in more overtly "marked" terms. As Maud converses with other members of the church

community in the parking lot at the end of service, Samuel, uninterested in socializing, looks off toward the playground and watches his daughters: “In the distance children fought and tried to force their angels into hardened snow, and among them Samuel saw his daughters, motionless and holding hands, dark queen bees amidst the flurry of their workers. They seemed to repel the other children” (Edugyan 28). The contrast between the appearance and behaviour of the twins and that of the other children in this section serves well to demonstrate how the twins are distinguished physically within the text. In this selection it is clear that race not only distinguishes the twins in a physical sense but, in the eyes of the other children, “marks” them as different, strange, or other. On the other hand, notice that the twins only “seemed” to repel the other children and that the true cause of the playground fight, which results in Chloe’s gashed knee (29), remains conspicuously undisclosed to the reader. In this way the narrator forces readers to speculate as to whether the scuffle was racially, or otherwise, motivated. Moreover, if we acknowledge Yvette as the retrospective narrator then we can also see how her reconstructive retrospective perspective, from her father’s shoulder, allows her to rewrite her experience of racialization as one of being “dark queen bees amidst the flurry of their workers.” Thus we see how conforming to, and reworking, the conventions of the *kunstlerroman* allows the narrator of Edugyan’s text to recreate “the social experience of otherness” while simultaneously engaging readers in the process of suspicion and assumption that is so central to her text.

The marked quality of Francis’ narrator is established from the outset of his long poem *City Treaty*. In the opening sequence Francis’ authorial narrator introduces himself to readers. He states: “good evening everyone my name is Joe. / jOE tb, you know, tb,

treaty buster, i am / a bush poet, i got one lung left” (Francis 3). In this selection we see that Joe, through the post-nominal letters “tb,” distinguishes himself as a kind of Aboriginal champion, “you know [...] treaty buster.” Moreover, as Joe states that he only has “one lung left,” we understand that the abbreviation tb also stands for tuberculosis and can see how this same post-nominal abbreviation marks Joe internally, and possibly even for death. In this way Joe’s marked qualities not only serve to identify him as a *kunstlerroman* authorial persona but also allow him to thrust the contemporary issue of tuberculosis, which is prominent in many Aboriginal communities, into his discourse.

According to Malmgren there are also elements of “appearance, demeanour, carriage—certain physiological oddities [that] serve as a sign of the artist’s difference, queerness, uniqueness” (6). The narrator of Goto’s text certainly conforms to these parameters but in complex and problematic ways. Goto’s narrator is a self-described “short and dumpy Asian with bad teeth, daikon legs, stocky feet. A neckless wonder with cone-shaped pseudo breasts” (Goto 122), “big-boned arms [...] bratwurst fingers [and a] colossal head” (51). We will engage with the clearly consumable nature of these qualities more thoroughly in Chapter Two; however, more important for our purposes here is how the narrator constructs her body from a variety of intercultural sources, and that her continual reiteration of this self description reinforces the conventional connection to the *kunstlerroman* by asserting her difference and uniqueness. However, the racial implications of the narrator’s self-description as well as her non-heteronormative sexuality complicate Malmgren’s notions of “difference” and “queerness.” In her self-descriptions the narrator states that she “is not a beautiful Asian” (51), articulating how her appearance does not conform to the stereotypes of Asian beauty. Even though Slither

states that the narrator needs only a few superficial adjustments the narrator “refuses to succumb” (51), demonstrating a refusal to submit to those stereotypical forms.

Moreover, Malmgren’s use of the term “queerness” is complicated by the narrator’s non-heteronormative sexuality. In fact, as the Goto’s narrator is unnamed so too is her sexuality. Certainly the narrator is engaged in very intimate relationships with the women in her figurative sisterhood, Midori, Genevieve and Bernie; however, she also displays tender feelings towards her childhood friend Gerald: “When I think of Gerald, my heart squeezes painful in my chest” (261). Truly, the only semi-sexual act in which the narrator partakes is sumo-wrestling the Stranger, a character of “questionable gender and racial origin” (121), which clearly places the narrator’s sexuality in a kind of liminal space. This act of straddling the space between sexual polarities is also an act of refusal to succumb to established discourse. As the narrator refuses to conform to stereotypes of racialized beauty so too does she refuse to conform to the limiting strictures of sexual discourse and instead, as she does with names, opts to pioneer this liminal space, in true protean fashion, so as to develop a liberated and individualistic representation of her sexual self. Thus it becomes clear that, instead of limiting our understanding or impeding the narrator’s ability to effectively manage and represent an individualistic self, the genre of the *kunstlerroman* serves as an interesting backdrop to Goto’s text while the context of gendering and racialization serve to complicate the narrator’s connection to that genre, in turn deepening our understanding and engagement with the problems of representation in literary discourse.

Malmgren perceives a distinctive type of relationship as existing between the protagonistic artist of the *kunstlerroman* and his or her parents; he states that: “the artist’s

parents invariably reflect his [or her] contradictory traits, [...] divided self, [and] dubious heritage” (Malmgren 6). While this statement obviously has far-reaching implications, in so far as race is concerned, it is necessary to establish and examine some of the connections between Goto’s narrator and her family that reflect the conventions of the *kunstlerroman* more generally before discussing how racialization complicates and deepens Malmgren’s assertion. The narrator’s parents in Goto’s text do indeed demonstrate the symptoms of the *kunstlerroman* in the sense that they reflect her “contradictory traits” and “divided self.” Like the narrator, and her sisters, Okasan is victimized by the physically brutal family patriarch. Indeed, victimization underlies two of Okasan’s chief characteristics: her “chronic sighs” (Goto 22), which seem to be her customary response to hardship, and her alien abductions. Lifton discusses alien abductions as patterns of dissociation (Lifton 211) which stand in antithetical opposition to the protean self. However, as a protean self “may take on the psychology of a survivor and undergo symbolic forms of death and rebirth that contribute further to shapeshifting” (5), it is clear that through Okasan’s victimization, and recuperation, we see the strongest parallels with the narrator. First we must examine the narrator’s own alien encounter to establish and examine their differing reactions. The Stranger whom the narrator continually encounters throughout the text is clearly a doubling of the trickster kappa from Japanese mythology but, in addition, the Stranger also strongly resembles the typical contemporary portrait of an alien. The narrator states that: “the Stranger looked almost greenish, skin hairless and moist. Without clothes, the Stranger looked smaller than I had imagined. Could have thought possible” (Goto 122) and that “there was no *penis*” (155 emphasis author’s) and “no nipples. Nor a bellybutton” (122). Furthermore,

in a dream the narrator has an encounter with a kappa and describes it, stating: “she has no nose. Her face triangulates into an amphibian point, her skin a mottled green. Overlarge eyes bulge, all pupils” (264). In both cases the creatures the narrator encounters are linked with water; the Stranger is defeated in a splash of water and the creature from the dream is dying for lack thereof, which links them strongly to the kappa. However, the description of a tiny, greenish, hairless biped with no nipples, bellybutton, genitals, or nose, and with a triangulated face and black bulging eyes, obviously, and very closely, parallels the contemporary construction of the alien.² These descriptions compounded with the fact that both the narrator and her father identify a distinctive aroma, the narrator identifying this smell on the Stranger (122) and her father identifying a strong aroma on Okasan after her abductions (260), inextricably link the narrator’s supernatural experiences with those of her mother. These women’s respective reactions to these encounters of the third kind, however, differ greatly. During her alien encounter the narrator engages in a grand struggle, fighting with every ounce of strength she can muster, whereas her mother’s abduction seems to suggest that she was merely a passive participant in the encounter. However, through Okasan’s final reaction to her abductions, as she becomes “an alien abductee organizing support lectures for other immigrant survivors” (244) “of non-euro background” (239), it becomes clear that her project of self discovery and reform parallels that of the narrator and father. Okasan’s protean project pioneers a space within the collective of alien-abductees in order to highlight the presence of, and provide support for, people on the margins of a community which is generally dominated by people of European origins. By identifying, articulating and

² For an example of the stereotypical alien image see: Ward Carroll, “NASA Naut Claims Alien Coverup” defensetech.org (July 25, 2008) Web, April 4 2013.

inhabiting a space for abductees of non-Euro origin Okasan defies and transcends divisions of racialization and thus creates a strong ideological parallel between mother, father, and daughter.

The narrator's connections to her father, on the other hand, are more overt and forceful but demonstrate the same degree of nuance as the parallels with Okasan. Even though the narrator is physically abused by her father she perceives a kind of strength within him which she believes only she inherits. When confounded by what she perceives as Mice's weakness the narrator asks, "Why couldn't she be strong? Like me. Like my father" (92), but it is also evident that this strength is intimately tied to violence. In the narrator's final confrontation with her father, as she squeezes the life from his aged body, the narrator asks herself, "What am I doing?" and concludes that "it's all wrong" (259). Through this selection we see both a strong parallel and the greatest separation between the narrator and her father. In this moment of violence the narrator becomes exactly like her physically brutal father but also perceives that parallel and rejects it, loosening her grip on her father's throat. However, the physical parallels between the narrator and her father run much deeper than the first part of this examination might suggest. Her relationship with her father is not one of simple abjection; she states: "It isn't like *I* feel an overwhelming surge of affection whenever I think of our father, but, I don't know, an emotion I can't name stays small and silent in the depths of my heart. I can't cut off my feelings from him, my monster, my hero" (245). In this selection we see through this coupling of the characteristics of monster and hero both that the narrator's father embodies a rejection of dualistic, polarized identity construction and that the

narrator refuses to accept or employ simplistic binaristic representational tools which conceal the complexity of interpersonal relationships and identity construction.

Throughout Goto's text the narrator reminds us that there are a few physiological traits shared only by herself and her father: her "colossal head" and her "pumpkin teeth" (36). The parallel of head and mouth, organs of thought and expression, between the narrator and her father is interesting in that it begs us to examine the father's agricultural project as one of self expression. As the narrator's father labours to bring a lush Japanese rice paddy to the arid Canadian plains she recalls his exclamation: "'We struggle and fight. For water. For success. For life!' Dad laughed, so handsome. My eyes glowed. Dad set the pickax next to the door and spun around, wrapped his arms loosely around my neck and ruffled my exploding hair. 'A head just like mine'" (133). As the narrator's family arrives in the rural community in which her father intends to establish them his first purchases include a plot of land and a tub of fried chicken, signifying his amalgamation into western society. Likewise the narrator's father's forceful assertion that they "are CANADIAN!" when a man speculates on their Japanese heritage (70) demonstrates that his desire to create a Japanese rice paddy in the Canadian prairies is more than a simple and straightforward desire for importation, or a mere act of supplanting, but is rather a desire to create a personal space that reflects the multiple and conflicting valences that constitute the family identity. While the difficulties of this project are represented by the family's bodily rejection of the tub of fried chicken, which in many ways signified the beginning of the family's amalgamation into western society, as well as their continuous efforts to saturate the arid Canadian prairie, their struggle becomes one of self-substantiation. By struggling and refusing to conform to either a

strictly Japanese or a purely Canadian identity and toiling to create and maintain a liminal space in which he and his family might be free of the stricture of both Japanese and Canadian identity constructs, the narrator's father, like his wife and daughter, rejects the discourses of racialization by positing a shifting, mutable, protean self.

Dissociation, which, as I've mentioned earlier, stands in opposition to proteanism, clearly speaks to Malmgren's *kunstlerroman*ic tenet of "the divided self." In a very basic sense dissociation results when the self cannot reconcile itself to trauma. When the self encounters trauma that it cannot integrate into its experience the consequence is fragmentation; one self divides into two, one that experiences the trauma and another that represses that trauma. However, Lifton informs us that though "the protean self may have experienced much pain and trauma during and after childhood, it is able to transmute that trauma into various expressions of insight, compassion and innovation" (Lifton 7). In this sense we see how Edugyan's narrator, "[b]urdened with her past and the dead sister she carries like a conscience inside of her" (Edugyan 328), fits perfectly into this protean paradigm as she "transmutes" the traumas of her childhood and transforms them into the "various forms of insight, compassion and innovation" that manifest themselves as, and in, her narrative. Moreover, as we see Yvette carrying her sister "like a conscience" inside her we understand why the distinction between the twins so often is rendered obscure. As the narrator experiences trauma (such as the death of her sister), rather than engaging in a process of dissociation, she engages in a protean process of integration; rather than one self fracturing in two, two disparate pieces are synthesized into a cohesive protean whole. When Samuel sees the twins dancing "with Maud's tea towels fastened to

their heads like veils and wearing scratched sunglasses” (33) he does not realize that that it is an expression of the traumatic experience of racialized otherness.

Only later did Maud tell him that their headscarves were really an attempt to duplicate the hair of their classmates, and that she’d eavesdropped on a conversation in which Yvette had said she ‘got tired of being black.’ Tired of the sugary way she had to behave to get people to play with her. Tired of being asked where she was *really* from, tired of being talked to as though she didn’t speak English and tired, above all, of feeling incapable of great things. (34)

Samuel is something of a relentless optimist. Though he becomes dissatisfied with city life, chiefly due to his ill-treatment at the hands of Dombey and Son, Samuel continues to believe that, by virtue of his labour and dedication, he will be able to etch out a place for his family in small town Alberta. Aster, based on the real life Amber Valley (a rural hamlet settled by peoples of African ancestry in the early 1900s), represents for Samuel a haven of multiculturalism and tolerance. His project, much like that of the father of Goto’s narrator, is to find a liberated space in which his family might flourish, to locate a space, devoid of the discourses of racialization and oppression, that will allow him to explore his creative potential. In this way we can begin to see that Samuel’s project is akin to that of his daughter narrator. Just as her father desires to discover and occupy this liberated space physically, so the narrator seeks to create such a space textually. A recent reviewer commented of *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* that “it’s written with a poet’s attention to wordcraft—each sentence has been tinkered with and fussed over to the satisfaction of its master, much like the electronics repairs performed by its title character” (Azania 1). In this way we can see an even greater parallel between father and daughter as their artistic ambitions are carried out with the same meticulous attention to detail. We also see in this scene a great difference exposed between father and daughter, in that Samuel’s assumption suggests he does not perceive the world in such racialized

terms. However, we must remember that the twins' perspective here is regarded in retrospect and does not necessarily reflect the matured narrator's perspective. Samuel, like the narrator, believes in the power of the individual and, as will be demonstrated more thoroughly in Chapter 3, maintains a complex, even protean, relationship with tradition, heritage and notions of home. In this way we can see how Samuel reflects the narrator's divided self but more important is the way that the protean imperative to "cope with, and sometimes even cultivate, feelings of fatherlessness and homelessness" (Lifton 5) allows the narrator to explore new and liberating ways of representing her past, her family, and their relationship to her sense of self.

Unlike Samuel, who was born the privileged and only son of a rich cocoa farmer and whose migrations are the product of his economic capability and desire for education, Maud's beginnings are much more humble. Since her mother died in childbirth Maud had only an abusive father as her guardian. Maud desperately desired, and indeed sought, rescue from her circumstances and so after "praying for salvation, it finally came. Maud was granted a nanny position with a missionary family returning to their lives on the Canadian Prairies" (Edugyan 23). The contrast between the circumstances surrounding the immigration of Maud and Samuel are significant in that they allow the readers to understand Maud's peculiar relationship with her country of origin.

Maud refused to speak anything but English, though Samuel knew the language of her tribe. And though she hated Gold Coast, she could never completely bleed its traditions from her life, for Samuel disliked Western food. When Gold Coast won independence in 1957, they ate a half-hearted feast of goat stew and fried plantain. And though rechristened 'Ghana' after its once-glorious ruined kingdom, the country would always be 'Gold Coast' for them; having lived so long away from it, their country was, in their minds, largely defined by its name. (9)

Like the twins, who express a sense of homelessness as they state that they are tired “of being asked where they are really from,” Maud expresses a kind of homelessness by relinquishing her country, by trying to “bleed its traditions” from her being like so much bad blood. However, notice that she is “never completely” capable of accomplishing this and so when Gold Coast won independence their feast was still “half-hearted.” While Samuel is chiefly responsible for this culinary continuation of culture it is also clear, particularly in the use of personal pronouns, that both Samuel and Maud perceive Gold Coast, a particular place in time, as their home. In this way we can see how Maud reflects the narrator’s “contradictory traits and divided self” as she simultaneously expresses a sense of homelessness and nostalgically clings not only to the name but to the conception of her home country that the name evokes.

The authorial persona of Weier’s *Steppe: A Novel* straightforwardly acknowledges his parents’ contributions to his sense of self and attempts to explore their role in the construction of his textual identity. Throughout the text we see images of agriculture on the Ukrainian steppes, attributed to the narrator’s father, which can be quite easily superimposed onto the Canadian prairie. They are the same nostalgic images of threshing crews and farmyard childhoods that we have come to expect from prairie fiction, only we are informed by the narrator, much as the young narrator is by his father, that these are stories about the old world. The narrator’s father transplants his stories about the Ukrainian steppe onto the Canadian prairie and into his son’s imagination, colouring the narrator’s perception of the world, his sense of self, and imbuing him with tradition’s compulsion to narrativize, or in this case textualize, his experience: “*Steppe*. The German word for prairie. Almost like a prayer. Something father stole, brought over

from Ukraine, the Russian steppe, transplanted here in Canada” (Weier “5.7 Journal: April 12, 1993”). Interestingly, in this selection we see a historiographical, almost etymological, tracing of the term steppe through its migration in the Mennonite dialect, from the betrayal of the Cossacks by Katherine the Great and her gifting of their land to the Mennonites, to the colonization and Russification of Ukraine by imperial Russia, to the emigration of the Mennonite people away from the Bolshevik revolution that resulted in their settlement in Canada. But more important is the way that the narrator perceives the term steppe or, to be more accurate, the stories that comprise the steppe, as akin to prayer. As the narrator desperately searches for a place to begin his text he finds the only place to begin is with his father’s narrative: “Everywhere, my father’s memories. This is my inheritance. His stories passed on, man to boy. People talk about the male line. This is how it is, and was, father to son. (Is that really true?)” (“1.1 Journal: September 3, 1992”). In this selection the narrator self-reflexively acknowledges the contributions that his father’s narratives have made to his own text. It is clear that there is a strong parallel between the narrator’s father’s need to narrativize his experience and the narrator’s need to textualize his identity. As we have seen in the other texts, the authorial persona and the father carry out similar projects of self-expression. We can see that the narrator perceives his father’s story telling as a form of tradition, like prayer, and can understand the depth of his father’s influence. At a glance we notice that within Weier’s text the sections that attribute some form of titular acknowledgment of the narrator’s father as source outweigh those of his mother by a ratio of ten to two. This might suggest a kind of patriarchal hierarchy in Weier’s text – “this is how it is, and was, father to son” –

however, by including that last provocative parenthetical question Weier's narrator calls that assumption into question.

The narrator's mother in Weier's text has an altogether more ethereal, ghostly quality and is characterized mostly by silence and absence. The narrator's mother's section, "Mother: Bad Things," is divided into two parts, 1.21 and 4.14, and in both we see a clear resistance to memory or a conscious attempt at repression. In response to what appears to be the narrator's request that his mother recount her memories of Ukraine his mother states: "I have very little memory of those days. I don't remember, I can't remember. [...] This one thing though, a special time" ("1.21 Mother: Bad Things"). The narrator's mother provides a nostalgic recollection of Saturday night parties, candied treats, and warm beds, "[t]hen came the bad things, events ... [she] just can't remember" ("1.21 Mother: Bad Things") or, to be more precise, is unwilling to remember. Repression is a psychological failsafe that attempts to minimize the damage, which results from personal trauma that might cripple the self. And indeed the narrator's mother's language seems to suggest that she is repressing the horrific memories of her young life in Ukraine: "I don't remember, I can't remember." When one truly represses a memory, becomes dissociated from that trauma, s/he is incapable of consciously recollecting that experience. However, in the latter of the narrator's mother's sections we do get a narrative of those traumas, those "bad things" that she does not wish to remember: "Mother and father dead. Three little sisters, soft skin warm little bodies, baby sisters dead. [...] Grandma and Grandpa dead too. [...] And then the fire. The guns." ("4.14 Mother: Bad Things"). In this way we can see that the narrator's mother's attempt to forget these events is not repressive, or dissociative, in nature but is conscious and

selective. The narrator's mother in this way is able to wield considerable power over her construction of self. By employing silence the narrator's mother is able to edit her self-narrative, to excise her traumatic experience, so as to render it more hospitable.

Silence, in this way, becomes a tool, a strategy that allows the self to temper the impact of experience. Weier's narrator perceives this as he states: "I am silent. I have searched the story of a mother's silence. And mine. I know this cannot be, men own no silence, only power. Silence belongs in a woman's world. Still, I claim it. Silence. This is the gift she gave me. I sucked her story from her breast" ("5.2 Journal: April 26 1993"). The narrator's relationship with his mother in this section is characterized by intrusiveness, which is possibly a reflection of the way that the narrator had to prod at his mother for the information. However, we must also consider the narrator's statement, that he claims his mother's silence, in light of the fact that the narrator is himself very silent within the text. We are given some interiority with respect to the narrator in his journal sections, but the specifics of his character, appearance and name (as we have already noted) as well as opinion and politics remain largely ambiguous. All we really know is that he is a male, Mennonite-Ukrainian Canadian scholar in search of his family history. He provides readers with what appears to be a collection of the source materials for his text and loosely strings them together, which forces readers to perform a similar process of synthesis in reading as he did in writing. Readers must, in turn, play a much more active role in constructing the text, as well as the narrator himself, filling in the narrative gaps and synthesizing the materials with our own understandings, perceptions, opinions and analyses, in a truly protean fashion, so as to impose some form of "grounding and cohesion" (Lifton 5) to the text as a whole.

So far we have broached, especially in relation to Weier's novel, discussing the relationship between selves as akin to the relationship between texts and, at least for the moment, I would like to push this a little further. Malmgren states that: "as self-reflexive text, [the *kunstlerroman*] is free to acknowledge the texts in which it finds itself, not as influences or sources, [...] but as an ineluctable seamless web of inter-textuality"

(Malmgren 22). And indeed the narrator of Weier's text demonstrates a self-reflexive awareness of the intertextual relationships in which his discourse is thrust:

Listen. I'll tell my story. I'll order it my way. I want my life to tangle with the others; mine with my father's, my great grandmother's, with the woman in the diary. Everything's a jumble. Roots. [...] This is a journey of deceit and discovery. I am here to guide you, teach you, to mislead you. That is my right, I can say anything I want. Follow me! Trust me! I will tell you the truth, a kind of truth, my truth. Listen to me. Reader, are you there? ("1.16 Journal: September 30, 1992").

As the narrator expresses his desire that his life-narrative "tangles with the others" we can see a clear parallel to the *kunstlerroman*ic "web of inter-textuality." Perhaps then my characterization of his discourse as "thrust" into these intertextual relationships is a little inappropriate as his narrative, that is his journal entries, quite literally runs parallel to the other texts as it seeks to stitch them together without rewriting them. And though there is significant overlapping, the narrator states that his intention is to "guide" the reader through his process of discovery. I would also like to point out the narrator's ironic description of his desire to make "everything a jumble. Roots." By isolating the word "Roots" in its own sentence we recall the controversy surrounding Alex Haley's work. Haley's novel *Roots*, which he states is largely intended to be a factual tracing of his family's heritage back through slavery to the tribal world of Africa, obviously bears a close resemblance to the project undertaken by Weier's narrator. However, Haley was heavily criticized for a lack of accuracy in his work (Athey 174) and in this way we can

see the irony of Weier's narrator creating this parallel, insisting that it is his "right" to mislead the reader, while providing a meticulously cited, albeit not exhaustive, list of sources at the end of his text. Weier's narrator demonstrates in this way an awareness not only of the intertextual relationships created within his novel but those that will be created as his work circulates within the literary world. The narrator's protean perception allows him to foresee these textual interactions, to anticipate their result, and to respond with an ironic quip as well as hard evidence.

The narrator of Edugyan's text hints at a similar type of self-reflexive awareness of the parallels that will be created as her text circulates within a larger literary sphere. As the young artist Yvette experiments with compassionate treatment of Ama, Chloe's discontent at her sister's behaviour causes her to react with militaristic discipline. After giving Ama a copy of *The Devils*, "[p]acing the room in a goose step, Chloe recited, 'Dostoevsky, Dickens, Disraeli.' She gave Yvette a stern look. [...] In a shrill voice that expressed precisely the opposite of the emotion on her face, [Yvette] chanted, 'D.H. Lawrence.' 'Lawrence Durrell,' [...] 'Gerald Durrell,' 'Fitz-gerald, Scott'" (Edugyan 75). Since *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* is such a large, hefty, novel we can see that a resemblance is created here between Edugyan's narrator and those writers of big 19th and early 20th century novels. However, more important than the way that this passage demonstrates the adolescent artist's proclivity for literature is the way in which her text deviates from the conventions of the novel. The large novel is typically associated with long cohesive narratives that impart some form of meaning or textual truth. However, in Edugyan's text there seems to be a rather striking lack of meaning and truth and many critics, like Azania, express dissatisfaction with the novel for this reason. Azania's

contention is that there is much potential in this text, many interesting themes touched, but that there is no resolution (Azania 1). We never discover what happened to Ama on the river, if the twins intentionally gave Samuel the wrong medication, or who started the fire, and this lack of certitude is viewed as a failure to fully develop, or to follow the trajectory of her narrative through to the end. Azania contends that "Edugyan buries Samuel Tyne under overly bleak, self-conscious writing" (Azania 1); however, this position fails to take into account the full implications of the "self-conscious[ness]" of the text. The lack of conclusiveness or, rather, indeterminacy in Edugyan's text forces readers to participate in the process of textual construction. Notice, for example, how in this selection Yvette's voice is described as expressing "precisely the opposite of the emotion on her face" but, without reference to the emotion on her face, we cannot infer the nature of either emotion. Like Weier's narrator, who guides us through his "web of inter-texts" but forces us to synthesize the material for ourselves, Edugyan's narrator presents readers with an ambiguous perception of events and forces us to be aware of our role in the process of the narrative construction.

Goto's *The Kappa Child* can be read as a reworking or rewriting of Laura Ingalls Wilder's novel and certainly Goto's narrating authorial persona demonstrates a deep connection to that text in her childhood. However, rather than acting as a source or model for *The Kappa Child* the text is evoked by the narrator largely as a means to facilitate discussion of the problems of representation and racialization. As the narrator first arrives in the small town that neighbours her family farm she is immersed in Wilder's work and is especially interested in the parallels between the pioneering struggles of the Ingalls' and those of her own family. However, the narrator also

perceives stark differences between the two families, such as the gentle nature of Laura Ingalls' father in contrast to the regularity of her father's physically violent outbursts (Goto 43). The narrator employs Wilder's novel more as a source of contrast than of parallel; she finds Laura's obsession with seeing a papoose completely incomprehensible, and yet through this contrast we can see the young narrator begin her engagement with discourses of racialization: "did she think the baby was more like a doll than a human child?" the narrator asks (188). Upon meeting her new neighbours the narrator perceives that the discourse of racialization presented in *Little House on the Prairie* is an unfitting representational tool for her experience. Goto's narrator notes that: "In Laura Ingalls' book-world, Indians meant teepees on the prairies and that was that. Indians didn't equal someone who was both Blood and Japanese Canadian. Indians certainly never meant someone who lived next door on a chicken farm" (188). In this selection Goto's narrator articulates how the binary conception of race inherent in, and promulgated by, racialized discourse, such as Wilder's novel, fails to account for her bi-racial neighbour. Moreover, as we see Goto's text, at least in part, as an effort to write the Japanese Canadian experience onto the Canadian prairies, we can understand the narrator's dissatisfaction with Wilder's text in its inability to accommodate either her experience or presence. Goto's narrator strives to complicate and nuance the portrait of the prairie landscape and its population, to reveal its complex and diverse nature, so as to render her own text more hospitable. In this way she resembles a protean pioneer who pulls at conventions, stretching them within her own text, so as to create a textual space that can accommodate her increasingly complex perception of the world.

Francis' narrator frequently engages in intertextual relationships that bring a degree of comic levity to his text, which only partially belies the seriousness of his subject matter. In the section titled "BNA ACTOR" Joe performs an updated and localized version of Hamlet's speech that, while very comedic in its delivery, engages with hard hitting issues in the Aboriginal community. Joe states: "time for some shakey spear [...] They call me / Omelette! / to drink or / not to drink / that is the question / whether tis noble savage to / suffer the arrows and arrows / of outrageous VLTs / or to take one arm bandits / into a sea of casinos / and end by opposing them" (Francis 34). In this selection Joe illustrates the complexities of Aboriginal gaming politics and their effects on native communities. Despite the fact that Aboriginal gaming enterprise has helped to bring prosperity to many tribes, through the question of "to drink or / not to drink" Joe highlights the connection between casino culture and alcoholism. Moreover, the image created by the line "suffer the arrows and arrows / of outrageous VLTs" suggests that Aboriginal gaming enterprise does some form of violence or is otherwise damaging to native culture. In the last line we can clearly see that Francis' narrator calls for resistance to casino politics; however, the undertones of suicide that linger in Joe's Shakespearian backdrop cast an ominously ambiguous light over the section as a whole and cause us to wonder at the question of responsibility. Thus it is only by virtue of Joe's intertextual relationship that we can understand his assertions that not only does cultural commodification kill Aboriginal culture but voluntary participation in casino capitalism is in some ways comparable to cultural suicide.

So far I have been describing these texts in terms of their adherence to the conventions of the *kunstlerroman* as defined by Malmgren. However, unforeseen by

Malmgren, his parameters explode with meaning when considering the ethnic text.

Indeed, there is a potential danger in the adherence to convention that we have observed thus far. Homi K. Bhabha writes:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. (Bhabha 126)

The dangers of colonial mimicry are twofold; one danger is that, for a racialized text, the authenticity of the expression of the experience of racialization is clouded, muffled or generally limited by the adherence to convention. The other danger is that an ethnic text might inadvertently support the project of colonial discourse. By adopting convention and reworking it, making it “almost the same, but not quite,” an ethnic text can unintentionally provide the colonial project with the “recognizable Other” necessary for its continuation. However, Colleen Lye states that: “Politically instrumental reading, [...] has contributed [...] to the continuing polarization of the ‘ethnic’ and the ‘aesthetic;’ it has overlooked the critical potential of literary interpretation to discover for the ethnic text more transformative kinds of agency” (Lye 94). So, while the dangers articulated by Bhabha are always a concern we might, however, turn to aesthetic theory since “the *kunstlerroman* by definition interrogates, describes, and enacts an aesthetic theory” (Malmgren 24), and because, by depolarising the political and the aesthetic, as Lye suggests, we might be able to create liberating forms of expression.

In his essay “The Aesthetic Object as ‘*Objet Manque*’” critic Allan Shields states that “the artist often makes his [or her] representations unlike rather than just like the things they represent, in order that the observer may be shocked into looking at them for

what they are instead of using them as symbols of something else and so failing to see them” (Shields 222). This process of “unlikeness” is evident in each of these texts as the authorial narrators diverge and converge with the conventions of the *kunstlerroman*. But more specifically, in Goto’s text the narrator employs phonetic translations of Japanese words without English translations as well as vernacular reproductions of different accents, such as “bakatare” (77) or “hinganai” (197), effectively estranging her discourse from convention. Furthermore, Goto’s narrator displays “a seeming predilection for employing such Japanese constructions as the placement of the relative clause before the modified noun” (Iwamoto 103). These distinct modifications to traditional forms of representation are remarkable because they simultaneously embrace and interrogate the mechanics of conventional aesthetics while concurrently engaging with the discourse of racialization.

Within one of the seemingly disruptive interjections that pepper Goto’s text we are provided with an interesting metaphor that articulates the difference between mimicry and creation. The musings of the disembodied speaker of these poetic sections often revolve around birth, which is significant considering the pregnant state of the narrator, pregnant not with child but with text. As the speaker states, “It’s a bad sign, don’t you think. How we develop, not by growing, but by splitting” (Goto 18), the concepts of cell division, mitosis and meiosis, are invoked. Mitosis and meiosis represent two differing models of development. In mitosis the daughter cells are immediately capable of dividing because they carry the same number of chromosomes as the parent cells, whereas in the process of meiosis the daughter cells only carry half the number of chromosomes as the parent cells and must amalgamate with a different cell in order to

develop. These models serve well to articulate the difference between mimicry and creation. The case of mitosis is obviously a case of mimesis, the absence of outside influence causes the daughter cell to become a mere replica. In the process of meiosis, however, the unification of disparate influences results in the creation of something new and different. So in this sense we can see that the adherence to the conventions of the *kunstlerroman*, compounded with the textual problematizations of that genre, of conventional aesthetic theory, and the engagement with issues of racialization, links these texts more closely to the process of meiosis and, therefore, transformative creation rather than to the merely mimetic process of mitosis.

I begin this chapter with a brief description of the evolution of the Graeco-Roman convention in Christian and Islamic art, of the way in which Christian and Islamic artists borrowed elements from the Graeco-Roman style without complete conformity and, as a result, produced equally rich and beautiful, but highly disparate and personalized results. Lifton characterizes this type of fluid, functional relationship as protean and, of course, the impetus of this chapter throughout has been to highlight the ways in which each of these texts demonstrates a similar protean relationship with the conventions of the *kunstlerroman*. We have seen how each of these texts engages with the conventions of the *kunstlerroman* by focusing on issues of naming, physiological markedness, uniqueness, queerness, parentage, representations of the fragmented and divided self, as well as through their self-reflexive engagement in a web of intertextuality. However, we have also seen how each of these texts pulls and stretches at the conventions of the *kunstlerroman*, complicating and personalising them in order to produce varied and individualistic results. It should be noted that, the analysis provided here is in no way

considered definitive; in truth there a number of ways that these texts might be subsumed into different groupings under other organizational paradigms. Indeed, much of this chapter should only be considered preliminary as many of the themes will be re-examined in Chapter Two and throughout this analysis. It is clear that the highly politicized nature of many of the themes engaged by these texts, such as race, problematizes the process of grouping performed in this chapter. However, we have also seen that these texts begin to demonstrate a complex relationship with the polarities and binarisms on which these politics depend.

Chapter Two:
Postcoloniality, Postcolonialism, and the Protean Prairie:
Fundamental Resistance in an Age of Entropy

Renaissance scholarship illuminates the protean qualities, or aspects, of that period by emphasizing its multiple, and sometimes contradictory, socio-political, religious, philosophical and literary history. Lifton demonstrates how late fifteenth-century scholarship, performed by thinkers like Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, articulates a particularly protean position as it argues for the indeterminate, self-fashioning, nature of human kind (Lifton 15). Rather than perceiving human ability as dictated by divine law, there is, during the Renaissance, an increasing awareness of the human capacity for self-determination, which leads to the breaking of the bond between the sacred and the secular. This disintegration signifies the development of a protean relationship with modes of perceiving and understanding the world because, for the protean self, “idea systems can be embraced, modified, let go, and re-embraced, all with a new ease that stands in sharp contrast to the inner struggle [that other] people [...] endure with such shifts” (6). And it is this fluid, malleable, or, in a word, protean relationship with “idea systems,” like religious doctrine and scientific rationalism, that, during the Renaissance, facilitated Enlightenment advancements in science and philosophy.

However, this is not meant to suggest any superiority of the science-centered world view of the Enlightenment over the God-centered world of the Renaissance and Dark Ages. Indeed, Lifton states that we should understand the church itself as a protean institute as it is one of the first institutions that disrupted the hegemony of consanguinity; it was one of the few places in which people could advance themselves through merit rather than birthright (15). Rather, this digression is meant to illustrate the protean

relationship with idea systems and more importantly to describe the cyclical, and possibly dialectic, process from entropy, through proteanism, to fundamentalism. As Lifton states, the church was itself a protean institute in the face of fundamentalist monarchic notions of nobility. However, as the church was confronted with more and more new information, attained through the burgeoning fields of science, which questioned, complicated, and refuted the religious worldview it became more and more necessary for the church to tighten its stranglehold on knowledge. As the church assumed a stance based on unquestioned, and unquestionable, religious doctrine with respect to knowledge it became fundamentalistic, or, to be more precise, its fundamentalisms became more apparent and began to fall out of favour with Mirandola among many others. Likewise, we can see the ugly fundamentalist side of the Enlightenment ethos through the claims of pure science and rationality that spawned the Nazi eugenics project (15). Lifton also informs us that the fundamentalist state is itself necessarily partly protean, that is, it contains a degree of internal conflict resulting from the forced cohesion of disparate or incompatible elements. However, within the fundamentalist state proteanism becomes, or is perceived as, a form of entropy which disrupts the fundamentalist system. Eventually the fundamentalist state is pulled apart by this entropy, proteanism synthesises the remnants and, usually, new fundamentalisms are created from this process to fill the vacuum that is created by the collapse.

I begin this chapter with a description of this process because I want to examine the ways in which these texts demonstrate a protean reaction to fundamentalist notions of gender, race, and community as well as fundamentalistic manipulations of postcolonialism. As we begin a chapter that is centrally interested in highly politicized

issues, I would like to insist that I do not seek to engage in a particular debate, or take sides on a particular political issue but rather I intend to examine the protean construction of the political-self within these four prairie texts. Though each of these texts might easily be considered postcolonial, as each openly engages in a critique of colonization, the authorial persona of each text maintains a protean relationship with postcolonialism, simultaneously embracing and complicating the postcolonial paradigm, and articulates a complex understanding of the politics of race, gender and community on the Canadian prairies.

Some particular aspects of postcolonial discourse have been the target of intense scrutiny in recent scholarship and, though it has not been articulated in these terms, much of the criticism can be broadly described as a backlash against fundamentalistic manipulations of postcolonial discourse. In her article, “She Ties Her Tongue: The Problems of Cultural Paralysis in Postcolonial Discourse,” Donnell engages with the fundamentalist turn of postcolonial studies. She states: “although postcolonial scholarship developed in opposition to prescriptive modes of thought, the consolidation and institutionalization of its works would seem to have generated in some respects an unhelpful homogenization of political intent and a stifling consensus of ‘good’ practice” (Donnell 101). In this selection we can see the process from proteanism to fundamentalism as Donnell describes the original conception of the postcolonial imperative as “an opposition to prescriptive modes of thought” and its descent into a fundamentalistic imposition of homogenizing postcolonial doctrine. The sad irony about the fundamentalistic turn of postcolonialism becomes evident as some current

manifestations rely on, and perpetuate, colonial conceptual tools in an effort to abolish dissent.

At this point, for the sake of clarity, I would like to ground my usage of the term postcolonialism with the definition provided by critic Graham Huggan in *The Postcolonial Exotic*. Huggan defines postcolonialism as “an anti-colonial intellectualism that reads and valorises the signs of social struggle in the faultlines of literary and cultural texts” (6). However, I have noted some concerns, expressed by Donnell, about the homogenizing effect of fundamentalistic implementation of postcolonial ideology, which is also highlighted in Huggan’s text. In an attempt to explain why postcolonialism should be open to such criticism Huggan articulates a distinction between postcolonialism, as it is defined above, and postcoloniality, which he defines as “a value regulating mechanism within the global late-capitalist system of commodity exchange. Value is constructed through global market operations involving the exchange of cultural commodities and, particularly, culturally ‘othered’ goods” (6). Huggan distinguishes postcolonialism from postcoloniality because he perceives an inherent contradiction between the impetus of postcolonialism and the effects of postcoloniality, but, as Huggan informs us, the two are thoroughly interconnected, much as are proteanism and fundamentalism. In this selection Huggan expresses concerns, similar to those which we will soon see articulated by Spivak, about the implementation of postcolonial theory as a value regulating mechanism and the cultural commodification that results from the creation of a market economy in which value is assigned by means of cultural othering, or exotification.

Similarly, in *Ethnicity Inc.* John L. and Jean Comaroff describe the postcolonial identity market as driven by an “economy [which] feeds, and feeds off, a deep

ambivalence in modern life: a sense of exile from ‘authentic’ being that seeks to requite itself in encounters with ‘authentic’ otherness [...] in consumable form” (Comaroff 140).

The postcolonial identity economy creates and controls the exchange rate wherein historically marginalized groups are imbued with authentic or iconic ethnic status that increases their value on the identity market with the intention of countering the effects of colonization, racialization and oppression. This process is termed “ethno-preneurialism” by John L and Jean Comaroff in their comprehensive book and suggests that individual members of these groups are intended to profit from their iconic status. However, the buffet of consumable ethnic goods presented by Goto's narrator's fragmented self description, examined in the previous chapter, seems to suggest that there might also be some damaging effects of this process of cultural commodification and consumption.

Some critics have expressed concern about the exploitation of the postcolonial identity market. In “Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value” Spivak considers the role of postcolonial scholars in constructing our ideas of marginality and the implications of the construction of marginal discourses as a field of study. While investigating what she calls “a new orientalism,” which I might hasten to call postcolonial exoticism after Huggan's long essay, Spivak expresses a concern about the exclusivist construction of job descriptions within the postcolonial field (Spivak 201). Spivak comments that: “neo-colonialism is fabricating its allies by proposing a share of the center in a seemingly new way (not a rupture but a displacement): disciplinary support for the conviction of authentic marginality by the (aspiring) elite” (201). Though she never expresses it in exactly these terms Spivak is articulating a concern about the postcolonial identity economy, about the creation of a political, economic and literary

value system based on racial or ethnic authenticity. Spivak's fear is that this process actually perpetuates old hegemonies; as neo-colonialism only "propos[es] a share of the center" to the aspiring elite, the hegemonies created by the colonial system remain relatively unaffected.

The danger of the postcolonial adherence to colonial conceptual systems has been frequently articulated in recent scholarship. In *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* Huggan describes the ironically Euro-centric attitude of some postcolonial criticism. He states:

One of the ironies [...] of a particular kind of postcolonial criticism has been its articulation of anti-European sentiments by European conceptual means. This irony has been compounded by the tendency to privilege Europe as a frame of cultural reference, as the primary producer of the discourses against which postcolonial writers/thinkers are aligned (*The Postcolonial Exotic* 3).

Huggan articulates here a concern about postcoloniality, about its perpetuation of colonial means of conception, and its reinforcement of the binaries on which colonial notions of race and ethnicity are predicated. However, the most important aspect for our purposes is the way in which postcolonialism, from its conception as a protean discourse to the development of a postcolonial fundamentalism that contradicts the postcolonial imperative, parallels the dialectical motion of the protean process. As we examine each of these four prairie texts we will see the expression of a similar concern about the fundamentalistic employment of postcolonial theory as a value-regulating mechanism.

Fundamentalistic manipulations of postcolonial theory are problematic not only in the ways listed above but also because postcolonialism still has much work to do as a tool of artistic expression and critical study. The problems created by fundamentalism make it difficult for writers of artistic and scholarly texts to engage in postcolonial scholarship

without opening themselves up to the criticisms. In Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child* a deeply complex relationship is established between the narrative authorial persona and the postcolonial field. While investigating her potential pregnancy Goto's narrator explains to her doctor that she has not menstruated for four months. The narrator informs us that, in response, Dr. Suleri "didn't say anything, only raised an eloquent eyebrow. I cringed. 'I didn't come in earlier because my period skips all the time. I'm not regular.' The eyebrow wasn't impressed" (Goto 101). If we understand Goto's Dr. Suleri as alluding to the contemporary postcolonial, feminist, queer studies scholar Sara Suleri then we can clearly see how this exchange reveals the authorial persona's uneasy relationship with processes of fundamentalization within these discourses. This is not to suggest that Sara Suleri herself is a fundamentalist; rather if we note this allusion then we can see how Goto's narrator expresses her discordance with fundamentalist notions of race, gender, and sexuality whether they be colonial or postcolonial, patriarchal or feminist. As the Dr. Suleri in Goto's text "rais[es] an eloquent" yet "[un]impressed" "eyebrow" at the narrator's irregularity we should consider all the characteristic irregularities that cause Goto's narrator's refusal of fundamentalist notions of race, gender, and sexuality. As we discussed in the first chapter of this examination the prominence of the narrator's patrilineal characteristics complicates gender construction, and similarly, as we have observed, her relationship with, or feelings towards, Gerald complicate constructions of race within the text. But additionally, as the narrator seeks to describe her paranormally pregnant state we are provided with further analytic fodder as she states: "the only difference I feel, physically, is a craving for cucumbers, preferably Japanese. And people are commenting on my olive complexion. Ask me if I'm part

Spanish or something. Big deal, right? But knowing there's someone in my body, this otherness, that's what really gets to me" (92). In this selection we can also see an example of the multi-racial identity constructions that complicate notions of racial essentialism, but more important for our purposes is the narrator's conflict with fundamentalist notions of gender and sexuality as she struggles to understand the relationship between her craving for cucumbers and her maternal desires. Perhaps it seems crass to read the narrator's cravings in such phallic terms, yet the text begs us to do this as the narrator mistakes a large cucumber in her pocket for a dildo (146). In this way we can see how the narrator's cravings relate to her heterosexual desire and her desire for maternity. Her perplexity at these cravings demonstrates her struggle to understand her desires beyond fundamentalistic conceptions of gender and sexuality, a struggle which exemplifies protean synthesis. Moreover, if we remember the textual nature of the narrator's pregnancy, then her description of her feelings as "someone in [her] body, this otherness" further supports this reading as we understand "this otherness" as a disparate part of the narrator's identity that is struggling for voice. So as Goto's narrator complicates essentialist notions of gender, sexuality, and race we can see how the irregularities which disconcert Dr. Suleri are not solely medical, but also ideological.

Similarly, in Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, the adolescent Yvette articulates a particularly ambiguous and protean position concerning constructions of gender, which complicates our attempt to situate her within a particular discourse. While attempting to convince her mother that she needs new clothes, either from a desire for self assertion, or as way to individuate herself from her twin, Yvette provides the following argument:

'I thought you wanted daughters. Don't you want me to dress more like a lady? More like her?' Yvette gestured to Ama, who felt a thrill of pleasure. Her cheeks reddened. 'In our era it seems more necessary than ever to clearly define gender. Otherwise, you leave me open to censure and the prospect of unmarrigeability. Who knows? I might be driven to throw myself on the pyre of parliament. I might actually thwart the divine comforts of housewife-hood and become prime minister. And where would that leave me?' (Edugyan 107).

Yvette's tone in this passage is clearly scathing and dripping with irony. Obviously.

Yvette's rhetoric is meant to simultaneously impress and confound her mother into bending to her desires but the reader is left to wonder at the implications of her arguments. Yvette demonstrates awareness of feminist concerns, gender construction, voice and censure, and she ironically employs this rhetoric for self-serving materialistic ends. Surely Yvette is operating here on the knowledge, or manipulating the fact, that her mother's concerns are somewhat traditional, that Maud wants her daughter to be married and to have a family; however, her ironic counter-posing of housewifery to prime-ministry causes her final question to seem not only ironic and rhetorical but provocative and in some ways earnest. Thus by facetiously towing a traditionalist line Yvette complicates her situation and clearly illustrates the protean relationship with idea systems through her complex relationship with gender discourse.

In Edugyan's text we see a similar unease with essentialist or fundamentalist notions of race. However, rather than presenting readers with a character like Goto's narrator, who embodies a refusal of fundamentalistic idea systems through the physical cohesion of seemingly contradictory elements of identity, Edugyan's text works within a protean realm of indeterminacy. Edugyan's narrator invites readers to import their own assumptions about race into her text by providing an extremely ambiguous physical description of Ama. After the traumatic playground incident the twins confront Ama

accusingly: "... set your friends on us,' hissed one of the twins. 'I didn't. I swear I didn't,' said a nervous, quite striking voice. 'We know who cracks the whip,' said the ruddy voice so obviously Chloe's" (34). The assertion that Ama is the one "who cracks the whip" suggests that the playground incident is a violent expression of racism and invites readers to characterize Ama as a white aggressor. However, as Samuel encounters Ama for the first time her physical description complicates our perception: "On the very bottom step sat a tall, lithe girl of undeniable beauty. [...] She was the most charming girl Samuel had ever seen, with skin the colour of oats and almond shaped eyes of a nameless hue" (35). The language employed to describe Ama in this passage, such as "skin the colour of oats" or "almond shaped eyes of a nameless hue" is descriptive and yet so ambiguous that it provides readers with no definitive elements that might allow us to identify her racial background. Oats appear in many different colours, from golden in their natural state, to pale mixed with rather dark patches in the processed form, and "almond shaped" is often used to describe the shape of eyes belonging to people of both Asian and European descent. Moreover, in a discussion with Samuel which centers on Ama's ethnic origin we again encounter this patent lack of conclusiveness. After a curiously prolonged conversation all that can be said for certain is that Ama is "not from Gold Coast"(35) and that she is at least part French, which itself is not a racial signifier as French is not an exclusively European language. Thus we can see how Ama's position as cracker is compromised by her conspicuous lack of racial markers within the text and how this has the effect of obscuring or complicating the nature of the twins' initial trauma. In this way it becomes clear how Edugyan's narrator invites readers to participate in her discourse, to fill in the narrative gaps with their own racial assumptions.

Indeed Edugyan's seemingly uninformative narrator invites readers to participate in the construction of her text even at some of the most critical parts of her narrative. For example, the role of the Franks within the novel is far from clear. Their interests, particularly Ray's, conflict directly with those of the Tyne family and as a result they might be considered the chief antagonistic force within the novel; however, we never discover if Ray truly plots against the Tynes or if he is simply willing to capitalize on Samuel's misfortune (277). In order to guide our assumptions about the Franks, Edugyan's narrator describes them in terms that cause readers to be immediately suspicious of their presence. Upon Eudora and Ray's first entrance into the Tyne household the narrator comments that: "their skin, and indeed their clothes, were so uniformly white they might have climbed from a salt mine" (59). As their stark whiteness is contrasted to the dark Tyne household the Franks' presence seems instantly conspicuous within their environment. The narrator then begins to colour our perception of the Franks with her description of Eudora, stating that: "this pallor, along with a well-fed corpulence, made the woman look much younger than she undoubtedly was. She had shrewd, vaguely blue eyes, her mouth filled with crooked teeth" (59). Eudora's "well fed corpulence" creates an image of the Franks which suggests an opulence that contrasts the impoverished state of the Tyne family and implies a racialized economic division. The description of Eudora's eyes as "shrewd" causes our suspicions to be heightened as we wonder how this shrewdness will be made manifest within the text. Moreover, the vagueness of Eudora's eyes and the crookedness of her teeth foreshadow the ways in which her perception of the world and expression of ideals are fundamentally skewed.

Through Eudora, Edugyan's narrator demonstrates how an individual can maintain, and even support, an ideology by way of a seemingly contradictory value system. Upon her first introduction it is clear that Edugyan's narrator perceives an inherent conflict between Eudora's ideological stance and her motives. The narrator states that Eudora "was vice-president of Aster's chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Women (NAAW), and yet she knew a woman's true duty was to her home" (60). In this selection we can see how Eudora's belief, which she holds as essential as knowledge, seems to conflict with her feminist activism. Similarly as Edugyan's narrator further characterizes Eudora she comments that Eudora "proved herself a woman before her time by suggesting social awareness programs to crack down on prenatal alcoholism; but her reason? – to stop filling cradles with 'feeble minded babies.' In her crusader state of mind, the motives differed" (61). The narrator's comment about Eudora's motivations are telling in that they imply a contradiction between her drive and her activism, her value system and her ideological stance, which seems to devalue the very nature of her crusades and causes Eudora to appear, at best, only dimly enlightened. However, this analysis forces us to wonder if these contradictions are as firm as they appear at first glance. Upon further inspection there seems to be no inherent contradiction between housewifery and feminism, the power to choose seems to be the central issue in that case, and it seems that, despite Eudora's unsympathetic language, any program whose goal is to "crack down on prenatal alcoholism" is ultimately geared at reducing the birth rate of infants with fetal alcohol effects. Thus we can see how Eudora's position is extremely ambiguous, if not precarious, and how this ambiguity invites readers to participate in the construction of the text by importing their own assumptions

and prejudices into the narrative. The way in which we perceive Eudora in these opening scenes will affect our assessment of her responsibility for the destruction of the Tyne family. While we might not want to hold Eudora responsible for the ambitions of her husband, if we perceive Eudora in a negative light as a result of these passages then we might see her condemnation of the twins as the recent arsonists of Aster as a means of destabilizing the Tyne family within the community so that she and Ray might ultimately obtain Jacob's land (277).

However, Edugyan's narrator also characterizes Ray in similarly ambiguous terms. Ray's opinions, his actions and indeed his physical appearance provide us with little insight into his actual role within the text. Upon Ray's first introduction the narrator informs us that:

“for all his age [Ray] looked athletic. Less muscular than simply well built, his broad, heavily veined forearms ended in pink, delicate wrists. Despite his brawn there was something of the intellectual about him; a low-sitting pair of wire-rimmed glasses obscured his pupils, giving him an almost affected erudition. His speech seemed deliberately unadorned, as though he were used to giving others time to catch up with his ideas” (60).

In this selection we can see how Edugyan's narrator, through the use of the word “despite,” sets intellectuality and physicality in an antagonistic relation and how Ray represents an amalgam of these seemingly contradictory characteristics. I use the word amalgam here very specifically in the sense of a dental amalgam, wherein mercury and silver are combined to create a malleable substance that can be formed but then hardens as the mercury seeps out, to describe the way in which Ray seems to represent not a complete fusion of brain and brawn but rather a temporary melange, like a heterogeneous mixture that has yet to settle. Edugyan's narrator creates a sense of uncertainty as she informs us that Ray possesses an “almost affected erudition.” While extremely

descriptive this characterization leaves readers with more questions about than insights into Ray's character. We see two plausible and yet contradictory characters being created simultaneously in Ray, one lumbering, oafish, gentle, ignorant farmer and one clever, deceptive, ambitious, cut-throat business man. We get the sense that one of these two characterizations will prove true; however, as we shall see, it is exactly this uncertainty, this ambiguity, that comes to characterize Ray throughout the novel.

As Ray and Samuel engage in their many socio-political dialogues Ray's ambiguous political stance is made plain. During Ray's first visit to Samuel's shop, which can be viewed in some ways both as a friendly tour and a condescending inspection, Ray begins to relate his perspective on the daily news. After vehemently expressing his lack of concern for the duration of library hours Ray also relates to Samuel:

'The IAA just got the vote for stat Indians.' He drew on his cigarette, and it was difficult to interpret what he thought of the matter. 'Oh, here's something for you – 'affirmative action' just got instituted in the States, don't know the particulars, but it's supposed to help you guys. Can't say it'll do you any good up here though. (93)

If we perceive Ray's pull on his cigarette as one of agitation, or geared at restraining his words, then we might easily view him as a duplicitous agrarian mastermind who from the start intends to rob Samuel of his land. However, if we see Ray's motions as nonchalant, or aimed at creating a pause in which his interlocutor can think and respond, then we can continue to view Ray as a secondary character in Samuel's life. In this selection we can see how Edugyan's narrator prompts our assumptions about Ray's character by providing an account of a conversation replete with political implications, which might seem to affirm our assumptions, but is actually devoid of any degree of solidity. It seems as

though Ray certainly has an opinion about the Indian Association of Alberta and its politics, or affirmative action, but we are free to draw our own conclusions about what Ray thinks; the only thing we can say for certain is that “it is difficult to interpret” his opinion. In this way it is clear how Ray’s political ambiguity creates our uncertainty as to his role within the narrative and in turn complicates the text as a whole.

There are some moments in Edugyan’s novel when it seems as though Ray’s prejudices come to light. When Samuel relates his ambition to create the world’s first computer, for example, Ray responds with a deflationary tone of scepticism, stating: “You’re a smart, smart man – you’ve done so well for yourself it puts lesser men to shame. You’re a real example. But there are limits. I say this as your elder, as your friend” (234). Frequently throughout the novel Ray refers to Samuel as an “example” in such a way, which might be interpreted as indicative of Ray’s racist inclinations. Indeed Samuel seems to recognize an implicit racial undertone when, in response, he asks: “Is it because I am an average man or because I am an average black man that you give me such advice?” (234). However, as Ray asks that Samuel not “misread [his] intentions” (234), the use of the word “misread” seems to speak directly to the reader and, causing us to reflect on the occasions in which Ray has called Samuel an example, leads us to discover that the possible racial implications of Ray’s diction have never been made explicit. We might assume that Ray’s employment of the term “example” is in some sense pejorative and generally racist; however, Samuel’s education, the status of his previous job from the perspective of an agrarian labourer, and the nature of his technological ambitions in the late 1960’s, early 1970’s, might also cause us to infer that

Ray means that Samuel sets a good example for anyone and that there are limits for everyone, not just black men.

In Goto's novel we see a similar misreading of intentions as the narrator's family begins their process of integration into the rural population. When Goto's family stops to spend their first night near what will be their new home the motel man comments to the narrator's father: "I always thought it was terrible what was done to you people" (Goto 70). The motel man's employment of the terms "you people," like Ray's employment of the term "example," seems implicitly racist and causes Goto's narrator's father to become agitated. In response, the motel man seems surprised at, or unaware of, the implication of his words: "'No offence intended,' Motel Man stammered. 'I figured you folks to be Japanese.' 'We are CANADIAN!'" (70). The motel man's amendment fails to rectify the implication that the narrator's father finds so disagreeable, that the narrator's family is not Canadian, strictly speaking. However, for our purposes here, we must note that the motel man is speaking in a sincerely sympathetic tone. The motel man's intention is to express his disagreement with, and apologetic feelings for, Japanese internment, but the crux of what he says is lost, buried beneath a mound of racial implications, so that, in a misreading similar to that in the case of Ray, the narrator's father, and even, perhaps, the reader, mistakes the motel man's sympathy for racism.

In "She Ties Her Tongue: The Problems of Cultural Paralysis in Postcolonial Discourse" critic Allison Donnell describes a phenomenon, a kind of cross-cultural critical paralysis, which has sometimes led to overly simplistic readings of postcolonial texts (Donnell 109). In her examination of *A Small Place* Donnell demonstrates how the critically paralysed reader is unwilling, or incapable, of perceiving the irony that is

oftentimes implicit in Kincaid's, and I would argue many other postcolonial, representations of neo-colonial forces. Donnell explains that: "Kincaid re-enters [Antiguan] culture, rehearsing its rhetoric and idioms to produce a multi-accentuated text that is both a direct political statement on neo-colonialism and an ironic commentary on the politics of postcolonialism – the two operating simultaneously" (108). In this selection we can perceive the protean imperative that is the impetus of this examination as Donnell describes Kincaid's fluid relationship with, or her simultaneous embracing and rejecting of, the postcolonial idea-system. However, as Donnell assures us, "this is not to suggest that the book shies away from a condemnation of [colonialism], but rather that it probes more thoroughly and painfully the question of responsibility for postcolonial failures (economic, social and psychological)" (109). Similarly, I want to emphasize that it is not the aim of this examination to delimit the importance, or effectiveness, of postcolonialism. Rather, my intention is to demonstrate that these prairie texts transcend the straightforward critique of colonialism that is often associated with postcolonial discourse and posit instead a "multi-accentuated text" that simultaneously provides a critique of neo-colonial forces as well as an "ironic commentary on the politics of postcolonialism" in order to investigate more thoroughly the nature of contemporary "economic, social and psychological" failings.

By presenting an exaggerated version of postcolonial discourse these writers produce texts that simultaneously provide a comment on contemporary colonial forces as well as an ironic examination of the practice of postcolonial theory. In Edugyan's text, as Porter and Samuel debate the value of a western education, Porter states that:

Not once, in all those books you reading, are we presented as decent, intelligent men. We ain't *even* men. Minstrels, animals, but never upright men. And I'd

know, I read all those things once I learned to – self educated. Won't read them again. We're the absolute last in this world with nothing to be done of it but keep on living. (Edugyan 197)

It is clear from this selection that for Porter the entire history of the English language is tantamount, or reduced, to a history of racism and exploitation. And indeed there is much truth in Porter's words, his insight into the representations of people of African descent as “minstrels [and] animals” throughout volumes of English literature is grimly accurate. However, despite the fact that Porter is an admirably strong, self-educated person his words carry a defeatist tone. The argument he proposes resembles a *reductio ad absurdum* of Audre Lorde's contention that “the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house” and, as he discards the notion that there is anything, or ever will be anything, to be learned from what he considers white books, we can see a sad irony implicit in Porter's position. His position is very inflexible, and in spite of its radically revolutionary impetus it is static. As Porter states: “we're the absolute last in this world with nothing to be done of it,” the implication almost seems to be that such an uncompromising and xenophobic politic has no future. In this way we can see how Edugyan's narrator, through Porter, condemns colonial conceptual systems while ironically highlighting an unhelpful homogenizing effect of his radically anti-colonial position.

In Weier's text, his narrator frequently invokes the voice of revolutionary Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko. However, rather than presenting an exaggeratedly defeatist, Weier's narrator uses Shevchenko's more militant, violently revolutionary voice to present an ironic vision of radically fundamentalistic anti-colonial discourse. In a text where silence is the native tongue, where the narrator seeks to give voice to the voiceless to the extent that he subsumes his own voice within a tangle of others,

Shevchenko's words sound bold as he cries: "Bless your freedom with the oppressor's blood! Take your land! Chase these cursed foreigners from your land! These damned Russians, these Poles, these Germans and Jews. Chase them! Kill them! Fill the Dnieper River with their blood. My Ukrainian people!" (Weier "2.17 Poet and Revolutionary"). Shevchenko's call to arms highlights the often occluded history of colonization in Ukraine and in so doing dismantles the typically racialized binary construction of colonizer and colonized so prevalent within fundamentalistic postcolonial discourse. However, the extremely violent nature of Shevchenko's imagery causes us to recoil at the severity of his proposal. In this way Weier's narrator is able to simultaneously condemn a colonial history that is frequently overlooked in postcolonial theory and to demonstrate the unacceptability of militant anti-colonialism.

Francis' narrator engages in a critical examination of racist representations of Aboriginal culture in media through an exaggeratedly aggressive persona so as to ironically illustrate a radically fundamentalistic anti-colonial discourse. In the section of Francis' text titled "White Settlers" Joe attempts to describe the anger Aboriginal people feel towards the participants and precipitants of colonization, "Building / Smouldering / Exploding / Across that John Ford landscape [...] KILL KILL KILL / MURDER MUTILATE MAYHEM! / [...] SCALP DISNEY, MAN / AND SKIN Bambi / And HOPPED UP CASSIDY" (Francis 46). In this section we can clearly see that Francis' narrator is criticizing the representations of native people found in many westerns and certain Disney productions and it is interesting to note that he does so by comically reflecting, or appropriating, the colonial stereotypes often depicted in these works. However, as Donnell notes of Kincaid's text, the violent impulses described in this

selection also represent a hyperbolic version of the postcolonial text. In this way it is clear that the extremely violent nature of Joe's call to arms also serves to force readers to question his means of attaining justice.

Francis demonstrates that the postcolonial fetishization of exoticized goods serves primarily to maintain or buttress existing social divisions. By examining Warren Cariou's description of "mcPemmican," Francis' critique of the postcolonial fetishization of culturally othered goods and the creation of corporatized culture becomes clear. In "'How Come These Guns are so Tall': Anti-corporate Resistance in Marvin Francis' *City Treaty*" Cariou explains:

In this poem Native people are not only the consumers of this unhealthy and expensive corporatized "mcPemmican"; they are also the original producers of pemmican itself. So essentially in this poem, Native people are being sold a branded version of their own culture. We can see this in the instructions for mcPemmican packaging, which focus on stereotypical Native design: "you must package this in / bright colours just like beads" (6). We can also see it in the advertisement for the restaurant's daily special: "special this day / mcPemmican™ / cash those icons in" (6). The last line of this advertisement seems to be aimed directly at Native people: "cash those icons in" means trade on your Nateness, give it over to the corporation which will then make a profit selling it to everyone, including selling it back to you. (Cariou 152)

In this selection Cariou describes a two-pronged effect resulting from the meeting of corporatized ethno-commerce and capitalism. Not only are Native people able to cash in their cultural icons as capital in the postcolonial identity market but those icons are then sold back gradually in a kind of neo-colonial entrepreneurial relationship. So in this way Francis demonstrates that the iconic status created by the racial essentialization and fundamentalistic notions of authenticity inherent in the postcolonial identity market, which, according to Comaroff and Comaroff, should promote improvement in the quality

of life for marginalized people through ethno-preneurialism, sometimes results in corporatized neo-colonial entrepreneurialism.

Moreover, by questioning the philosophical precepts that underlie the postcolonial identity market and illustrating the social realities spawned by ethno-preneurialism, Francis' artistic project helps to elucidate, interrogate or "debate the values and limitations of the cultural discourses and positions associated with postcoloniali[ty]" (Donnell 107). In "mcPemmican," Francis' narrator further illustrates postcoloniality's propensity for consuming culturally exoticized goods. Francis' narrator notices the employment of Aboriginal cultural symbols in the corporate world. Joe states that "they line up for blocks dying to clog mind arteries everyone has / at least one fortieth Indian two parts water the rest unknown / they line to see the real [...] to touch the other" (Francis 7). This passage clearly engages with the notion that there is a perceived lack of authenticity in the postcolonial market economy, that the "other" possesses this desirable authenticity and that it might be attained through some form of consumption. Also, while there is obviously an ironic comment about the ubiquity of claims to Aboriginal ancestry in the postcolonial identity economy in the lines: "everyone has / at least one fortieth Indian two parts water the rest unknown," this selection also suggests the fallaciousness of racial essentialization inherent in postcoloniality's notions of authenticity. In this way Francis' text seems to suggest, as Huggan does in his examination of "Exoticism and Ethnicity in Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*," that "ethnicity is not a natural but a socially constructed category: its definition is shaped by the moment, placement, and power of those who champion its cause" ("Exoticism" 116).

Cultural corporatization in the postcolonial identity market creates a highly xenophobic environment because the need to decide who has the right to share in profits and resources causes the matter of membership to become centrally important. As Comaroff and Comaroff state: “[t]he more that ethnically defined populations move toward the model of the profit-seeking corporation, the more their terms of membership tend to become an object of concern, regulation, and contestation” (Comaroff 65). However, the fluid concept of ethnicity proposed in these prairie texts seems to contradict the notion of authenticity that is at the foundation of the postcolonial identity economy. In this way it is clear that these texts can be more accurately termed protean because “for the protean self, communities are partial, fluctuating, come in odd places and combinations; are often at a distance; and vary greatly in their intensity and capacity to satisfy the needs of members” (Lifton 108). Indeed Lifton's selection strikingly illuminates the nature of the many different forms of relationships represented in these texts. However, while it is not necessary to investigate every manifestation of community in each text, a brief survey should illustrate the point thoroughly.

In regards to Francis' text we should surely note how the implications of his overall project, of creating a *City Treaty*, demonstrate, in a general way, many protean qualities. The notion of a city treaty suggests that Aboriginal culture transcends reserves and stereotypes, that it not only existed long ago, but exists now, that it is not static and unyieldingly bound to tradition, but constantly evolving. However, Francis further elucidates the role of community in the postcolonial identity economy as Joe presents a menu of assorted exotic delicacies primed for the postcolonial palate. Joe describes “chiefs salad” as “cold, cheap, and costly” (Francis 19). This selection engages with the

hegemonic control of tribal economics by the ruling elite. Joe describes the chief in this selection as “cold,” suggesting a lack of empathy, while the paradoxical pairing of “cheap, and costly” suggests an uneven or inappropriate distribution of tribal funds. In this way Francis describes the way that “neo-colonialism is fabricating its allies by proposing a share of the center in a seemingly new way (not a rupture but a displacement): disciplinary support for the conviction of authentic marginality by the (aspiring) elite” (Spivak 201).

The creation of a personalized space is a central theme in Goto’s text, and, as we observed in Chapter 1, this theme extends well beyond the rice paddy and relates to the narrator’s drive for textual (pro)creation and her mother’s desire to create a support group for alien abductees of non-European origins. However, we must note that, though these spaces are personalized, they are not hermetically sealed or devoid of human presence, but communal in nature. Okasan’s project is clearly geared at creating a community, but more interesting is the way that the narrator’s text exists in flux with Wilder’s text and her own family mythology in order to create a type of communal authorship. Aside, we might also note how, while living in the big city, Goto’s narrator feels alienated and develops an intimate relationship with a group of women in the absence of her family. This group, comprising Midori, Genevieve and Bernie, in many ways acts as a surrogate sisterhood in place of the now grown and somewhat estranged P.G., Mice and Slither. These different forms of community are all created to provide an outlet for expression that was not previously available, and yet the previous community is never abandoned completely. Neither Goto’s narrator, who begins to reconnect with her sisters at the end of the text, nor her mother completely renounce the family; instead, they find alternate

communities that fulfill different requirements. In these ways it is clear how notions of community in Goto's text reflect the characteristics of the protean community as described by Lifton.

Weier's text is itself a textual reflection of the protean community. In Weier's text, like Goto's, the narrator creates a community of authors; his own family mythology is intermixed with a host of fourteen other texts provided in a list of sources. Each of these texts seems to speak to one another and all are only loosely tied by the narrator's journal entries. In Weier's text the narrator perceives how "one story builds another" (Weier "5.15 Journal: May 8, 1993) and seeks to promote this protean process of textual construction. Since his project is in large part focussed on giving voice to the voiceless and highlighting an obscured history, Weier's narrator organizes his text in such a way so as to assure that his narrative does not overpower its inter-texts. As the narrator seeks to discover his cultural heritage through these texts it is also clear that he constructs a personalized form of Mennonite Ukrainian Canadian cultural identity through his creation of this textual community. As he inhabits a textual space that is at once personal and communal, discovered and yet constructed, it is clear how notions of community in Weier's text parallel protean parameters.

In Edugyan's text *Samuel* seeks a community that transcends the racial divisions of the 1970s and, like Francis' narrator, he seems to perceive the constructed nature of ethnic division. Indeed his interest in Aster for its racially integrated quality signifies this in a general way. However, as Akosua Porter mocks what she perceives as the pretentiousness of Samuel's daughters' reading, a more specific example of Samuel's inclination towards a protean concept of community is revealed. Through her ridicule

Akosua expresses a kind of racial fundamentalism which will be examined further in Chapters Three and Four, but more important for our purposes here is Samuel's reaction to Akosua's taunts. He states:

Even now I do not say it is the British system, but an inherited set of ideas, of customs we must somehow integrate better with our own traditions. [...] I always thought that a black can, and should, define himself beyond being black. Black, white, Chinese, Arabian – life is much more than that. Egyptian, Senegalese, French – never, never, never accept the limits another wants to give you.
(Edugyan 196-7)

As Samuel asserts that people should define themselves beyond racial categories we can clearly see how Samuel's concept of community transcends ethnic and national divisions. Moreover, Samuel's insistence that people should never accept the limits imposed by others not only speaks to the limits imposed on a community from the outside, as in the case of racialization and political or economic oppression, but also to those imposed upon a community from within. Akosua's reductive characterization of authentic Ghanaian-ness allows us to perceive Samuel's concern about the binary construction of European and African cultures. In this way Samuel's rejection of the radical anti-European inclinations within fundamentalistic constructions of postcolonial discourse not only demonstrates a propensity for protean forms of community but also suggests that the way identity is constructed in the postcolonial world needs to be reconsidered.

Throughout this chapter I have been trying to demonstrate that each of these four prairie texts maintains a protean relationship with the postcolonial paradigm and in so doing I have also revealed a degree of concern, within each text, regarding the effects of postcoloniality in contemporary society. Notably, Lifton informs us that "the struggles and shifts within the [protean] self are likely to be associated with a sense that society, too, is changing or requires change" (Lifton 115). Thus we can see how these texts

accurately reflect Lifton's characterization of the protean social conscience by demonstrating a strong inclination towards postcolonialism while simultaneously expressing concern about the repercussions of postcolonial theory's employment within the current capitalistic global market.

Francis' *City Treaty*, as I have mentioned earlier, is a treatise that seeks to write the presence of modern, largely urban, Aboriginal people into literary discourse and contemporary consciousness. In some ways postcoloniality has contributed to the shrinking of populations that are considered culturally Aboriginal by imposing static parameters for Aboriginal signification. In the section titled "treaty adhesions" Joe engages in the construction of a treaty and illustrates the difficulty of attempting to create a treaty that fits all the postcolonial parameters. In the following selection Joe describes that process: "argue/bitch/question/probe/tear apart/challenge/discuss until / everyone is sick of it, then do it again for you have / to *remember what the people went through*" (Francis 64, emphasis author's). In this selection we can see a clear sense of anger conveyed through the diction; however, the way that these words are listed, compounded by the notion that this procedure is repeated "until everyone is sick of it," implies that this process has become nearly banal. Indeed, Francis' text seems keenly aware of "how the very concept of history is underpinned by philosophical, religious [...], and economic notions of guilt/debt which make the future guilty/indebted for its past" (Sanders 13) and employs Joe to destabilize this process.

Francis employs his narrator to interrogate and to criticize postcolonial theory, one of the central paradigms of contemporary sociological representation and historical understanding, in order to provoke readers to enter into new and liberated patterns of

thought. As Joe cries “**Fuck your colonial euro-attitude dudes** / Your post colonial angst” (Francis 47, emphasis author's), separating postcolonial into “post colonial,” he tempers the transcendent connotations of the word postcolonial as a single term. United, these words seems to suggest that the thing being described is not colonial, that those things which are described as postcolonial have somehow transcended or moved beyond colonialism, whereas the divided “post colonial” implies simply that its subject is simply after colonialism, in a temporal sense, and not necessarily un-colonial. As we have seen critics like Spivak, Donnell and Huggan, to name a few, have expressed the concern that postcolonial theory has, in some cases, been used to perpetuate old colonial or neo-colonial ideologies within the contemporary socio-political world and in this way we can see that Francis’ narrator expresses similar concerns. In “EDGEWALKER” Joe states that: “society edges the other from others / walks all over our person / reality / invisible borders stronger than / barb wire” (28). In this selection Joe illustrates the continued presence of social divisions in postcolonial society; however, he also states that “we all walk edges uncertain / on border slippery / between dirt poor / and filthy rich [...] between bush and city” (28), revealing the constructed nature of these divisions and, in so doing, calling them into question. Joe seems to be resolutely entrenched in a discourse of opposition that makes him very effective in providing a critical voice but renders him less successful in articulating an alternative. In her 1990 book *Native Literature in Canada From The Oral Tradition to the Present* critic Penny Petrone states that “once the outrage has been exorcized [...] and the frictional heat of catharsis has subsided, new subjects and themes will take their place” (Petrone 183) and in 2002 we can see that Francis’ narrator continues to struggle with this rage. However, as we have also observed, Francis’ text

often suggests a way out of the restrictive colonial binarisms on which postcoloniality is predicated. In Francis' section entitled "Court Transcripts," as the clown, known for his insightfulness, "jumps up from the net" he states: "*I have found that common denominator / sea links to bush to red sea one collective tribe*" (Francis 10). In this selection the clown joins the old world to the new, the Red Sea in this sense representing the histories of Israel, the Mediterranean, the Middle-East and Africa. But more specifically as the clown describes the journey from "sea to bush to red sea" we can see that he is tracing back the migratory path of early humans out of the cradle of life on the shores of the Red Sea, across the wilds of Asia and Europe to the Bering Sea and across to North America. Moreover, by choosing the Red Sea, on which lies Hadar—the resting place of Lucy, our most famous, oldest fossilized relative—the clown implies a larger form of connectedness, "one collective" human tribe. In this way we can see how the clown disrupts the polarized thought construction inherent in fundamentalistic postcolonial discourse and posits instead a less restrictive notion of human connectivity.

Similarly, Weier employs his narrator not only to highlight the problems of postcoloniality but to investigate more liberated forms of human connectedness. While Weier's narrator is obviously centrally interested in discovering, or creating, a personalized form of Mennonite Ukrainian Canadian identity, I have also asserted that he seeks to highlight Ukraine's history of colonization. However, the history of colonization in Ukraine is very complex and, though the narrator's family's national heritage is Ukrainian, as they are also Mennonite, they are considered ethnically German. German Mennonites, as a result of Katherine the Great's marriage to the tsar of Russia, which was the imperial power that dominated Ukraine at the time, began to colonize Ukraine in

1775. Weier's text informs us that the Cossack men, native Ukrainians from the banks of the Dnieper River, were away fighting the Turks for their imperial masters when their homeland was destroyed, appropriated by the empire, and donated to German Mennonites for colonization (Weier "2.13 Cossacks"). Within the narrator's text, that is, his journal entries, we can easily detect a tone of remorse and anxiety over this as he asks:

Who are the Little Russians I read about? They are Ukrainians. What is Ukraine? Does father know he's growing up in Ukraine? Does he know this is a conquered people? Does he know they want their land? Whose home is this? He talks of Russia. Russia, an imperialist statement. The language of domination. ("2.8 Journal: November 6, 1992")

In this selection Weier's narrator's angst over his family's role in the colonization of Ukraine is clear despite the violent means through which they were ejected from their homeland. However, the narrator's feelings of guilt then double as his family flees to Canada, in search of a peaceful existence, only to repeat the colonial process. As Weier's narrator places the history of Christopher Columbus alongside the history of Ukraine we can see that he creates a parallel as the narrator expresses a similar form of angst over his current position as a colonial resident:

Christopher Columbus, 1492 – 25 years before the first Mennonite is even born – off to discover a new world for them, a haven. What would we have done if he hadn't? Where could we have gone? We would surely have been carted off to Siberia, would all have died in Siberia. ("1.6 Mennonites, and Other Freethinkers")

In this selection we can see that Weier's narrator expresses anxiety over the colonial position in which he finds himself as he suggests the alternative. Weier's narrator argues that his people were facing mass annihilation and so had no choice but to flee to wherever they could. However, this argument resembles an apology because Weier's narrator does

not justify the actions of his people but rather attempts to excuse them for the reason that there were no other, acceptable options. Indeed Weier's narrator clearly finds the history for which he is made to feel responsible hopelessly beyond his control and extremely restrictive. However, as Weier's narrator states: "I know, you've heard this all before. Just another angry voice. Complain, complain" ("2.3 Journal: October 28, 1992") we can also see that Weier's narrative, like Francis' text, attempts to move beyond expressing feelings of anger, pain and regret. In this passage, as we observed in the selections from Francis' text above, there is the sense that iterations of anger and regret, like those based on a "guilt/debt" construction of history, are problematic and have been espoused almost into banality. However, while Weier's narrator does not propose the ultimate form of human connection presented by Francis' clown, the construction of Weier's narrator implies that new and liberating forms of identity can be created by moving beyond anger, regret, guilt and debt in favour of a more complex understanding of history and its relationship with the self.

Janice Kulyk Keefer explains that in her novel *The Green Library*, which is similarly about the discovery of Ukrainian Canadian identity, she attempts to create, "[a] self [...] that is not turned nostalgically back to some pure or golden past, or engaged simply with the traumas of the past, but a self situated in the present, pulled between vastly different sites: a rapidly changing Canada, and a chaotically 'developing' Ukraine" (Keefer 99). In this way we can see a strong parallel between Weier's narrator and Keefer's narrative self. As Weier's narrator reflects images of both beauty and destruction, poverty and comfort within his familial and Ukraine's national histories we can see how his engagement with the past is neither simple nor nostalgic and, as we

engage in an examination of representations of ethnic fundamentalism in Chapter Three, his feelings of tension or detachment between the Ukrainian and Canadian aspects of his identity will also become clear. Also, as Weier's narrator positions the history of colonization in Ukraine alongside the colonial exploits of Christopher Columbus in order to highlight neglected historical parallels and complexities, we can see greater congruence with Keefer, who states that she intends for her narrative to discuss "points of connection" wherein her "historical experience" can speak to and learn from the historical experiences of others across cultural boundaries (99). And indeed, as Weier's narrator engages in his investigation of what he calls "the politics of stolen land" (Weier "2.13 Cossacks"), we can see that he touches on an issue that is prevalent in all four of these prairie texts.

By its very nature Francis' *City Treaty* is clearly centrally interested in the politics of stolen land, as I mentioned earlier; however, while the investigation of this issue in Goto's text is somewhat less obvious it is no less thorough. As Goto's narrator recollects her father attempting to establish some temporary comforts for his family by appropriating one of the local campground's port-o-potties she states: "[M]aybe Dad was just like Pa parking his wagon wherever he wanted. Maybe it was like Pa chopping down trees by the river. He didn't ask anyone's permission. It wasn't stealing. No one called it that. I hoped" (Goto 129). In this selection Goto's narrator ironically parallels her father's theft with the theft explicit in the process of colonization and comically displays the absurdity of the colonial process by illustrating its deployment within a more contemporary context. Thus it is clear that Goto's text expresses a degree of concern about the politics of stolen land and as the narrator becomes more familiar with her

neighbour Gerald it is clear that Goto's text also problematizes any attempt at a simplistic understanding of these concerns. While Goto's narrator, like Weier's, clearly expresses a sense of discomfort at her position as colonial resident on the Canadian prairies through Gerald, whose mother is Japanese and father is Aboriginal, she is able to see, as will be discussed further in Chapter 3, that cultural boundaries are never static and ethnic distinctions are never absolute.

Finally, in Edugyan's text the politics of stolen land again represent a major theme as much of the intrigue within her narrative revolves around the possibility that Ray and Porter plot to steal Samuel's land. However, unlike the other texts we have examined, which engage with the politics of stolen land in a colonial sense, Edugyan's text represents the politics of localized land disputes when confronted with the forces of government and a global market system. The fact that Edugyan's novel concludes without definitively informing readers whether or not there was a plot to steal Samuel's land falls into the background as the entire community of Aster, even the crafty and industrious Ray Frank, falls into ruin as a result of declining grain prices, and other political issues during the Trudeau administration (Edugyan 310). Edugyan's narrator comments that, "they watched, without relish, as Ray Frank fell on hard times and didn't recover" (310). The mournful tone with which the narrator laments the loss of Ray Frank suggests that, in the face of large, global or governmental forces that affect the whole community indiscriminately, divisions within that community are obscured or rendered less important.

Throughout this chapter I have been trying to demonstrate how the relationships with ideological systems represented in these four prairie texts are characteristically

protean. The fluid, malleable, and sometimes contradictory, political positions presented by these four narrators clearly demonstrate some protean characteristics; however, given the apparent precariousness of their positions we are given cause to question the benefit of examining such a stance. I begin this chapter with Lifton's description of how the "disintegration of the bonds between the sacred and the secular," the ability to perceive the physical and religious worlds separately and not necessarily in conflict, "facilitated Enlightenment advances in science and rationalism," in order to demonstrate how these texts, through their consolidation of seemingly oppositional idea systems, conform to protean parameters. However, as Lifton argues that a protean discourse, like scientific rationalism, can be used to support a fundamentalistic agenda, so this chapter seeks to demonstrate how postcolonial discourse can also be manipulated and imposed in a fundamentalistic manner. In this sense, as I have argued above, this chapter also seeks to illustrate the protean process that not only acts as an entropic force disruptive to the fundamentalist state but also promotes a cohesiveness that creates the space for new fundamentalisms to flourish and fall again.

Chapter Three: Protean Space: Riemannian Spatial Constructions, Striation, Fundamentalism and Entropy

Many of the themes under consideration in this text, such as gender, ethnicity, and textuality might be examined in a spatial sense. That is, we can conceive of the text as a space and in a similar way we might understand how concepts of gender, race, and ethnicity might be, and often are, perceived or understood in a spatial sense. However, performing such an examination, especially considering the ways in which Goto, Edugyan, Francis and Weier challenge and complicate these categories, causes us to question how these spaces are figured in these texts. Ideally, we should look to Lifton's protean self for a description of protean space, and indeed community can easily be understood in this spatial sense. However, while Lifton does provide us with a brief description of the way that the protean self engages with notions of community, which was examined in the previous chapter, he does not provide us with a description or a model that might help us to visualize what a protean community, or protean space, might look like or how it might function. Then, while searching through Lifton's text for a hint of how we might conceive of, or characterize, protean space I was introduced to Deleuze and Guattari's *1000 Plateaus* and their theory of smooth and striated space and was immediately struck by its resemblance to proteanism, but was unsure of how to incorporate it into this thesis. Then I was reminded, if I might be so bold as to make the analogy, of Niels Bohr as he sought to describe the structure of the atom. Bohr, himself a great protean figure, created the modern image of the atom in 1913 by synthesizing Rutherford's orbital image of the atom and Max Planck's quantum theory (Bronowski 336) and in this chapter I intend to do much the same thing with Lifton and Deleuze and

Guattari. My intention here is not, of course, to equate Bohr's project with my own but only to use his method to illustrate my intentions. Bohr sought a model that would allow him to conceive of the inner structure of the atom, a way to understand atomic space, which would accommodate or explain the flaws with the orbital model. Likewise this examination requires a model that can characterize protean space, a structure that can help to illustrate how it might function despite its multiple and contradictory qualities. In a truly protean gesture Bohr turned to the work of Max Planck, which had been published a dozen years earlier, and, by fusing Planck's theory with the Rutherford model, Bohr gave birth to our current understanding of atomic structure. And similarly, though this is where the similarities end, this examination intends to adopt the theory of smooth and striated space from Deleuze and Guattari's *1000 Plateaus* in an attempt to bring a greater degree of clarity to Lifton's theory of the protean self.

There are many parallels between these two theories, but in order to begin we must first gain a basic understanding of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of smooth and striated space, "the space in which the war machine develops and the space instituted by the state apparatus" (Deleuze and Guattari 474). Deleuze and Guattari use six different models (the technological, the musical, the maritime, the mathematical, the physical and the aesthetic) in order to investigate the seemingly simple opposition of the smooth and the striated and, rather than attempting to reiterate their extremely complex models, it will best serve our purposes here to develop a fresh and slightly more basic, though no less problematic, model. Smooth space can be understood as akin to a bare field after the winter thaw and, contrarily, striated space can be understood as that same field when it is tossed into row upon row of neat furrows by a passing plough, or seeder. Striated space is

heterogeneous in nature whereas smooth space is homogenous; the striated is a space that strives towards hermetic boundaries whereas the smooth is a space with no boundaries at all. Deleuze and Guattari state that “smooth space itself, desert, steppe, sea, or ice, is a multiplicity [...], non-metric, acentered” (484) and, though, as Deleuze and Guattari note, the opposition of the smooth and the striated is itself inherently problematic, in a sense I want to look at how the smooth quality of prairie space has been imparted to the textual spaces of these works.

The protean self, as we have already observed, is similarly characterized and for the sake of concision I would like to employ a fairly lengthy passage wherein Lifton lists most of the protean characteristics which have been, and will be, under examination so as to refresh and reinforce our perception of the parallels between these two theories. Lifton states that:

the protean self does nothing in a completely linear, straightforward manner. It darts and teases, its feelings and connections less than fully clear. It nonetheless seeks always to maintain a certain poise or balance- an equilibrium or equipoise – to enable it to function in the world. That poise is bound up with agility, with flexible adaptation, and is less a matter of steady and predictable direction than of manoeuvrability and talent for coping with widely divergent circumstances. Such poise requires a series of additional psychological characteristics, ones that are crucial to protean existence. These include strong tendencies toward mockery and humour for ‘lubricating’ experience, emotions and communities that are ‘free floating’ rather than clearly anchored, preferences for fragmentary ideas rather than large belief systems, and continuous improvisation in social and occupational arrangements and in expressions of conciliation or protest. (Lifton 93)

Through this selection we can instantly see many striking parallels between the theories of Lifton and Deleuze and Guattari: the lack of linearity, of boundaries, of center and periphery, the flexibility, the fluidity, the revolutionary impetus and, as smooth space seemingly resembles Lifton’s conception of proteanism, we can begin to see how striated

space resembles Lifton's characterization of the protean counterpart that is fundamentalism. Fundamentalism, like striated space, is invested in division, rigidity, in boundaries and stability; however, as soon as Lifton attempts to explore this opposition he concludes that "although [it is] an antagonistic negation of proteanism, fundamentalism tends to be intertwined with proteanism; they may even require one another" (160). Similarly, at the very inception of Deleuze and Guattari's opposition of the smooth and the striated they conclude that "the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space" (Deleuze and Guattari 474). However, while these selections clearly demonstrate the parallels between the theories of Lifton and Deleuze and Guattari they still do little to illustrate the function or to outline the parameters of protean space and for this reason we must include two more terms in our analysis. In the previous chapter I briefly employed the term "entropy" in order to describe the cyclical process from proteanism to fundamentalism. Entropy is, of course, a force that pushes towards disorder. Proteanism is not itself disorder, in fact it always seeks to "maintain a certain poise or balance - an equilibrium or equipoise," but within the fundamentalist system proteanism acts, or is perceived, as a disruptive, entropic, force. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari state that smooth space is not a plane of entropy; upon closer inspection they discover that smooth space resembles Riemann space, "a continuous variation that exceeds any distribution of constants and variables, the freeing of a line that does not pass between two points, the formation of a plane that does not proceed by parallel and perpendicular lines" (488). In Riemann space, *"the linkage between one vicinity and the next is not defined and can be effected in an infinite*

number of ways. Riemann space at its most general thus presents itself as an amorphous collection of pieces that are juxtaposed but not attached to each other” (485 emphasis authors'). Thus smooth space is not smooth but Riemannian; it only appears smooth from the perspective of, or in comparison to, striated space, much in the same way as proteanism appears entropic from the perspective of fundamentalism. In this way it is clear that the smooth, or smoothing, actually describes an entropic force within the fundamentalistic striated space. So, in this sense we can see how the dialectical motion from striated space, to smooth space, to Riemann space closely resembles the movement from fundamentalism, to entropy, to proteanism. Moreover, we can clearly see in the description of Riemann space many strong parallels with Lifton's conception of the protean self and, for the first time, an image, albeit a complex one, of protean space as well as an explanation of its function and parameters. Allow me to clarify: for the protean self racial space comprises the entire human race; it perceives and understands the infinite complexity of genetic diversity within this space and in this way rejects simplistic fundamentalist striations within racial space. The fundamentalist self understands humanity as comprising a number of racial spaces, black space and white space for example, whereas for the protean self racial space is Riemannian, people are understood as “an amorphous collection of pieces that are juxtaposed but not attached to each other” wherein “the linkage between one vicinity and the next is not defined and can be effected in an infinite number of ways.” In this chapter I intend to demonstrate the Prote-Riemannian constructions of spaces – sexual, racial, and textual – within Goto's *The Kappa Child*, Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, Francis' *City Treat* and Weier's *Steppe: A Novel*.

In Goto's text the narrator's constructions of race are often ambiguous, which disrupts any attempt at a fundamentalist, or striated, perception of racial space. As the narrator describes her friend Midori, she states: "she'd flick her Asian eyes at me from a Caucasian face" (Goto 84). This description is not selected to debate Midori's race but rather is meant to illustrate how Goto's narrator's description is free of polarized, striated, fundamentalistic conceptions of racial space. In this sense the ambiguity of Goto's narrator's description of Midori's appearance, the easy fusion of seemingly, or overtly, contradictory characteristics, causes her conception of racial space to appear highly Riemannian, or protean, in nature.

The narrator's sister Slither, or Satomi, is described in similarly culturally liberated terms as she announces that in regards to cooking "Italian is [her] specialty" (268). In Goto's text the importance of ethnically authentic cooking is depicted by the sense of repulsion felt by the narrator at the appearance of "Janice's giant onigiris" (166), which shall be discussed in greater depth later in this examination. However, through the narrator's acceptance of Slither's cross-cultural culinary expertise it is clear that ethnic space within Goto's text transcends stifling notions of authenticity. In this way we can see how the boundaries within ethnic and cultural space are smoothed down, or rendered less rigid, within Goto's text.

Moreover, we see further resistance to the striation of racial space when Goto's narrator returns to her family farm, after the attempted murder of her father by her mother, to discover that her father's hair has, rather abruptly, lost all pigmentation. The narrator's father explains: "Like Marie Antoinette! Turned white over night!" (258). As Marie Antoinette's hair is rumoured to have whitened in a night's time when she

discovered that she was to face the guillotine, the narrator's father's reference here is very fitting considering both the narrator's father's tyrannical disregard for his family's well being for the sake of his ambitions and his wife's violent act of retribution.

However, more important for our purposes here is the way that the humorous quality of this passage lubricates this cross-cultural analogy. The comic reception of this passage is partly achieved by the cultural and economic disparity of the subjects of the comparison, the elderly, Japanese, agrarian man and the rich, French, female aristocrat. However, this comic quality also devalues the contrast between the subjects, the striations within racial space that separate them, and causes the comparison to seem simply appropriate.

In Edugyan's novel we see a similar erosion of the boundaries within ethnic space as the narrator describes Maud's appearance when caught halfway through her beauty ritual. Throughout Edugyan's novel, as I mentioned earlier, we get the sense that the narrator is recalling her own experiences. As the one remaining twin, Yvette, returns to her family home to rediscover her past at the very end of the novel we get the sense that the narrative voice actually represents Yvette's retrospective self-narrative. After the twins are scolded by their parents for consistently mocking Ama the narrator observes that Maud "looked strange, half of her hair was seared straight by a hot comb, the other half an Afro awaiting transformation" (Edugyan 227). This selection describes Maud as existing in a fractured or fragmented racialized space to convey the adolescent Yvette's feelings of anger toward her mother at the belief that she favours Ama. However, as the retrospective narrator represents the twins' treatment of Ama in a decreasingly sympathetic light, and hence suggests that Maud's treatment of Ama has nothing to do with favouritism, the racialized significance of the beauty ritual diminishes and we can

see how, as a retrospective narrative, Yvette's text has more of an ironic than nostalgic perspective. In this way it is clear that this fracturing or fragmentation actually represents a smoothing down of the striations within racial space rather than an admonishment for crossing them.

Fragmentation is a prominent theme in both postmodern and postcolonial discourse and is sometimes perceived as a destructive force; however, the protean self thrives, and in many ways can only exist, within a space that is, in a sense, fragmented. Lifton states that:

tendencies toward multiplicity to the point of fragmentation are rampant in both the modern and the postmodern, but the latter embraces these tendencies— 'swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and chaotic currents of change.' In that sense, proteanism is consistent with what is called the 'contingency, multiplicity, and polyvocality' of postmodernism in the arts and with its 'playful, self-ironizing' patterns. (Lifton 8)

By considering this notion of fragmentation in light of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of smooth and striated space it become clear that fragmentation within smooth space constitutes a form of striation but more specifically it describes new striations that conflict with existing striations. Lifton suggests that it is at that juncture, where the new striation meets the established striation, in the "chaotic currents of change," that the protean self flourishes. Each of these texts demonstrates a clear resistance to striated conceptions of space, often by introducing new striations that problematize, or contravene, existing striations.

In Francis' text the narrator often expounds powerful critiques of corporate institutions that appropriate elements of Aboriginal identity. As we have already observed in previous chapters, Francis' narrator also often presents an exaggerated version of fundamentalistic postcoloniality;. and, as he states: "Fuck Mohawk gas / Atlanta braves /

Cleveland Indians / Washington redskins / THE KANSAS CITY CHIEFS” (Francis 47), these two elements of Francis' text become obvious. However, as we have also observed, Francis' narrator's inflated postcolonial anger also often has an ironic quality that is meant to reflect, critically, on fundamentalistic aspects of the postcolonial paradigm. In his analysis of Francis' text Cariou states that: “Francis uses postmodern irony and verbal excess to show how the lives of contemporary Aboriginal people are implicated in complex patterns of symbol, contract and stereotype which work to keep them in marginal positions” (Cariou 149). In this quotation, the protean qualities of Francis' text, the postmodern irony, the complex patterns, the verbal excess, are starkly highlighted. However, more important here is that, as Cariou asserts that Francis' text demonstrates how “[a]boriginal people are implicated” in a process of self-marginalization, we can also see how Francis' text therefore complicates racialized notions of cultural appropriation or, more accurately, smoothes the racial divisions on which processes of cultural appropriation are predicated. Moreover, as Francis' text engages in this analysis of “patterns of symbol, contract and stereotype,” which confounds the dichotomy of self and other, he also provides a complex and in many ways critical representation of the processes of exoticization and fetishization that fuel the postcolonial identity economy. In the selection from Francis' text we can clearly see a critical representation of the forces of exoticization and cultural appropriation but the criticism itself is less than clear. The criticism might be based on notions of authenticity; if Mohawk gas were tribally owned, for example, or, if these were Aboriginal ball clubs, Francis' narrator might not object to their nomenclature. However, as we have already seen, Francis' project is in many ways geared at complicating notions of Aboriginal authenticity as it seeks to write the

Aboriginal experience beyond the world of rural reserves through a *City Treaty*. So, as Francis' text critiques the appropriation of native identity, and simultaneously complicates notions of Aboriginal authenticity, we can see that it questions the interaction of the postcolonial identity economy and contemporary market economy more generally.

The concept of authenticity is necessarily fundamentalistic, though not necessarily negative; it exists only in striated space, relies on hermetic boundaries and cannot cope with change. Striated space experiences ambiguity as a fracture, or fragmentation, that disrupts its cohesiveness and so it is with concepts of authenticity. In Goto's text, as the young narrator first encounters Gerald, the biracial son of her Nissei neighbour, she expresses feelings of discomfort which reflect the fragmentation of her fundamentalistic notions of racial authenticity. As Goto's narrator studies Gerald's appearance she states: "I eye-glanced at Gerald's face for signs. Flipping from his face to his mother's, searching for where the ancestry bled into more Japanese and less Indian, but I couldn't tell" (Goto 188). The narrator's vain, and almost frantic, search for a clear dividing line between Gerald's Aboriginal and Japanese heritages, and for evidence that his Japanese half occupies the greater portion of Gerald's being, clearly demonstrates the narrator's discomfort with racial ambiguity, or signifies a fragmentation that disrupts the divisions that make up her striated notions of racial space. However, as the narrator matures, her understanding of racial space seems to become more protean and she comes to illustrate the fallaciousness of notions of authenticity in the contemporary global market. As the narrator searches through the produce aisle at her local groceteria for Japanese cucumbers to satiate what she believes are pregnancy cravings, Bernie assures her that there's "a

fresh shipment, direct from California” (140). As Bernie's observation comically invites us to consider the cultural signification of food, and to perceive its fallaciousness, it simultaneously causes us to see the process of racialization with regards to humans as similarly problematic. However, in Goto's text her narrator almost relishes the act of pointing out the seemingly paradoxical constructions of racial and cultural signifiers within contemporary society, and in this selection we can also see how, like Francis' narrator, she provides a critique of the process of cultural signification in the postcolonial identity economy more generally.

Each of these four prairie texts engage in an examination of the global market economy, some more forcefully than others. As we have already seen, Francis' text is primarily concerned with notions of cultural commodification and appropriation, and with engaging with manifestations of this process within contemporary culture, often in media and other big business. Similarly, Goto's narrator engages in comic or pointed representations of this process. However, in Edugyan's text her engagement with the forces of the global market is more oblique, as is most everything in Edugyan's text, but not less complex and of no less significance to the text. As we first learn that “Ray was making a ludicrously huge capital off national wheat sales to Russia and China” (Edugyan 131), it is clear that Ray's success is to a large degree predicated on political motions well beyond his control. As Ray falls into ruin as a result of other political decisions and the quality of yields in China and Russia (310), it becomes clear that social and economic prosperity largely depends on complex forces within the global market economy. However, as in Francis' and Goto's texts, we are never provided with a solution, only an observation. Like Weier's narrator, who asks “Who controls this

marketplace, these routes of trade between Europe and Asia, east and west, north and south?” (Weier “1.25 History Lesson: Borders”), we are left perplexed at the sight of the complex and bewildering process of globalization. As these four texts interrogate the process of racialization, and smooth the divisions within racial space, we can see how they are also smoothing the national divisions on which the global market economy is based by complicating the concept of authenticity and illustrating the hopeless complexity of the global market system.

As racial space comprises all of humanity, or the space of the human race, and the process of racialization attempts to create striations that divide people into ethnic or racial categories, so does gender space comprise all of humanity, but the imposition of striations upon gender space obviously attempt to define gender rather than racial divisions. This striated conception of gender space is complicated in two of these texts. In Goto’s text the narrator frequently characterizes herself as ambiguous in gender. In addition to her disdain for all things stereotypically feminine, her connection to her father, and her pseudo-sexual encounter with the asexual stranger we can also perceive the ambiguousness of the narrator’s gender construction as Gerald, in one of his first conversations with the narrator, inquires: “You a boy or a girl?” (Goto 168). As Goto’s narrator complicates gender divisions within her text we can clearly see how she smoothes the divisions within gender space or, more accurately, illustrates a protean or Riemannian form of gender space, by demonstrating a freeness of connectivity between genders.

Likewise, Weier’s text demonstrates an inclination towards protean forms of gender construction. As we have already seen in the first chapter, Weier’s narrator

demonstrates a strong degree of connection to his mother as he states: “I am silent. I have searched the story of a mother’s silence. And mine. I know this cannot be, men own no silence, only power. Silence belongs in a woman’s world. Still, I claim it. Silence. This is the gift she gave me. I sucked her story from her breast” (Weier “5.10 Journal: April 26 1993”). However, as the narrator defends his right to his mother’s story in this selection, we can also see that the narrator expresses anxiety over ventriloquizing, or for stealing or appropriating the voice of a woman. The chief way in which Weier’s narrator attempts to avoid the problems associated with the appropriation of voice is by allotting each voice its own clearly referenced section, or textual space. Moreover, as Weier’s narrator states that he tries to cause his “life to tangle [...] with [his] great grandmother’s [and] with the woman in the diary” (“1.16 Journal: September 30, 1992”), we can see how he too is attempting to create a Riemannian or protean form of connectivity within gendered space. His characterization of the connection between his narrative and the narratives of these women as a “tangle,” or a jumble of roots, strongly resembles the image of patterns of connectivity within Riemannian space described above. Furthermore, as Lifton characterizes proteanism as “a balancing act between responsive shapeshifting, on the one hand, and efforts to consolidate and cohere, on the other” (Lifton 9), we can also see that Weier’s narrator’s efforts to respond to the politics of voice by balancing each of the narratives within the text closely resembles this protean process.

Thus far we have been observing how the divisions in different types of spaces within these four prairie texts, which are often conceived of in a striated or heterogeneous fashion, are rendered ambiguous, or smoothed. In a sense, as I have suggested above, we have been looking at how fragmentations, or new striations, within striated space conflict

with existing striations, or how a striated space might be so thoroughly problematized, or fragmented, that it is essentially smoothed. However, for the sake of clarity, it serves our purpose here to look at how exactly this process is described in *1000 Plateaus*. Deleuze and Guattari state:

The more regular the intersection, the tighter the striation, the more homogenous the space tends to become; it is for this reason that from the very beginning homogeneity did not seem to us to be a characteristic of smooth space, but on the contrary, the extreme result of striation, or the limit-form of a space striated everywhere and in all directions. (Deleuze and Guattari 488)

In this selection Deleuze and Guattari conceive of homogeneity, like Riemannian space, as “the result of extreme striation.” However, unlike Riemannian space, wherein “the linkage between one vicinity and the next is not defined and can be effected in an infinite number of ways” and a line does not move between two points or on parallel or perpendicular lines, in homogenous space striations are “regular,” “tight” and absolute. For this reason it appears as though homogenous space in some ways more closely resembles the restrictive state of striated space that I have been both terming fundamentalist space and equating with striated space within my dialectic model. But for the sake of precision it serves us to differentiate between striated spaces in general and the type of oppressively rigid striated space that I mean to indicate when discussing fundamentalist space and the types of striations that these four prairie texts seek to confound.

Edugyan’s text frequently problematizes fundamentalist conceptions of racial space by demonstrating forms of connectivity that transcend notions of racial homogeneity. In Edugyan’s novel *Ray* expresses an extremely striated, homogenous understanding of Africa and indeed African people in general. During one of their

expeditions to the Frank farm, Ray suggests that since Samuel is from Africa he might not be accustomed to the plenitude of rain. In response Samuel states: “Well, where I’m from, we do get the monsoon. And I did live four years in England” (Edugyan 128). In this selection we can see how Samuel’s experience thwarts Ray’s homogenous understanding of African geography and climate. Moreover, as he informs Ray that he also lived in England for four years, Samuel reveals that Ray had not conceived of the possibility that an individual of African descent might have arrived in Canada from anywhere other than Africa itself. However, as Ray introduces Samuel to his inebriated farm hand Jarvis, we can also see how Edugyan’s text refuses homogenous depictions of Canadian identity. Edugyan’s narrator describes Jarvis as a man with “brown and parched” skin, “luminous green eye[s]” and “black hair” (130) but he is never racially distinguished; indeed he might even be considered racially ambiguous in description. Jarvis presents the stereotypical image of the vulgar, drunken, uneducated, agrarian labourer, which might account for his tanned skin, but when he encounters Samuel another side of Jarvis’s character becomes clear. As Ray introduces Samuel to Jarvis states “‘Tyne,’ [...]. An unimpressed smile made him look almost handsome. ‘Tyne. An Englishman?’ His laugh sounded like hiccups. ‘I guess the cold’s no bother to you. Lot of rain in England’” (130). In this selection we can see that Jarvis’s comments suggest an understanding of the history of colonization, that his conception of racial space is significantly less homogenous and that the divisions within his concept of racial space are substantially less rigid than those expressed by Ray. Similarly, as Maud is introduced to many Canadian women who are incapable of pronouncing her name she experiences feelings of isolation and exile. However, Maud then encounters another woman who

shares the same experience and who introduces herself by stating: "'Tara Chodzicki,' she smiled, 'Said, 'Shud-it-sky,' but spelled C-H-O-D-Z-I-C-K-I. These Asterians have problems with my name, too'" (115). Frequently this sentiment of alienation is understood in racialized terms but, as Tara's last name clearly indicates that she is Slavic (likely Ukrainian) and would be considered racially white in contemporary society, we can see how Edugyan's text also problematizes homogenous perceptions of European peoples. As Edugyan's text draws the comparison between the experiences of Maud and Tara we can also see how the narrative makes connections without regard for the conventional divisions, or striations, within racial space.

In many ways we can see how Porter's fundamentalistic politics stand in antithetical opposition to Samuel's protean disposition. Porter is self-educated whereas Samuel has also received a more traditional education both in his home country and abroad. In this way we can see how, in a very general sense, Samuel's education is more protean than Porter's. Samuel's education involves teachers, which necessarily creates a more dynamic, more protean, learning environment, if for no other reason than it provides another, and ideally, more learned perspective on the material or, less ideally, a perspective against which to rage. Also, considering the diverse nature of Samuel's education, in Europe and Africa, it is clear that his inclination towards proteanism is born of necessity. As Samuel returns to his home-country, after spending some time at school in Europe, he sees a shaman performing a ceremony with the intention of bringing rain. However, the narrator states that: "Samuel found this ludicrous, the creation of rain so beyond the realm of man. But driving home from the last spectacle, he was depressed by an ancestral desire to believe, and lamented with bitter humour that too much schooling

had made a white man of him” (267). In this selection we can see that Samuel expresses deep concern about the possibility of his western education conflicting with his ancestral culture. However, unlike Porter, who, when confronted with a conflict between his experience of blackness and European constructions of blackness, rejects European influence outright, Samuel treads a thin line whereupon he attempts to pay continual homage to his ancestral culture – his failure to perform the proper ceremony upon Jacob’s death causes Samuel great anxiety, for example – yet embraces enough of western culture, science and technology to conceive of and construct a computer, the touchstone of 21st century western culture, in the late 1960s to the early 1970s.

Over the last few decades the slaughter of animals in less industrialized countries has often been represented in media with images of ropes, knives, a significant amount of danger and often, from the perspective of the viewer, cruelty. Edugyan’s text frequently presents us with images that blur the distinction between conceptions of first and third world by highlighting occluded practices from the rural Canadian prairies that appear much like contemporary representations of so-called third world customs. At the Frank farm, as Samuel watches the first slaughter that he has seen since childhood, he becomes physically sickened after having been forced to become involved. When reflecting on the event afterwards Samuel thinks: “Certainly in his country they killed to eat, as everywhere. But there was something less barbaric in those old childhood slaughters (the ones he’d witnessed, anyway), and he recalled that it likely had something to do with ritual. He had seen nothing today but ridicule and cruelty” (136). While this selection clearly illustrates a smoothing of the divisions between notions of first and third world, as it highlights common practices and reflects perceptions of barbarism and cruelty, the

parenthetical note seems to suggest that Samuel is speaking from a fairly distant, or detached perspective. Furthermore, we must also note that there is a degree of irony in Samuel's comment here if we consider that the young boy who is also present at the Frank farm “understood that some rite of passage had taken place” (134) when he witnessed the slaughter. There is, for the young boy, an element of "ritual" in what Samuel "today" perceives as "ridicule." This recalls the fact that Samuel's points of reference are themselves “childhood slaughters” and as Samuel perceived an element of ritual in his youth so does this young boy perceive this slaughter as ritualistic in nature. In this way we can see how this scene is less a critical depiction of modes of slaughter than it is a critique of the divisions, or the striated conception of cultural, national, or racial space, on which claims to barbarity and enlightenment are based.

In Goto's text, as the narrator first arrives in the small town, she immediately perceives that the discourse of racialization is as unfitting a representational tool for her experience as is the model of *Little House on the Prairie*. The narrator remarks: “a man with MF on his cap took it off [...] the top part of his forehead was a startling white, the rest of his face a reddish brown. [...] It doesn't pay, I thought, to believe everything you read” (Goto 69). While it is obvious that the different skin tones possessed by this man are simply the result of sun exposure, the implications of the narrator's shock are much more complex. The letters MF, the abbreviation for the agricultural equipment company Massey Ferguson, coupled with the man's sun burdened skin signify his position as an agrarian labourer but, furthermore, the narrator perceives how the unromantic image this man presents smoothes the racialized striations she expects within socio-economic space. In this way the narrator's observation, like the character of Jarvis, problematizes the

polarized constructions of race and class by creating a liminal entity that disrupts the striated construction of racialized space within literary discourse; “it doesn’t pay,” the narrator asserts, “to believe everything you read.”

As I have suggested thus far, the text itself can also be conceived as a space. Upon first glance the formal or structural appearances, the textual spaces, of these four prairie texts cause us to perceive them as quite disparate. However, if convention is equated with striation in textual space, we can see how they provide a cross-section, I hesitate to use the word progression, of formal and structural experimentation. Edugyan's novel appears very conventional in form and structure but the restricted, and restrictive, nature of her narrator, the way in which the narrator omits key information from the narrative, such as whether or not the twins tried to drown Ama, or if they started the fires that led to their incarceration, problematizes this assessment. In this sense we can see how the narrator's unreliability fragments traditional narrative structure but, at the same time, as the unreliable narrator has itself become a convention, we can also see how Edugyan's narrative fragmentation simultaneously acts as a striation. For this examination, the striking element in this selection is the same as that quality which intrigues Deleuze and Guattari, who state: “[w]hat interests us in operations of striation and smoothing are precisely the passages or combinations: how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces” (Deleuze and Guattari 500). However, this analysis seeks to examine how in performing this process these texts problematize homogenous, or fundamentalist, conceptions of space. Formally or structurally, Goto's text is observably more unorthodox than Edugyan's novel. As we saw in Chapter One, several times

throughout Goto's narrative we are provided with short poetic interludes that seem almost completely removed from the narrative except that they engage with topics that are germane to the rest of the text, such as reproduction and mythology. These sections provide a perceptible break in the novel's structure and in this way we can understand how they essentially fragment the textual space within Goto's novel. Moreover, in Weier's text the conventional form of the novel has been almost completely abandoned. His text appears as a series of letters and excerpts that the narrator has woven together with his own journal entries, and yet the narrator continually insists that his text is a work of fiction. In this way Weier's narrator blurs the distinctions between his text and other texts – his intertexts – and also between authorship and readership as he tasks us with synthesizing into a cohesive narrative the letters and his source material. As Lifton states that, for the protean self, “this hard-won cohesion is the opposite of pure form, that it is more a matter of a workable blending of disparate elements” (Lifton 88), we can easily see the protean process at work in these texts. Despite their contradictory elements, each of these texts strives to attain a degree of structural stability. Donnell notes that: “emphasis on migratory subjectivities within postcolonial studies has come from many theoretical directions and their convergence has created a critical practice in which diaspora narratives take center stage in many postcolonial discussions” (Donnell 479). This fundamentalistic conflation of postcolonial and diasporic studies could cause postcolonial scholarship to overlook Francis' text. However, *City Treaty*, as the final part of our structural cross-section, offers the widest array of structural diversity. As Francis' text is identified as “a long poem” it is less constrained by narrative convention and Francis' narrator experiments with different forms of poetic and structural convention

throughout the text. In the section entitled “Booze Treaty” (Francis 18) readers are presented with a concrete poem that engages with the subject of alcoholism among Aboriginal peoples while structurally creating the image of a bottle of alcohol on the page. While concrete poetry is not a new phenomenon, in fact it traces back to the ancient Greeks, the way in which Francis' narrator blends this ancient structural convention into his text and uses it to engage historical as well as contemporary issues demonstrates a strong inclination towards protean forms of textual space.

Each of these four prairie texts seeks to ground itself in some historical experience but since, as Donnell notes, “access to the ear and pen of history is not equal for all at all moments” (Donnell 485), and these texts are largely interested in the occluded histories of marginalized people, they frequently engage in a (re)presentation, or construction, of their historical narratives. In the section of Francis' text entitled: “This Gun is This Tall” (Francis 55), the narrator stacks his poem beside the vertically written title, employing more concrete poetic elements, in order to illustrate how the value of furs were gauged during Canada's early colonial period by stacking furs alongside rifles and muskets. Simultaneously, the speaker of the poem provides a furious rebuke of colonial exploitation of the Canadian landscape and its people. However, more important for our purposes is the way in which Francis' text, by highlighting this history, constructs a historical narrative and thereby demonstrates a malleable or fluidic concept of historical space. Historical space is often extremely striated in its socio-economic, political, and racial divisions, and as Francis' poem textualizes this occluded history of exploitation it is clear that it also smoothes these divisions.

In many ways Edugyan's text as a whole is a project that seeks to textualize the occluded presence and experience of African people on the Canadian prairies, and in this way demonstrates the malleability of historical space. While shopping around Aster for a storefront in which Samuel might set up shop, Ray explains how he came to Aster, with a flood of migrants from the east, in search of work. In response the narrator informs us that: "Samuel spoke timidly of his own origins, which he sensed lacked the wholesomeness of Ray's beginnings. He hated to justify himself, holding back anything dubious, so that his story ended up being the one he'd often told the twins when they cared enough to ask" (Edugyan 70). In this selection we can see how, by editing his self-narrative, Samuel demonstrates a protean reaction to rigid concepts of personal historical space. Moreover, this selection also represents one of those interesting moments where the parallel of the narrator's knowledge and Yvette's knowledge is made explicit. The narrator's knowledge of Samuel's history is limited to the knowledge possessed by his daughters and Ray, and since Samuel, Ray and Chloe die within the text, and of course Yvette returns at the end, the identification of the narrator as a retrospective Yvette is clearly supportable. So, as the narrator constructs her self-narrative her father's self-narrative acts as historical intertext.

In Edugyan's text history is frequently illustrated in malleable and uncertain terms, and indeed Edugyan's text as a whole centers on themes of malleability and uncertainty. The town of Aster itself has an uncertain history; it is recorded that Aster contained one of the earliest black communities in prairie Canada but the origins of its most famous landmark, Stone Road, remain shrouded in mystery. The narrator states: "[t]ruth is, no one knows how Stone Road came to be. Too mathematically perfect to

seem natural, its mystery is the theme of an annual town contest” (42), yet the narrator provides us with a myth to explain its origins. This might also imply the connection between Yvette and the narrative voice as it can be taken as Yvette’s contribution to the “town contest.” The narrator describes the stone road as having been originally conceived as a wall, a barrier to separate the white from the black side of Aster. Then she goes on to state that:

No one knows the details of what came next, whether a war of sorts started, or if the backbreaking nature of the work itself was enough to tame the project, but the wall remained ten inches high for several decades. The passing of years saw it kicked down, eroded by constant rain. Now it rises scarcely two inches, a skirt of parched rock at the river’s edge. So the myth goes. (42)

This selection almost resembles a parable that explains the problem with striated conceptions of racialized space. This passage suggests that throughout history war and necessity for, or excesses of, labour have caused the striations within racial space to shift. Also, we might note that this passage seems to suggest, since the wall “now [...] rises scarcely two inches,” that maintaining a striated perception of racial space is problematic, or simply too much work. However, even as Edugyan’s narrator constructs this history, she problematizes its adoption into striated space by assuring readers that it is only a myth.

In Goto’s text the narrator openly asserts her desire to textualize her self-narrative. As Goto’s narrator experiences feelings of loneliness and isolation in her urban apartment, even in the company of her friend Midori, she muses:

I’ve always hoped that childhood could be a book, a sequence of pages that I could flip through, or close. A book that could be put away on a shelf. Even boxed and locked into storage should the need arise. But, of course not. Childhood isn’t a book and it doesn’t end. My childhood spills into my adult life

despite all my attempts at otherwise and the saturation of the past with the present is an ongoing story. (Goto 215)

There is a clear lack of temporal striation evident in this selection. In Goto's text recollections from the narrator's past quite literally spill into her adult life, her childhood narrative seamlessly intertwines with her adult narrative, much as the narrator in Weier's work tangles his text with his father's and mother's narratives, or as Edugyan's narrator blends her text with her father's narrative.

Indeed there is a large degree of parallel between all four of these texts, but there are also substantial differences. It is interesting how these books can be divided into groups, based on obvious similarities, but then regrouped into different configurations, based on equally obvious parallels. Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* and Goto's *Kappa Child*, for example, bear some striking similarities. The narrators of both texts are retrospective; both are moved to the rural prairies in youth; both have fathers that have some form of ambition that the community, and their own families, perceive as eccentric; neither families have sons; and both provide a clear narrative. The texts of Weier and Francis, on the other hand, provide us with very little information about the narrator, and the narratives, as well as the texts themselves, are extremely fragmented. However, we might also note that the texts of Weier and Edugyan, as we have observed, are both centrally interested in engaging the reader in the process of textual construction, whereas the texts of Francis and Goto do not as openly invite readerly participation in the construction of their texts. Moreover, we might also note that Edugyan's text differs from Goto's in that Goto's narrator's text is created alongside, parallel or in contrast to, Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*, as will be observed in greater detail in Chapter Four, whereas Edugyan's text is not as firmly anchored to a specific intertext. Edugyan's

text does engage in intertextual relationships, as we have already observed in Chapter One, and we should also note that there exists a more intimate intertextual relationship between Edugyan's text and Dostoevsky's *The Devils* that is beyond our purview to explore in this examination. However, Edugyan's text does not as obviously engage in this process of visibly reworking a narrative as do the texts of Goto, Francis and Weier. As these texts thoroughly remould canonized narratives we can clearly see that their conceptions of textual space are not rigid, but fluid; there are striations, points of connection with convention, but they are effected in multiple, complex, and sometimes contradictory ways.

In Francis' text, the narrator comically reworks Shakespearean drama and in so doing he not only complicates divisions within textual space, but also illustrates how language itself can be understood in a spatial sense. In the section entitled “native tempest” (Francis 49) Francis narrator reworks Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* but focuses on the perspective of “nabilac” (49), a reversal of Caliban, the exoticized island native from Shakespeare’s *Tempest*. Immediately, as the narrator remoulds Shakespeare’s text, we can see how he is smoothing textual striations by simultaneously reducing textual rigidity and creating fluidic textual connections. However, as nabilac shouts: “*the red plague rid you / for learning me your language*” (49), we can see that he conceives of language in heavily striated terms, that is, he conceives of language as a space filled with hermetically sealed groups and expresses concern at confounding those striations. It is also interesting that he parallels this with the linguistic colonization of Aboriginal culture and suggests that the destruction of Aboriginal language by the fundamentalistic indoctrination of English creates a homogeneous, extremely striated space, like treaty

language, which promulgates the colonial process. Finally, as nabilac cries: “*you taught me language I know how to curse*” (49), we can see how he turns indoctrination into appropriation, as he employs the English language to “curse” or criticize his colonial oppressors. In this way we can see how the extremely striated, homogenous, linguistic space in which nabilac is thrust is effectively smoothed by his protean curses.

In Weier’s novel the narrator engages in multiple intertextual relationships, as we have observed earlier. Indeed his narrative immediately presents itself as a tangled “web of inter-texts.” As in the texts of Goto and Francis, in Weier’s text his narrator reworks a familiar, or well established, narrative and remoulds it to engage with the themes in his text. In *Steppe* we are provided with a comical reworking of the Cinderella story, (Weier “3.2 Ugly Stepsister” and “3.8 Stepsister”), wherein the positions of the ugly stepsister and Cinderella are essentially reversed. In Weier’s Cinderella the beautiful, vain, and bold Margarethen so viciously degrades her physically unattractive stepsister, Betti, into subservience that in the end Cornelius, prince charming, chooses to marry Betti, which puts a comical twist on the story of beautiful Cinderella downtrodden by her ugly stepsisters. Moreover, as Weier’s narrator titles the section wherein Margarethen is introduced “Ugly Stepsister,” and the section wherein Betti is introduced only “Stepsister,” we can see that he is making this assessment based on character rather than physical beauty. In this sense we can see that the way Weier’s narrator remoulds the Cinderella narrative demonstrates his resistance to the striating force of his intertexts.

Finally, this chapter has sought to use Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of the smooth and the striated to highlight the flexible, fluid, complex, and sometime contradictory nature - what we might call the protean qualities - of the connections and

divisions, or striations, within the spaces of identity, race, gender, and nation, as they are constructed in these four prairie texts. We have observed how the seemingly smooth spaces created within these texts are actually the result of extreme striation and thus present a Riemannian or protean form of connectedness rather than the lack of connection implicit in smooth space. Moreover, we have seen the dialectical process of entropy, proteanism and fundamentalism running in concert with the dialectic of smooth, Riemann, and striated spaces. However, as we have already begun to observe, striation is a force and the agents of striation therefore require a form of power in order to perform their task. I began this chapter with an analogy to the work of Rutherford, Planck, and Bohr, and indicated that it would be carried no further. However, much as the next stage in quantum physics came from an examination of energy within Bohr's new structural paradigm, the next stage of this analysis necessitates an examination of the representations of power relations within the Prote-Riemannian spaces of these four prairie texts.

Chapter Four: Narrative Negotiations: Authorial Authority and the Absence of Authenticity

Just as the last chapter centered on concepts of space in Francis's *City Treaty*, Goto's *The Kappa Child*, Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* and Weier's *Steppe: A Novel*, so shall this chapter focus on constructions of power in these four prairie texts. It is clear that as we engage in an analysis of themes like convention, politics, identity, race, gender, authenticity, history or authority we are simultaneously engaging in an examination of power relations. However, considering the extremely complex nature of the engagement with these themes in these four texts, as has been demonstrated throughout the last three chapters, it is immediately obvious that a hierarchical conception of power relations fails to accurately reflect this complexity. Furthermore, since Lifton's text does not provide us with a definitive description of a protean concept of power relations, only oblique implications, it is clear that, like at the beginning of the last chapter, this analysis requires the addition of a new paradigm, one that is capable of characterizing the power relations within these prairie texts. If I might extend the analogy from the introduction of the last chapter a little further I would say that, like the field of quantum physics, which, as a result of Bohr and Plank, understood the structure of atomic space but still needed to understand how it worked, we now have a better understanding of how spaces are conceived in these texts but still need to understand how power relations are constructed within these spaces. And additionally it is interesting that, like the field of quantum physics, which found the solution to this problem in Heisenberg, Bohr and Jordan's theory of matrix mechanics, it is through

Foucault's theory of power matrices that we shall examine the representations of power relations in these four prairie texts.

A matrix is a medium in which a thing exists; for example, a fossil might exist in a variety of matrices, such as sandstone or limestone. To quote from the popular movie franchise, "the matrix is all around you." In his long essay *The History of Sexuality* Foucault states that power "is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 93). Immediately the parallels between Foucault's theory of power matrices, Deleuze and Guattari's theory of Riemann space, and Lifton's characterization of the protean self are evident as Foucault describes power matrices in terms of simultaneity and multi-directionality, a lack of linearity or clear divisions. Moreover, Foucault goes on to assert that "[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (95), in the same way as Lifton states that fundamentalism and proteanism "may even require one another," and Deleuze and Guattari observe that "smooth space is constantly being striated and striated space is constantly being returned to a smooth space." In this selection we can see further parallel between these theories as Foucault's theory problematizes binary constructions and the process of polarization. However, Foucault then asks:

Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remoulding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds (96).

The type of resistance characterized by Foucault in this passage obviously closely resembles the types of resistance we have observed thus far in the texts of Francis, Edugyan, Goto and Weier. In a sense, conceiving of power as a matrix and power relations as matrices causes Foucault to describe the relationship between resistance and power in terms of fluid, “mobile,” or shifting and “transitory points,” which are similar to those used to describe the relationship between proteanism and fundamentalism. Moreover, it is interesting that Foucault discusses the society and the individual, fracturing, and fragmentation, bodies and minds, as well as groupings and re-groupings, because in this way we can also see that he is employing highly spatialized terms which closely resemble those used to describe the nature of protean space in the previous chapter. Indeed, there is much overlap between these three theories and for this reason it seems very appropriate to conclude this examination by analysing these four prairie text through Foucault’s theoretical lens. In this way this chapter shall demonstrate how these texts disrupt hierarchical conceptions of power relations and posit instead a complex matrix of power inter-relations.

Power can exist in many different forms and, indeed, it does in these four texts. However, for the sake of cohesion we shall limit the scope of this discussion to the way in which these texts represent power as it manifests itself in the process of textual, historical and ethnic construction. Power is bound up with notions of authenticity and truth, and this is fairly obvious for the first two cases. In textual construction, traditionally, there is a clear hierarchy wherein the reader is in a position of subordination to the narrator and/or author, which is based on the belief that the author has special authority over, or access to, the true meaning of the text. Likewise, it is clear that history

is sometimes based on notions of truth and authenticity. Actually the processes of textual and historical construction are even more closely related than this description suggests because historical construction is itself a form of textual construction.³ As we have already begun to see in the previous chapter, these texts frequently work to problematize notions of truth and authenticity. Indeed we can clearly see the relation between history and text; however, the inclusion of ethnicity within this analysis necessitates a little explication. In the introduction to *Writing Ethnicity: Cross-Cultural Consciousness in Canadian and Quebecois Literature*, Siemerling states that:

The question of authenticity is one of several problematic areas at the intersection of ethnicity and literature that literary theory has to approach when trying to understand how the term *ethnicity* can be meaningfully employed in literary discussion, and what kinds of problems and qualities it can elucidate in literary texts. (Siemerling 17)

In this selection Siemerling asserts that “questions of authenticity” are often central, and problematic, in literary discussions that revolve around ethnicity and in this way we can see that, like history, ethnicity is also invested in notions of authenticity. Moreover, in her article, “She Ties Her Tongue: The Problems of Cultural Paralysis in Postcolonial Discourse,” Donnell suggests that the investment in notions of authenticity in the critical study of ethnicity can cause problematic forms of essentialization. Donnell states that:

those involved in postcolonial studies often prioritize the point of production because of their unwillingness to condone the ‘death of the author’ as possessor of textual ‘truths.’ The tendency to give authority over to the writer’s (cultural or political) intentions or to those readings produced by ‘native’ critics signifies that postcolonial (and more acutely cross-cultural) readers are unsure about the availability of meaning within these texts and only feel comfortable with meanings that are culturally determined from the ‘inside.’ (Donnell 104)

³ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19th Century Europe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973).

In this selection Donnell unifies the textual hierarchy discussed above, which is itself predicated on concepts of truth, with notions of ethnic authenticity. Donnell describes the postcolonial prioritization of the “writer’s (cultural or political) intentions” and the “readings produced by ‘native’ critics” as an extension of the problematic essentialization, or fundamentalization, of authorial intent. However, as we have already seen in Chapter Three, these texts not only problematize the author’s position as “possessor of textual truths” but also disrupt boundaries within ethnic space. Also, it is interesting to note that, much as history is understood in a textual sense, as a historical text, so ethnicity is discussed here in textual terms, as an ethnic text. In Huggan’s article, “Exoticism and Ethnicity in Michael Ondaatje’s *Running in the Family*,” he argues that: “[i]f the text enacts a quest to recover ‘forgotten’ ethnic origins, then that quest is doomed from the start, not just because those origins are fictitious – recoverable only through reinvention – but also because the language that might describe them obstructs an access route to the past” (Huggan 119). And, in many ways Edugyan’s *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, Francis’ *City Treaty*, Goto’s *Kappa Child*, and Weier’s *Steppe: A Novel* might be described as performing precisely this “quest.” However, each of these texts also seems acutely aware of the facts that “access to the ear and pen of history is not equal for all at all moments” (Donnell 485), that history is itself a literary discourse filled with its own fictions, and that their “quest” is therefore necessarily one of reinvention. Thus it is quite clear that their projects are not “doomed from the start” for it is through language and reinvention that these texts destabilize the division between history and fiction as well as highlight their respective occluded histories, be it of Japanese or Ghanaian presence on the Canadian prairies, or Aboriginal or Ukrainian colonization. In

Huggan's selection here, too, we can see that ethnicity is textualized, discussed in terms of an ethnic text, which more thoroughly draws the connection between ethnicity, history and textuality. However, rather than discuss history and ethnicity as text we shall, for the sake of clarity, continue to conceive of history, ethnicity and text as spaces, as in Chapter Three, and this chapter will examine how these four prairie texts disrupt the hegemony of authenticity implicit in the traditional hierarchical conceptions of power relations in textual, ethnic and historical space.

. As we have already observed in previous chapters, Edugyan's narrator is unreliable and in addition she is a fundamentally divided character. As we have seen, the narrator is "burdened by the dead sister she carries like a conscience inside her," and her retrospective text so often reflects negatively the actions of herself and her sister and provides so little interiority with respect to the twins that it renders their actions not only virtually indefensible but their identities sometimes almost indistinguishable for readers. Moreover, Chloe and Yvette are often represented, and perceived by other characters, as one entity, "the twins," two halves of a whole, and even as they sometimes present opposing desires or points of view, as we saw in Chapter One of this discussion and as we often see with respect to Ama, that opposition is quickly dissolved. Thus we might assert that, in some ways, Chloe and Yvette represent two halves of the narrator's divided self. As Chloe berates Yvette for, nicely, playing nurse with Ama she declares: "You're farther from being Florence Nightingale than Ama is from being a genius. You're three-point-six inches too short and far too dark to come remotely close" (Edugyan 74). In this selection, as Chloe asserts that Yvette is "too dark" to be Florence Nightingale she is clearly expressing a fundamentalistic conception of racial authenticity. However, if we

understand Chloe and Yvette as representing the narrator's divided self then we might also see this scene as representing a conflict within the narrator; Chloe stands as the rigidly fundamentalistic aspect of the narrator's self, which is focused on racial division and authenticity, and Yvette represents the more fluid protean aspect of her self, which resists rigidity and division. In this way Chloe's fundamentalism can also represent a form of racial abjection. However, more important for our purposes, Yvette's resistance to Chloe's aggressive fundamentalism reflects Foucault's assertion that points of resistance might cause "cleavages in," or "furrowing across," the self.

While the scene from Edugyan's text, described above, obviously reflects some of the qualities of Foucault's theory we might also note how it closely resembles Lifton's theory of the protean self. In his text Lifton states:

The protean self lives in a realm of absurdity, embraces a tone of mockery and self-mockery along with a spirit of irony, and often bathes its projects in humour. The sense of absurdity has to do with a perception of the world as 'discordant' or 'out of tune,' or in some way 'deaf,' 'mute,' or 'in chaos' [...] Important here is the absence of 'fit' between individual self and outside world. (Lifton 94)

Immediately the humorous quality of Edugyan's scene parallels Lifton's description but further it is also evident that Chloe considers the image of her sister as Florence Nightingale absurd and as a result reacts with aggressive disapproval. Moreover, we can also see that the qualification of "absurdity" here is based on "the absence of 'fit' between individual self and outside world," or a sense of discord between the authentic and the imagined, and that Yvette, the protean figure, creates and inhabits this imaginative "realm of absurdity."

Furthermore, as the young twins encounter Akosua for the first time we can see how language and feelings of deafness and muteness are of paramount importance in

Edugyan's text. As Maud prepares tea for the Porters during their first interfamily gathering, Akosua addresses the twins in what she expects is their native language. At the twins' failure to respond Akosua asks: "'They do not understand the simplest order, or it is stubbornness? *Bra-ha*.'" In a voice less interrogative than whiny, she questioned them in Twi. At their silence, she made a disgusted face. 'Eh, even the littlest ones know it. Are you not Akan?'" (Edugyan 195). By Akosua's "disgusted face" we can see that language is used here as a measure of authenticity. Also, since the narrator does not speak Twi, we can see how, as Huggan suggests in the selection above, her "access route to the past" might be blocked by her linguistic ignorance. In this way we might argue that the narrator's "deaf[ness]" and "mute[ness]" compromises her authority. However, much as the mysterious narrative gaps cause readers to more actively participate in textual construction, Edugyan's narrator's ignorance of Ghanaian language causes her to be more flexible in the construction of her historical mythos. As we have seen through her imaginative reinvention of Aster's origins in Chapter Three, and as we see in general through her project of exploring her father's perspective by breathing a second textual life into Samuel Tyne, Edugyan's narrator disrupts the hegemony of fact and authenticity by positing her own imaginative historical reconstructions.

The lack of fit between Goto's narrator and the world is comically illustrated through her proclivity for wearing pyjamas. The narrator states, simply, that "[c]lothing does not fit [her]" (Goto 51) and so she seeks out alternate attire that can more appropriately accommodate her body. Moreover, we have already seen how she is in many ways a deeply divided character, torn, for example, between her mother's passivity and her father's aggression. However, as in Edugyan's text, we can also see that Goto's

narrator engages with notions of authenticity at the intersection of ethnicity and language. When Okasan attempts to engage Janice in a conversation in Japanese, Janice states: “Can’t speak a word and no shame about it either [...] I’m Nissei and never set foot anywhere else” (163). Janice’s inability to speak Japanese, compounded by the contrast between her tough, cigarette-smoking brand of femininity and Okasan’s quiet demeanour, earns her the title of “hinganai” (197) – vulgar – within the narrator’s household. Moreover, as we have already seen in previous chapters, the narrator has some difficulty reconciling Gerald’s biraciality and so we can understand how the Nakamuras, in some ways, represent a less authentic state of Japanese-ness for the young narrator and her family. However, as the narrator remarks that Gerald’s “mom’s so cool” (189), we can also see that this perceived lack of authenticity does little to denigrate Janice in the narrator’s eyes. In fact, the narrator actually admires Janice’s strength and believes that Janice might even be able to “teach [her] Dad a thing or two” (189). In this way we can see how the narrator’s strength is not only a reflection of her father, but is also a result of her admiration for, and the influence of, Gerald’s mother.

Notions of authorial and narrative authority are also problematized in Goto’s text. As Goto’s narrator arrives at her urban home to discover the door ajar, and expects to arrest some assailant with her hockey stick, she finds the apartment empty and settles in for the night. In the darkness the screen flickers a televised version of *Little House on the Prairie* and the narrator slumbers. In her half-waking perception the narrator sees Laura Ingalls, running playfully through the prairie grasses. Then suddenly, within the dreamscape, Laura turns and looks directly through the screen, at the narrator, and begins to advance towards her. As Laura advances the narrator states:

[A]s I watch, her face hardens, the skin slowly browns, tightens, pressing against bones, her eyes glitter bright in her starving face, lips cracked with malnutrition. Her braids are messy, the hair dull and brittle. The child grins and her teeth are yellow and crooked. 'They changed the book, you know.' (252)

The changes in Laura's physical appearance are interesting in a number of ways. As Laura gets closer the implication is that we, through the narrator, get a more accurate perception, and indeed the "starving face" that Goto's narrator describes, "hair dull and brittle," browned skin, "lips cracked with malnutrition" and concealing "yellow and crooked" teeth, certainly more accurately reflects the picture of pioneer life. In some ways Laura here also reflects the image of the Kappa. However, more important for our purposes here is Laura's statement at the end of the above selection. As Laura asserts that "they changed the book," we can begin to see that she is commenting on the fallaciousness of authorial authority. In this scene Laura continues, stating: "They got it all wrong [...] And I can't do anything about it! [...] You can, though" (252). From this selection we can infer that Laura is either saying that the televised versions of *Little House* are inaccurate reflections of Wilder's text, or that Wilder's text is an inaccurate reflection of reality, but either way it is a comment that problematizes notions of authority and authenticity. Moreover, as Laura asserts that, though she herself is powerless, the narrator is capable of rectifying the problems with her text we can also see that, as in Edugyan's text, the reader's participation in textual construction is being acknowledged. In this way we can see that by complicating notions of authorial authority and narrative authenticity Goto's text disrupts hierarchical conceptions of textual power relations.

Weier's text, as we have already observed, presents a narrator who is profoundly divided by feelings of guilt and anger; by Canada, Ukraine and Germany; and by his

father's stories, his mother's silences, and the myriad of texts that are employed in the construction of his textual self. Moreover, we have already noted how Weier's narrator overtly and forcefully implicates readers in the process of textual construction by providing readers with only minor narrative illumination alongside a cacophony of disparate voices, which causes us to synthesize the materials in a process that mirrors his own. Thus we might already quite clearly see how Weier's text disrupts hierarchical conceptions of textual power relations. However, we might also note a number of other ways in which Weier's text works to dissolve notions of textual authenticity. The prefatory note to Weier's novel states: "This is a work of fiction. / The characters are works of the imagination and do not / represent actual persons, living or dead" (Weier Prefatory Note). By including this note along with a meticulous list of works cited Weier's text creates a historical fiction, or his narrator creates a fictional history, and in the process the distinguishing lines between the two become obscured. In this way, as was suggested in Chapter Two, Weier's text protects itself from the hegemony of authenticity by wrapping itself in a veil of fiction.

Weier's text demonstrates that the source of much history is ultimately fictional, or rather that the distinguishing lines between historical fact and fiction are often not so clearly defined. As Weier's narrator interrogates his family and pages through volumes in a quest to discover his personal history he begins to question the authenticity of memory, stating:

Be careful, memory will trick you. It tells you everything you wish to know. Nothing you remember is true. Father remembers only the good things. That's his story, the good and happy story. The rest he can blame on the Russians. Mother remembers nothing. Was it really that bad? When I was twenty I rehearsed my happy childhood. Thirty, it all turned ugly. Memory, something you make up the way you want. ("4.5 Journal: February 22, 1993")

In this selection, though the authenticity of meaning is clearly thrown into question it is not a matter of pure falsification. The issue is one of editing, of picking and choosing, of omitting and rearranging, and history is a form of memory, often a sophisticated one, that is subject to this process of editing. As mentioned above, “access to the ear and pen of history is not equal for all at all moments” and, frequently, the authors of history, like Weier’s narrator’s parents, edit their texts so as to render them more habitable.

Moreover, Weier’s text even works to compromise photography’s position as a technological hard-line that separates fact from fiction. In his second-to-last journal entry of the first part of his text Weier’s narrator examines a series of black-and-white photographs from 1907-11 and, interestingly, as he does so, the female subjects of the portraits seem to be “studying the camera” (“1.19 Journal: October 18, 1992”), reflecting both the camera’s and the narrator’s investigative gazes as well as strongly paralleling the scene from Goto’s text described above. Moreover, Weier’s narrator comments that “these pictures promise little lies, black and white lies frozen for the camera. Fairy tales” (“1.19 Journal: October 18, 1992”) as he describes how the subject of one picture, a wealthy land owner, arranges everything to make it appear “as though everyone is busy,” and to give the impression of greater affluence (“1.19 Journal: October 18, 1992”). By compromising the authenticity of photography in this way Weier’s narrator demonstrates the fallaciousness of claims to absolute historical truth.

As Weier’s text destabilizes notions of historical authenticity it also works, as I have asserted throughout this examination, to highlight the history of colonial oppression in Ukraine. However, even within that history Weier’s text complicates hierarchical conceptions of power relations by blurring the distinction between victim and oppressor.

Weier's narrator relates a story from the period of German and Russian colonization in Ukraine about "Sergei Ilaryonovich Mechnikov [who] grew up in a simple peasant home in a [...] Ukrainian village" ("1.23 One of Katherine's Schools"). Sergei manages to become educated and gains a teaching position at a little school. Then as "[h]e hears a boy at the back of the class laughing" Sergei becomes enraged, exclaiming "We're just dumb Ukrainians. You look down on us. You like to laugh, and beat us. Whose land is this? Do you know why we're so poor? [...] Remember, you are foreigners here, you are guests, this is our land, our country" ("1.23 One of Katherine's Schools"). In this scene, despite the fact that the rude boy is ethnically, and it seems possibly even ideologically, part of the colonial group, and Sergei is a member of the ethnic group subject to that colonial force, Sergei, as a teacher, is in a position of power over the young boy. Moreover, as Sergei "los[es] control [...], hits the boy across the side of the head" and concludes by stating: "[s]omeday you'll see the real Ukraine. You won't like it" ("1.23 One of Katherine's Schools"), we can see that there is a degree of irony in Sergei's claim that "you like to beat us." The power Sergei exerts over the young boy closely resembles the violent, threatening and oppressive colonial power that he seeks to criticize. In this way we can see how Weier's text reflects Foucault's assertion that "there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations" (Foucault 94).

However, the lack of distinction between oppressors and oppressed is perhaps more strikingly illustrated in Weier's text through an engagement with the politics of the Second World War. Many Ukrainians joined the Red Army when Ukraine was under Nazi control as, at the time, the Russian Red Army was perceived in some ways as a

liberating force. However, Soviet rule was also largely unfavourable for Ukrainian people, and Weier's text describes the flight of one soldier who strives to escape the shackles of Soviet control. In the story of David Janzen we are informed that he joined the Red Army to fight the Germans. However, Janzen then informs us:

One day we were chasing the Germans and I found a dead soldier. I don't know who killed him, it might have been my own bullet. I took the German's clothes and left mine lying. So, I knew the language, I joined the German retreat. That's how I came to Canada, alone. (Weier "4.15 The War: David Janzen")

Since Janzen would have had to give a German name in order to immigrate to Canada as a German it is mostly useless to speculate on his ethnicity. However, what is interesting about the power relations in this section is that, while David fights to rid his home country of German domination, it is more favourable for David to join the German retreat than to stay in the country he has fought to liberate. Moreover, and perhaps more important for our purposes, in this selection we can also see the notions of historical authenticity being compromised. As historians sometimes refigure the historical text so as to make it more inhabitable, so Janzen constructs, or reinvents, his self so as to render the world more hospitable.

Indeed, Weier's narrator suggests that all history, even scientific history, is a form of construction, reconstruction, or assemblage. As Weier's narrator self-reflexively examines the process he performs in creating his text he states:

The story comes in bones and ruins, in shards and fragments, from a thousand sites and sources. [...] I collect and count, interpret. Let me suggest a theory. What's important, I suppose, is where you put the brontosaurus's skull. How do the bones all fit together? (Weier "3.1 Journal: December 8, 1992")

In this selection Weier's narrator is making reference to the brontosaurus skull controversy, wherein professor of palaeontology Othniel Charles Marsh mounted an

incorrect skull on the body of an Apatosaurus and, as a result, created a new species he called Brontosaurus. This mistake was so pervasive that, despite the fact that the Brontosaurus had been revealed as fraudulent by Elmer Riggs in 1903, it continues to influence modern images of the Brontosaurus, with its upright posture and lackadaisical tail, in the mainstream media. This controversy illustrates perfectly how the science of palaeontology is itself a process of construction and, as such, is subject to the fallibility of interpretation. However, as Weier's narrator states that "what's important" is "how the bones all fit together" we can see that the narrator parallels his process of discovery and self-construction with that of palaeontology not only to demonstrate their mutual fallibility but to suggest that it is the process itself that is important, and not necessarily the accuracy, or authenticity, of the result.

Francis' *City Treaty*, as we have already seen, is highly interested in the reconstruction, and re-textualization, of the Aboriginal historical experience. In the final section of Francis' text, entitled "word drummers," Joe lists, references, and alludes to many influential people and forces that have contributed in the construction of contemporary Aboriginal, especially literary, history. In this concluding section Joe states:

momaday takes us to rainy mountains joy of horses joe
 (king and hiway) break open the way erdrich
 narrative willow twists annaharte frankensquaw opens eye
 while mcnickle gets surrounded maracle vancouver tears the
 heart armstrong slashes canlit within the same silko
 ceremony jordan wheels tv while drew some
 curve lake laughs alexis gives us famous fistfight
 vizenor theory sizzles the bad dog trudell crunch
 bernice half bones as duncan mixes it
 all together in his traditionalist stew (Francis 68)

In this selection we can see reference to many Aboriginal authors: Navarre Scott Momaday, Thomas King, Tomson Highway, Louise Erdrich, Marie Annharte Baker, D'Arcy McNickle, Lee Maracle, Margaret Armstrong, Leslie Marmon Silko, Jordan Wheeler, Drew Hayden Taylor, Sherman Alexie, Gerald Vizenor, John Trudell, Bernice Halfe and Duncan Mercredi. However, the history they represent is so large and complex that we have little hope of analysing all the particulars of Joe's comments in the space remaining in this analysis; indeed one such name could easily inspire an examination much longer than the one presented here. Nonetheless, we can at least assert that Francis' narrator is presenting us with a brief history of Aboriginal literature in North America. Moreover, the history presented here in Francis' text exemplifies the living history, a history that is mutable and changing, especially since many of these authors are still alive and have gone on to be even more prolific as writers in the years since Francis' death. The final lines of this selection, "duncan mixes it / all together in his traditionalist stew," might seem to suggest that Joe casts a critical eye on these writers, that they, or at least Duncan, are in some way responsible for the processes of cultural commodification and consumption in the contemporary world. However, the tone of this passage overall seems to glorify the struggles and works of these authors rather than condemn them. Indeed, there also seems to be a fundamental difference between Duncan's "traditionalist stew" and the "unhealthy" corporatized "mcpemmican" described by Cariou. As a result it seems more accurate to state that this passage suggests that the process of textualization is inseparably linked with those of commodification and consumption. In this way we can see how the above selection from Francis' text criticizes the economy in which these

Aboriginal works circulate while simultaneously re-textualizing Aboriginal history and experience.

In Donnell's examination of Kincaid's *A Small Place* she states that: "although the irony of the piece is subtly sustained, it is explosive to its meaning and transforms the text from a monologic attack [...] into a disturbing series of cultural observations directed at a range of targets" (Donnell 108), and we can certainly see the relevance of this observation with respect to this final section of Francis' text. As Joe brings Francis' text to a close by "hurtl[ing] / words into that english landscape like brown beer / bottles [...] shattering the air" (Francis 69), he provides us with some final words of wisdom before he and the clown retire to get some "well deserved sleep" (69). As he finishes crafting his *City Treaty*, and after constructing and examining a somewhat personalized aboriginal literary history, Joe concludes: "so there are no linear no / straight lines in the bush / the city only thinks so" (69). In this section we can detect a note of irony as he verbally shatters the "english landscape," not only because he has crafted his text in English but also because, as he asserts that there are no straight lines, the implication is that at base there are no distinct boundaries, no authenticity, only "one collective tribe." Moreover, while the lack of linearity expressed in this passage closely links Francis' text to proteanism, smooth or Riemannian spaces, and matrices, it also allows us to perceive that the omni-directional critique described by Donnell reflects these theories as well as the critical tactics of Francis' text described above. Finally, in this way we can also see how Francis' text resists restrictive impositions of notions of ethnic authenticity whether constructed by forces from outside or within an ethnic group.

Each of these four prairie texts demonstrates how fundamentalistic, or homogenous, perceptions of racial space are not always imposed on a group by another group that perceives itself as distinct. In this way each of these texts destabilizes the hierarchical conceptions of power in racial space. Goto's's text demonstrates how restrictive and homogenous concepts of race and culture can be imposed on a group from the inside as Okasan ritualistically attempts to protect her family from incorporeal attackers. When the narrator's sister, PG, thinks she sees a ghost in their new home their mother salts the floor of the house, the outhouse, her children's heads, and then speaks softly into her hands. Seeing this ceremony the narrator asks: "Who're you praying to? [...] I thought you were Buddhist? What happened?" (Goto 132). In this selection the narrator's fundamentalism, or fundamentalistic understanding of religious space, precludes her understanding of her mother's ritual and the protean qualities of Buddhism in general. However, this assertion needs a little explication of some general facts about Buddhism, particularly Japanese Buddhism. Primarily, we need to remember that Buddhism teaches the doctrine of reincarnation, and that Gautama Buddha was a real man. He is not, strictly speaking, a godhead in the western sense, that is, Buddha did not claim divinity. As such, the act of prayer seems to the young narrator, to be incompatible with Buddhism. Moreover, in Japan Buddhism became fused with other dominant belief systems such as Taoism, among other more localised spiritualistic beliefs, in order to create Japanese Buddhism as it is today. In this way it is clear that Okasan's ritual is a result of this protean history and that the narrator's confused reaction is a result of this protean religious performance destabilising the boundaries that structure her fundamentalistic understanding of religious space.

Throughout her youth Goto's narrator encounters situations that subvert fundamentalistic constructions of race and as a result her perceptions of racial boundaries become, as we have seen throughout this examination, more fluid, more protean. Shortly after Janice demonstrates how to get water to the narrator's family, a feat that the narrator's father was unable to perform, Janice presents the narrator's family with a serving of onigiris. The narrator recalls the scene: "'Maaaa!' Okasan exclaimed, when she opened the lid of the Tupperware. 'Don't these onigiris look so good!' We all peered. The rice balls were twice the normal size and there wasn't any seaweed, but we agreed with our mother and nodded our heads" (165). In this selection, as the narrator and her sisters obediently and politely nod their heads, we can see that the narrator is somewhat concerned by the apparently inauthentic onigiris, or the seeming inaccuracy of Janice's cultural culinary construction. However, when the narrator and her family actually sample the dish she states: "We all ate into Janice's giant onigiris, surprised at how good they were" (166). In this selection as the narrator states that she is "surprised" she is clearly suggesting that Janice's onigiris were good, despite the lack of authenticity. In this way we can see how the narrator's fundamentalistic perception of ethnic authenticity is problematized not only by her perception of examples of ethnic inauthenticity but through her admiration for Janice and her own refusal to commit to fundamentalistic constructions of ethnicity.

As Goto's narrator matures she discovers that a fluid, or protean, understanding of racial, ethnic, or cultural construction can be liberating and in some ways even protective. In her youth the narrator feels that the presents she received for Christmas were inadequate, stating that they went by in a "blur of [...] K-Mart sweatshirts and mint

chocolate sticks” (192). The narrator states that, rather than suffering the social stigma of poverty, “[w]hen our friends at school asked us what we got for presents, my sisters and I just looked at each other, told them we didn’t celebrate Christmas at our house” (192). In this selection it is clear that the narrator is suggesting that her family does not celebrate Christmas because of their culture or ethnicity. So in this way we can see that the narrator’s public cultural performance protects her from further social stigmatization and that in the process she effectively divides her public and private construction of culture. Moreover, Goto’s narrator also adopts or exploits, in the most positive sense, existing racial stereotypes for similar protective purposes. Frequently in her narrative, when feeling threatened or in danger, Goto’s narrator reacts by adopting a particular posture. In a public restroom, for example, the narrator becomes frightened and as a result she “spin[s] around, crouching low into a karate-like stance for no other reason than watching too many kung-fu movies” (Goto 247). In this selection the narrator is clearly engaging the stereotype that conflates people of Asian descent with martial artists; however, she is doing it in two distinct and interesting ways. First we can see that she adopts the “karate-like stance” so that if the potential assailants believe such a stereotype they might reconsider attacking her. But more comically as the narrator includes the clarification that she adopts this position “for no other reason than watching too many kung-fu movies” we can see that this clarification is directed at readers. Moreover, as the narrator adopts the stance of Karate, a Chinese martial art, and states that it is a result of watching too many Kung-fu movies, a separate Chinese martial art, we can also see how Goto’s narrator is commenting on the contemporary, and problematic, conflation of Asian cultures. As Goto’s narrator adopts these protective trappings, as she reconstructs her ethnic self and

redeploys these cultural stereotypes, we can see how she demonstrates that power within racialized space does not flow only one way, but rather can be directed and redirected, formed and reformed.

In Edugyan's text the issue of fundamentalistic conceptions of ethnic authenticity imposed on a group from within that group is raised multiple times and in many different ways. When Akosua Porter meets the Tynes for the first time her dissatisfaction with the twins' lack of fluency in Twi, as we saw earlier in this chapter, suggests that she perceives the Tyne family as less authentic than her own and that this renders them in some way inferior. As Akosua goes to see the twins, after they had been excused from the room to read, she comments: "Eh, they think they are big big? They think they are whites or what?" (Edugyan 196). Samuel's lengthy retort, wherein he not only acknowledges the damaging history of British colonization but also asks "[s]ince when [...] has literacy altered the colour of one's skin?" (196) and asserts that it is not a "British system, but an inherited set of ideals" (196), demonstrates a strong critique of this limiting form of ethnic fundamentalization. However, more important for our purposes here is the way in which this situation clearly illustrates the imposition of fundamentalistic notions of ethnic authenticity on a group from the inside.

In Edugyan's text the Porters are frequently used to represent a seemingly more authentic state of Ghanaian-ness. When Maud and Akosua first meet each other, in church, Maud asks from which part of their home country Akosua hails. However, Maud's use of the name Gold Coast causes Akosua to become irritable and to respond by asking:

'*Eih*, what is this Gold Coast business? 'Which part of Gold Coast?' she asks. Ahein...' [...]. 'Did we not see independence? Must we still go by that name? Are

we not ourselves? *Sth.* And what do you mean by ‘were’? I *am* from Winneba. I *am* from Ghana. I am *not* from *Gold Coast*. You sign the paper and like that forget your heritage, isn’t it?” (145).

In this selection it is clear that Akosua views Maud’s use of the name Gold Coast as a form of betrayal to her ethnic heritage. Furthermore, when Akosua discovers that Maud has come to the church with Eudora she becomes sarcastic. In response to Akosua’s disdain the narrator informs us that Maud “understood the judgment: not only did she fail to keep up traditions whose neglect would bring certain ruin, but she kept company with a white woman” (147). In this selection Maud accepts the equation of merely being in the company of whites with the neglect of tradition and ruination of her culture. This selection illustrates how notions of ethnic authenticity quickly dissolve into discrimination as the objection, which Maud accepts, is not based on any flaw in Eudora’s character, of which there is an abundance, but only on her skin colour.

However, it is also clear that Maud does not accept Akosua’s ethnic fundamentalization wholesale. When Akosua attempts to condemn the twins as cursed, as a result of Samuel’s lack of adherence to the culturally prescribed procedure for grieving upon his uncle’s death, and to blame them for the arsons that have been plaguing Aster, Maud refuses to accept Akosua’s accusations. Maud responds to Akosua’s charges by stating: “*She* is the one who is mad. She left her common sense back home and brought her lunacy with her. What is this *magic*, what is this *curse*? Are we not in Canada? Did I turn my map upside down and end up right where I began?” (275). In this selection Maud is clearly demonstrating resistance to Akosua’s attempt to impose her conception of ethnic authenticity upon her family, though, it is also comical that legal officials, and the town in general, willingly accept Akosua’s superstitious evidence. Furthermore, as Maud

vocalizes her indictment of superstition by conflating nationality with belief structure, Canada with the scientific and Ghana with the superstitious, she too expresses an unhelpful form of fundamentalism. However, we can clearly see how this dichotomy is upset in a darkly comical fashion as the Tynes are ostracised from the community, which generally seems to accept Akosua's spiritual version of events, and the twins are imprisoned in a mental institution. Also, Eudora seems to be involved in the Tyne smear campaign; while this is never made explicit there is the implication that the alienation of the Tynes may have been orchestrated by Ray in order to bring Samuel to financial ruin so that Ray might finally obtain Tyne's land. In this way this section demonstrates that the currents of power in Aster are extremely complex, unpredictable; they run in all directions and in turn problematize hierarchical conceptions of power relations both inside and outside ethnic space.

As Samuel reflects on his feelings about the perceived conflict between his scientific education and his cultural superstitions he expresses a protean form of reconciliation that parallels the resolution of religious conflict in Goto's text described above. Moreover, it is interesting to note that, as we discuss the way in which Samuel attempts to reconcile his scientific and spiritual sides, we are again highlighting the protean relationship with "idea systems" as described in Chapter Two. As the problems that surround the Tyne family come to a head, Samuel, who interrupts what he perceives as a nearly homicidal fight between his daughters, is left at a loss in explaining the reason for the fight and is worried at its severity. Dumbfounded, Samuel uncharacteristically thinks of possession and recalls a time when he had returned to Ghana, after having been

educated abroad, and, with his classmates, witnessed an exorcism. After viewing the spectacle the narrator comments of Samuel that:

Whether it was his scientific training or a more congenital scepticism, he refused to accept the authenticity of what he saw. It all seemed too comical, too dramatic, to have the depth of a miracle. He dismissed it as ambitious fraud, a dark industry from which the government profited as much as the average charlatan. (267)

Samuel's sceptical reaction to this ritual demonstrates his resistance to culturally prescribed forms of spirituality and it is interesting to note that he arrives at this judgement based on a lack of "authenticity," as his lack of belief causes others to characterize him as culturally inauthentic. However, as Samuel experiences feelings of hopelessness at the problems that surround his family, in hindsight he characterizes his scepticism as "smug [and] full bellied" (267). In this way Samuel suggests that his assessment was hasty and that he lacked the perspective to understand why people believe in such things. Moreover, we can see that Samuel's feelings of desperation allow him to sympathize with those who believe, and to understand the conditions that promote superstition and the exploitation of that superstition. In this way we can see that Samuel demonstrates how even the scientific worldview can become fundamentalistic as it inhibits his ability to extract social knowledge from a situation that seems scientifically inauthentic. Furthermore, Samuel's ability to painlessly overturn previous judgments and to elicit knowledge from this newly integrated perspective demonstrates protean resilience to scientific fundamentalism and disrupts the hegemony of scientific thought in the realm of understanding.

In *The Protean Self* Lifton states that: "[w]hile proteanism is able to function in a world of uncertainty and ambiguity, fundamentalism wants to wipe out that world in favour of a claim to definitive truth and unalterable moral certainty" (Lifton11). As we

have already seen throughout this examination, uncertainty and ambiguity are the two chief characteristics of Edugyan's text. Moreover, as we have seen in the treatment of Tara and Eudora, and through Samuel's assessment of the colonial education system, the assignation of moral responsibility is often presented as extremely complex. However, Samuel also boils his moral outlook down to a simple, concise, individualistic statement as he defends his daughters from the accusations of Akosua and Eudora by stating: "[p]eople are not evil, people are not good – they only behave in evil or good ways. [...] We are what we are because of what we *do*, not do what we do because of what we *are*" (Edugyan 275). In this selection it is obvious that Samuel disagrees not only with the sweeping moral judgement of an entire group, as he does in his racial debate with Saul Porter. By asserting that it is actions, not inherent qualities, which dictate our moral character Samuel also problematizes the blanket moral assessment of the individual. Moreover, as Edugyan's text illustrates the ambiguity and uncertainty of action and the problems of assessing intent and motivation, even for the retrospective self, it problematizes "claims to definitive truth and unalterable moral certainty."

In Weier's text, as the narrator arrives in Ukraine, he expresses anxiety over the possibility of encountering the kind of ethnic fundamentalism that we have been describing throughout this chapter. Descending onto the runway, Weier's narrator lists the passing sights with a brevity that implies his state of anticipation. The narrator is undoubtedly excited at the prospect of reconnecting to a land of which he has never himself been a part as he states "this is what I've waited for" (Weier "5.17 Journal: May 6, 1993"). However, as the narrator asks, "Will I find a cousin in Ukraine? Will she tell me to go away? This man walking with a lunch-box. The woman standing at that door.

This face here beside me. Are you Ukrainian? Do you remember me?" ("5.17 Journal: May 6, 1993"), we can also detect a note of anxiety and apprehension as well as a sense of disappointment. Since Weier's narrator has made this journey as a kind of pilgrimage to discover his ethnic roots, and his text concludes with a series of questions, the suggestion seems to be that his "quest to recover [his] 'forgotten' ethnic origins, [...] is doomed." However, as the narrator undergoes a process of discovery he textually constructs, or reinvents, his historical self-narrative and, as a result, demonstrates resistance to the objections put forth by notions of ethnic authenticity.

As does the narrator in Weier's text, Keefer, in "'Coming Across Bones': Historiographic Ethnofiction," expresses a desire to highlight the Ukrainian historical experience and to emphasize its uniqueness. However, Keefer also asserts that she aspires to create points of cross- cultural connectivity. In her article, while borrowing from the work of critic Michael Fischer, Keefer states:

if ethnicity is dynamic and interreferential in nature, fostering comparative knowledge rather than the ethnocentrism that has racism as its corollary, then it is essential for us to acknowledge and explore the connective difference between us, whether we are Japanese- or Trinidadian- or Ukrainian Canadians. (Keefer 100)

In this selection Keefer promotes a "dynamic," or protean, form of ethnic studies and provides a critique of the ethnic fundamentalization or "ethnocentrism that has racism as its corollary." Moreover, as we have also seen through the references to Christopher Columbus in Weier's text, here Keefer is expressing her interest in promoting cross-cultural comparisons. However, in this selection we can also see that Keefer's assertion about the importance of "comparative knowledge" parallels the comparative route to knowledge articulated in Edugyan's text and described above. Finally, we should also

note that this type of comparative knowledge is essentially protean and largely describes the analysis that this examination aspires to perform.

Comparative knowledge, however, can be problematic. As we have seen throughout the course of this analysis, this type of comparative examination is necessarily predicated on the acceptance of a degree division, a measure of polarity, and relies in many ways on binary notions of opposition. As a result, some discourses that foster comparative forms of knowledge, like postcolonial studies, can be manipulated in a fundamentalistic fashion and in this way can become entrenched in, and continue to perpetuate, these binary divisions. However, even as these narrators produce texts which center on issues of postcolonial identity construction they produce protean texts which are simultaneously as self-critical as they are self-empowering. In this chapter I have been attempting to highlight and to characterize power relations as they are represented, or constructed, within these four prairie texts. We have observed how, as in Foucault's theory of power matrices, these protean narrators are generally, though not totally, opposed to "great radical ruptures" and deal instead in "mobile and transitory points of resistance" as they textually examine constructions of power relations within the prairie social landscape.

Conclusion:
Protean Expansion and the Canadian Prairies

There is an implicit irony in this analysis of Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne*, Francis' *City Treaty* Goto's *The Kappa Child*, and Weier's *Steppe: A Novel*. What is ironic about this examination is the way in which it seems to rehearse or to be predicated upon the same divisions it seeks to complicate. As Lifton's text provides us with a racial, gendered, socioeconomic spectrum that seems to conflict with the protean sensibility so this examination seems to provide a similarly facile spectrum for analysis. However, this irony has been created with a degree of self-awareness, and has been intentionally compounded by a variety of interdisciplinary analogies (scientific, historical, art-historical) in order to better illustrate the particular elements of the protean self and the many occurrences and applications of protean responsiveness within these four prairie texts. I hope that these analogies have indeed been illustrative rather than distracting, and that the use of them has been taken not as lofty but rather as expressive of the expansive purview of the protean self. On this same theme of expansion and connection, this thesis extends Lifton's theory of the protean self, which he sees as particularly (although not exclusively) American, into the literary landscape of the Canadian prairies.

The protean self emerges within these four prairie texts as each maintains a protean relationship not only to the conventions of the *kunstlerroman* but to conventionality in general. While the authorial personae appear to adhere to many of the parameters of the *kunstlerroman*, such as an interest in naming, physiological markedness, parentage, queerness, the fragmented and divided self, and self-reflexive engagement in intertextual relations, they frequently present complicated and varying

versions or adaptations of the genre. As issues concerning race and gender rise to the thematic forefront in these texts the conventions of the *kunstlerroman* are refocused, remoulded, and expanded, often in unexpected and individualistic ways. This process demonstrates the protean capacity to recognize, in what may conventionally be considered a lack of fit, a lack of constraint, which allows for the exploration of more liberated forms of analysis and expression. As these authorial personae complicate constructions of genre, so they complicate constructions of, and thus present a complex vision of, the highly politicized themes, such as race or gender, that permeate their texts.

Indeed, each of these four prairie texts maintains a liberated relationship with idea systems, which is central to the protean disposition. In a very fundamental way, conventions are to genres as tenets are to idea systems. That is, a convention is a functional parameter of a genre as a tenet is a functional parameter of an idea system. Thus, the protean political position at first seems largely ambiguous or ungrounded. However, as we have observed, these authorial personae are deeply “aware of historical process and of planetary connections” (Lifton 6), conscious of the ways in which idea systems can be manipulated in fundamentalistic ways, and consequently each presents, rather than a complete adherence to any one system of thought, a functional and personalized, protean ideological politic. Each of these texts complicates some postcolonial constructions of race, ethnicity and gender while simultaneously promoting many of the ideological precepts of postcolonialism. In this way, it is clear that, as in the protean relationship to conventions of genre, the protean response to idea systems permits a particular freedom of thought and expression. The presence of these protean forms of

resilience in these four texts clearly extends Lifton's theory beyond the American border and demonstrates its prosperous growth within the Canadian literary landscape.

Much of proteanism may seem overly idealistic and perhaps not really functional in its ambiguity, precariousness, and lack of distinct boundaries. However, Deleuze and Guattari's theory of smooth and striated space helps to explain the forces that move proteanism to fundamentalism, and then back again. Striation pertains to a force or process that pushes towards fundamentalism, which itself pertains to a specific homogeneity and thus to homogenous space, in Deleuze and Guattari's conception. Moreover, smoothing pertains to the entropic fragmentation, in Lifton's conception of the protean self, which moves the fundamentalist back to the protean, whose corollary is Riemann space in Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the smooth and striated. The authorial personae's capacity to effect Riemannian or protean forms of connectivity results in a more accurate, individualized reflection of their experiences of identity construction and the forces of striation within prairie society. However, the analysis of spaces within these four prairie texts, such as racial or gender space, renders obvious not only the conclusion that smoothing and striation are forces that act on a space but also the necessity to analyse the relations of power within protean space.

For the protean self relations of power are effected in multiple, varying, and unpredictable ways and, for this reason, traditional conceptions of hierarchical power relations fail to accommodate the relations of power as they are represented in these four prairie texts. Moreover, as the authorial personae of each of these texts problematize simplistic, hierarchical, constructions of power, they present a complex understanding of power relations that closely resembles Foucault's characterization of power matrices. For

these protean authorial personae power is omni-present and omni-directional; that is, it comes from everywhere and flows in every direction. This realization allows them to recognize their own authority, and particularly their power to narrativize their experiences. Ultimately, these liberating protean approaches to convention, space, and power foster representations of experience and constructions of identity as diverse as the environment that informs them.

As these four prairie texts have shown, the presence of proteanism in the Canadian prairies is palpable and suggestive, perhaps, of the sense that this particular place, as a geopolitical zone, may even foster a protean sensibility. As the authorial personae of these texts repeatedly converge with and diverge from fundamentalistic constructions of convention, space, and power, and embrace a protean approach in both their perceptions of experience and their constructions of the self, they permit themselves a liberty in thought and expression as vast as the Canadian prairies.

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