

Go West: Urbanism, Mobility, and Ingenuity in
Western Canadian Writing and Everyday Practice

by

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ABSTRACT

In early criticism of Western Canadian literature, prairie spaces were constructed as predominantly rural in order to set the region and prairie writing apart from the rest of Canada and other Canadian literature. In time, prairie criticism's focus on rural realist texts led to the marginalization of urban prairie writing and the construction of urban spaces as corrupt and artificial in comparison to the natural and virtuous rural environment. I work to remedy the absence of urban texts in the criticism of prairie literature, and I argue that prairie cities are dynamic and mobile worlds where prairie inhabitants exercise their agency through everyday practices.

Utilizing the work of Raymond Williams, I show how urban and rural spaces are constructed in the canonical prairie texts of Grove, Ostenso, and Stead to serve various capitalist interests and colonial ideologies. I explore the depiction of Winnipeg in Durkin's *The Magpie* as a dynamic, complex, and politically engaged space. Moreover, I use Michel de Certeau's work to assert that the underprivileged and colonized individuals in the city subvert and utilize the systems and organizations of those in power. They develop an increased deviousness and take advantage of incidental and multifarious opportunities that come their way as they work, dwell, and move about in everyday life. Subsequently, I look at urban writing by women, Eastern-European immigrants, and Aboriginal writers and show that they use urban spaces, everyday practices, and writing to exercise their agency. To destabilize unitary forces in language, to depict their own experiences, and to convey their own meanings of home, labour, and community, marginalized writers employ wordplay, humour, historical and cultural references, and intertextuality. I also use Jane M. Jacobs' work on postcolonial cities and Tim Cresswell's theories of mobility. I read prairie cities as places of competing mobilities and networks of

dominances and resistances, where colonized individuals negotiate complex, hybrid, and authentic identities. The urban prairie texts I explore demonstrate the possibility of political, social, and economic changes, and a beneficial relationship with the prairie environment.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I argue that there is a specifically urban Western Canadian writing which acknowledges its prairie frontier traditions but moves forward into the experimental and innovative realm to accurately represent Western Canadian urbanity. More explicitly than their Eastern predecessors, Western Canadian cities were frontier outposts that grew into metropolises through recklessness and speculation in trade, through ambitious railway expansion, and through colonial enterprise and technology. These factors have made them places where a vast discrepancy exists between the myths of opportunity, freedom, and mobility, and the reality of failure, oppression, and limitations. This discrepancy is most evident among the poor, the underprivileged, and those with limited access to everyday resources, including recent immigrants and First Nations people. In my argument I use literary, postcolonial, and city planning theory to analyze texts written about and in Canadian prairie cities.

However, because cities and urban dwellers are under-represented in Canadian prairie fiction and more significantly in the criticism of prairie literature, the task of studying urban writing in this region is challenging and problematic. Ever since the 1920s when the work of prairie writers Frederick Philip Grove and Martha Ostenso was recognized for its original contribution to the emerging Canadian literature, prairie writing has been constructed and viewed primarily as rural, local, and realist. In the 1970s Canadian prairie criticism emerged as a discipline with the republication of Edward McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction* (1949), the publication of Laurence Ricou's *Vertical Man Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction* (1973), and the publication of Dick Harrison's *Unnamed Country: The*

Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction (1977). These works perpetuated and reinforced the image of prairie inhabitants' isolation in a desolate and empty rural landscape. To varying extents, McCourt, Ricou, and Harrison discuss characters' antagonistic relationship to the land. This antagonism results from characters' inadaptability to their prairie environment, the physical hardships endured in such climate, as well as spiritual and intellectual stagnation due to lack of access to Western culture, art, and community. As McCourt and others were looking to the past to establish a tradition and were making a case for unique Canadian prairie writing, their criticism emphasized uniformity rather than diversity in prairie writing. Unfortunately, the critics who followed in their footsteps did not challenge their deterministic conclusions and constructs. The recognition of a more comprehensive body of prairie literature, and a more inclusive criticism and discussion, still eludes the discipline. This may in part be due to shifting currents in literature and literary criticism from regional and nationalist toward international, post-modern, post-structuralist, and post-colonial perspective.

The inertia that followed in prairie criticism, especially as it relates to representation of urban spaces, resulted, first, in a focus on a few canonical rural realist prairie texts. These texts continued to be taught and read in the context of the established criticism of Ricou and others. Second, a handful of prairie authors, such as Margaret Laurence and Robert Kroetsch, came to be elevated in stature and recognized as Canadian and universal. In part, I contend that the national reception of Laurence's and Kroetsch's work was due to their use of rural settings, which did not challenge the mainstream perception of the prairies. Finally, the stagnation in prairie criticism silenced and effaced prairie texts that represented non-rural landscapes and topics, especially if the writers used non-realist or popular genres to convey their stories. Without larger critical acclaim and the sense of being part of a tradition, many non-rural prairie writers fell into

obscurity, if they managed to get published in the first place. Most were unaware of past texts that might have encouraged them and contextualized their diverse prairie experience, whether it was urban, queer, Native, or ethnic. Due to a lack of recognition of their writing and urban subject matter, some writers left the prairies while others pursued their interests by writing popular non-fiction and journalism.

The stakes of misunderstanding the Canadian prairie landscape as primarily rural, empty, and antagonistic are grave and manifold. First, such an understanding continues to preserve the unequal economic, political, and social colonial power relations under which the prairies were first constructed as a land empty of people, to the detriment of Aboriginal peoples' rights and culture. Second, traditionally such a view of the prairies leads to the overuse of natural resources and reliance on physical labour and the underuse of the rich human resources and creative labour, thereby impoverishing or driving away people who have much to contribute to prairie culture. Third, the overuse of natural resources can result in the destruction and pollution of the environment, as is already apparent in Alberta with the oilsands. In addition, I argue that the emphasis on the rural contributes to alienation and disconnection of urban people from the land because their lives and stories are not represented. Finally, the focus on the rural obscures the connection between urban and rural spaces and the reality that problems in rural spaces will affect people in urban spaces and vice versa.

To remedy the imbalance, my work provides a theoretical framework for reading urban prairie texts that have been previously ignored. In contrast to other critics of Western Canadian literature who read rural, I will highlight, in my first chapter, the urban elements in texts that are generally thought to be strictly about rural prairie themes. My urban readings acknowledge that cities have existed on the prairies since the beginnings of Western settlement. Urban prairie

inhabitants, through everyday practices of walking, working, and dwelling, have constructed meanings and unique worlds worthy of attention and study. An understanding of urban prairie citizens' mobility and dwelling practices brings to light past examples of agency and ingenuity and provides examples of other ways of interacting with land that is not antagonistic and reliant on the colonial and capitalist exploitation of natural resources. My thesis also illustrates how individuals use the city's diverse social organizations and their creative labour, to make connections and communities in prairie settings.

Before I begin to discuss those issues, I want to engage with some of the important works of prairie criticism to examine the problematic assumptions as well as helpful constructs therein. First, I look at Laurence Ricou's *Vertical Man/ Horizontal World: Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction*. As Ricou's title makes clear, his main trope stands the human upright in opposition to the stereotypically flat land of the prairies. In a problematically deterministic stance suggesting that everyone perceives and is affected similarly by the same landscape, Ricou claims that Canadian prairie fiction explores how this intrusive single figure faces the vast and bleak landscape and attempts to understand the isolation and solitude it engenders. In such a case, "man" struggles to recreate and "erect something in the prairie emptiness" to fill the physical, the social, and the cultural absences he feels (8). In his book, Ricou argues that the increased antagonism of man toward the environment figures prominently in the way prairie writers have portrayed Canadian prairies over time. Yet even in his chapter titles, Ricou complicates the above premise as he identifies benign and eternal prairie in the work of Robert Stead and W.O. Mitchell and bewildering prairie in recent fiction. Ricou's theory articulates the bias toward rural over urban settings and the bias toward realist texts over the "minor" historical romances. While his close readings are perceptive, Ricou is dismissive in his analysis of Stead's

and Mitchell's work. For example, he finds Stead's belief that humans can be "in complete harmony with the prairie" (35) simplistic and nostalgic because Stead does not address darker undercurrents of prairie life. However, I believe these texts offer possibilities for a less antagonistic, more intellectual, and spiritual relationship with the land.

Although the sense of absence in prairie landscape and the antagonism between man and land are overstated at the expense of other ideas in Ricou's book, Ricou's analysis of Grove and Ross is important in establishing major ideas and constructs in early prairie criticism. In his analysis of Grove's work, Ricou presents a growing complexity in understanding the land and the human psyche interacting with it. He sees Grove proceeding from portraying man in conflict with the adverse environment that stifles his relationships with other people, to showing how "the greatest threat is man himself and his inability to understand his fellows" (53). Ricou also gives Sinclair Ross the credit for thoroughly internalizing landscape and climate in *As for Me and my House* (1941). Ross uses landscape as a metaphor for man's mind and character. Thus the artistic and intellectual Bentleys are stifled in the small town (82-83). Ricou, to his credit, also attempts to discuss urban fiction, even if his discussion is limited. He claims that the 1960s and 1970s prairie inhabitant becomes a tortured neurotic and that in "both rural and urban fiction the prevalent landscape is empty and nightmarish, peopled by bewildered, frightened men" (112). When it comes to John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death* (1957) and Adele Wiseman's *The Sacrifice* (1956), both novels set in Winnipeg, Ricou does not see their prairie settings as relevant to the themes of their texts. He concedes, however, that these urban novels display some awareness of a distinct prairie landscape (125). Ricou writes that in contemporary fiction:

Vertical man is no longer primarily exposed to the physical violence of existence, but to the frightening knowledge of his own condition. He is isolated in an empty world. The

landscape in which he must exist is vacant of meaning. Since the city is an extension of man, it shares the same situation. (125)

In the end, for Ricou, urban and rural experiences on the prairies do not differ enough to warrant an elaboration. He simply writes “The city is as much an intrusion, and often as aware of the surrounding prairie, as were the first tentative farms” (129). So while Ricou does not propose a unique understanding of the prairie city and literature, he at least mentions its existence on the prairies.

Unlike Ricou, Dick Harrison in his *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction* (1977) fails completely to discuss the urban prairie. Still, it is worthwhile to look briefly at his contribution to prairie criticism. Harrison frames his discussion of prairie fiction with what he defines as failure of imagination and lack of willingness to adapt “old” culture to a “new” land. As he explains, European and other immigrants to the Canadian prairies had no social associations with what, to them, seemed uninhabited land, and since they failed to recognize the art and culture of the Aboriginal and Metis people, they utilized their old culture and customs which were not well-suited to the Canadian prairies (14). In comparison to Ricou, Harrison qualifies his deterministic stance and pays particular attention to how culture and specific circumstances influence man’s reaction to landscape. Importantly, he acknowledges the prairies’ diversity in landscape and vegetation, writing that the prairies contain “three distinct levels or steppes, sloping gradually north-eastward from the Rockies in southern Alberta to the Hudson Bay basin” and include muskeg, parkland, and grasslands ecosystems (xv). In a turn that, in prairie criticism, could be considered revolutionary, he proposes that there are two main ways man responds to his prairie environment—withdrawal and approach. Harrison uses two canonical novels, Sinclair Ross’ *As For Me and My House* and W.O. Mitchell’s *Who Has Seen*

the Wind, as examples of the realist tradition to explain “the tragic and comic views of man facing an unnamed country” (xii).

Harrison elaborates on themes and ideas already established by McCourt and Ricou; however, he also brings up new ideas related to aboriginal people, prairie houses, and the British Empire. These ideas are relevant to my criticism of prairie literature. Although Harrison dismisses several early prairie writers for their superficial engagement with Aboriginal and Metis cultures, he does acknowledge Indigenous peoples’ presence, and he alludes to their distinct relationship with the land. In addition, Harrison explains how looking at the depiction of houses in prairie literature provides a good measure of how settlers adapted to their surroundings. He juxtaposes British and Canadian settlers’ isolated, imposing, and impractical houses to more accessible and mobile dwellings inhabited by other ethnic immigrants and the Metis. Harrison’s ideas about prairie homes complement my own in Chapter 2, wherein I read early Winnipeg homes as mobile and impermanent and as culturally significant for Winnipeg settlers. In his discussion of prairie writing at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, Harrison demonstrates how popular Western Canadian writers used the garden metaphor to depict the Canadian prairies. Among these writers he includes Ralph Connor, Nellie McClung, R.J.C. Stead, and Arthur Stringer. He makes the point that some of these early prairie novelists saw the west not as a frontier wilderness but as part of the empire, a settled and policed extension of eastern Canada, where many of them were born (73).

By discussing other popular writing on the prairies, Harrison complicates realism’s stylistic dominance in prairie writing. Furthermore, even though he uses Grove’s *Settlers of the Marsh*, Ostenso’s *Wild Geese*, and Stead’s *Grain* to illustrate his main points about prairie realism, he admits that stylistically these books do not have much in common. Harrison brings

forth a problem that other critics echo after him—the liberal and misleading way the term prairie realism has been applied. He writes that realism “during the 1950’s was the most critically respectable thing for a novelist to be practicing, and this may further explain why some critics called their favourite authors ‘realists’ even when, like Martha Ostenso, they were writing powerfully romantic fiction” (154). Moreover, Harrison describes the popularity of adventure romances (such as Mountie stories and Westerns) and sentimental comedies on the prairies, among which he includes W.O. Mitchell’s *Who Has Seen the Wind*. In contrast to the alienation and antagonism of the realists, Harrison explains that these popular writers in the 1940s and 1950s saw redeemable virtues in the prairie world (156). The main characteristics of these comedies are faith in man’s endurance in the prairie landscape, tolerance of eccentric behaviour, and “ridicule of unjust authority” (170-71). Harrison also identifies significant gaps in prairie realism when it comes to the portrayal of public, social, and political spheres of prairie life and experience (181). I contend that, by studying urban prairie texts, we can fill some of these gaps. Furthermore, in line with his main premise, Harrison asserts that the prairie novelists of the 1960s and the 1970s made a break with prairie realism. These writers were aware that the old culture and old literary constructs were no longer able to convey their experiences and they saw more need for indigenous forms and language in their work (212). For Harrison this change also manifested itself in greater concern with technique and varied and experimental forms (191). Even though Harrison fails to acknowledge urban prairie writing, at least he recognizes that there is a growing diversity in genres and increasing innovation in technique and form emerging in prairie literature by 1960.

After the publication of Ricou’s and Harrison’s formative texts, the 1980s produced some place-and-genre specific prairie criticism. Dennis Cooley mentions three collections on

Saskatchewan writing in his essay “The Critical Reception of Prairie Literature” (41) in *West of Eden: Essays on Canadian Prairie Literature* (2008). Cooley’s 1987 monograph *The Vernacular Muse: The Eye and Ear in Contemporary Literature*, in part, provides an examination of prairie poetry. In both their creative writing and criticism, from 1980s onward, Robert Kroetsch and Aritha van Herk have also explored prairie spaces and have commented on non-traditional literary genres, from post-modern and feminist perspectives. In the past twenty years there have also been article-length post-colonial, ecocritical, ethnic, feminist, and queer readings of the canonical texts, those by Grove and Ostenson in particular. However, neither Cooley, Kroetsch, Van Herk, nor their contemporaries explored the prairie city in detail.

Since the late 1990s, there appears to be a slow resurgence in prairie criticism, with George Melnyk’s two volumes of *The Literary History of Alberta* (1998), Deborah Keahy’s *Making It Home: Place in Canadian Prairie Literature* (1998) and the earlier mentioned *West of Eden: Essays on Canadian Prairie Literature* (2008). However, although *West of Eden*’s editor Sue Sorenson discusses some of Winnipeg’s urban poets and songwriters in her introduction, and admits “as we all know, the majority of prairie people are now urban” (15), none of the essays deal explicitly with urban literature. Two collections that combine historical, cultural, and literary scholarship, *History, Literature, and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies* (2005) and *Place and Replace: Essays on Western Canada* (2012), also provide new readings of prairie writing but not one essay comprehensively addresses urban texts and urban themes.

I have only found one book-length publication that has attempted to address the subject of urban prairie writing and the prairie city. *The Urban Prairie*, a book containing art and three essays by Dan Ring, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and George Melnyk, was published to accompany an exhibition on prairie cities at the Mendel Art Gallery in Saskatoon in 1993. While it is not

exhaustive, the book combines a visual, cultural, and literary history of the prairie city. It provides a stepping stone for my work which, with its wide focus on urban prairie literature, is the first of its kind. The essay by Ring offers a history of visual art in Canadian prairie cities from 1880 to 1960. I use his analysis regarding the developments in art, photography, and architecture on the prairies to understand movements in urban prairie writing and to provide a brief history of the prairie city. Ring discusses the mobile origins of western Canadian cities and calls them “Cities of the Rail,” since their growth and first iconography originated with the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway and its subsequent expansion (15). The first photographers that the CPR brought out west photographed settlements established by the railway and recorded the Indian and Metis encampments that these conglomerations displaced. Their work was used for immigration pamphlets and posters, which promoted the Canadian West.

Ring documents the colonial authorities’ ordering and quantifying of the city through maps and pamphlets, and he adds that these “advertisements embody that curious mixture of Anglo-Saxon aesthetic, utopianism and relentless boosterism which characterized the representation of the prairie city and landscape well into the 20th century” (16). He also discusses the disappearance of Aboriginal people from pictorial representations of the prairie city in order to reassure new settlers. Ring echoes Ricou’s idea regarding the settlers’ response to the prairie: “[T]he obsession with objectifying the city through the exaggerated and endlessly repeated images of the urbanscape, was likely a fear of the featureless and empty void of the Prairie itself” (33). According to Ring, by the beginning of the twentieth century the populations of these new prairie cities were mainly of Anglo-Saxon descent, and they dominated politics, culture, and art. Their tastes reflected nostalgia for the British Empire. Early prairie city planning incorporated

mechanization and boosterism, as well as the Edwardian middle-class notion of social progress through civic architecture and the creation of public parks, boulevards, and grand monuments (43). Even though Ring restates that the prairies are empty, he also depicts early Canadian prairie cities as places of technological innovation and constant mobility related to colonial and nationalist expansion. Ring's discussion of the colonial and nationalist agenda in visual art also contextualizes and fits in with similar themes in urban prairie literature. Nationalism figures prominently in Ralph Connor's *The Foreigner* (1909), which I discuss in the third chapter of my thesis.

Notwithstanding the influences of popular American culture, Ring shows how the prairie city's artistic development progressed from colonial toward more local art. New artists, mostly of Anglo-Saxon descent, settled on the prairies and universities and art schools opened. In time prairie artists, such as Winnipeg-born and New York-trained Lionel LeMoine FitzGerald, became prominent and began "to express their relationship to place and to explore contemporary practice" (56). Ring claims that, when FitzGerald became the director of the Winnipeg Art School in 1929, the prairie city emerged with its distinct perspective. FitzGerald and his contemporaries depicted "views of quiet backyards and streets... where the structures of the city echo and reinforce those of nature" and recognized "the urban scene as a self-sufficient subject for art, equal to the landscape in importance" (60). Ring's urban art history supports my argument that, in spite of colonial and Anglo-Saxon middle class trappings, distinct art and culture inspired by local experience and everyday life began to emerge in urban centres on the prairies. Paintings by FitzGerald and other artists at this time suggest that urban artists saw themselves and their homes not in conflict with their environment but in a symbiotic relationship with it.

In spite of the poverty and hardships that the 1930s brought to the Canadian prairies, Ring writes that a new social awareness emerged which influenced art. As urban development and manufacturing halted, the prairie city “became the focal point of both agrarian and urban protest, transformed from the site of a utopian dream of wealth into a battleground of political ideology” (69). Even though social protest and political and economic unrest were not clearly visible at first, they made their way into art of the prairie artists as they did into urban writing of Douglas Durkin. Ring explains how, in subtle ways, the devastation and turmoil of economic collapse entered the art of the painters Fritz Brandtner and Caven Atkins who “depicted Winnipeg industrial sites and street scenes starkly and expressively as alien and hostile environments, emptied of human presence” (73). Ring illustrates that the public, social, and political aspects of prairie life, which Harrison remarks as being absent from prairie realism, were present in Western Canadian art. The 1930s prairie artists saw the prairie city as “a self-contained subject which could accommodate both social commentary and visual documentation” (78). In addition, these artists’ work was influenced by the everyday practices of walking and living in the city: “their painting focused on the city and moved into it as if through a kind of close-up lens” (78). Similarly, in urban literature from the 1920s onward, in Durkin’s and Marlyn’s novels for example, mobility and everyday dwelling in the city was intimately connected to the characters’ rising and falling fortunes and their understanding of Western Canada’s political and economic landscape.

Moreover, Ring shows how, during the 1940s, war became a subject for many prairie artists who depicted urban settings. These artists used metaphorical or biblical narratives, new techniques of block printing, and modernist techniques to tell their stories. Likewise, Adele Wiseman’s first urban novel, *The Sacrifice* (1956), is a modern re-telling of the Isaac and

Abraham story, wherein Wiseman uses a biblical narrative and an urban prairie setting to comment on larger themes of generational conflict and the loss of tradition. In the 1950s and 1960s, international artistic movements and American popular culture became prevalent influences on the Canadian West (101). While abstraction and international art movements led to fewer descriptive images of the city, the urban influence manifested itself in prairie art in indirect ways. For example, Saskatoon artist William Pehudoff's murals, painted in Saskatoon's bus station in 1955, were "about speed, mobility and their importance to modern life" (105). Ring explains that by 1960 prairie artists were moving away from direct and abstract representation of the prairie city in their work, but "the city continued to be the most important site of artistic production" (105). From 1880 to 1960, Ring's rich art history shows that everyday mobility, innovation in technique, social and political awareness, and a vision of a more symbiotic relationship with the environment was present in prairie cities. In addition, Ring's work can be extrapolated and used to supplement the understanding of urban prairie writing, which without critical analysis and recognition appears isolated.

In the second essay in *The Urban Prairie*, Vanderhaeghe offers possible explanations why there are so few novels set in prairie cities in the first place. While Vanderhaeghe fails to mention some key texts, he supports my idea that a lack of exposure and community hampered Western Canadian urban writers. He argues that the under-representation of prairie cities in Western fiction is, in part, the result of a lack of models for prairie writers to follow. Working from the premise that art relies on imitation, Vanderhaeghe contends that fictions of the American West offered Canadian prairie writers "useful blueprints" for small towns and rural settings but not for prairie cities (117). Vanderhaeghe undermines his argument somewhat by beginning his essay with the example of Connor's *The Foreigner*, which in 1909 provided a

depiction of Winnipeg and a model of a prairie city. However, his conclusions are not faulty, just in need of qualification. It was not just the lack of urban examples but lack of continual exposure to a diversity, range, and quantity of urban examples that proved detrimental to Western Canadian urban writers. In an additional point, Vanderhaeghe claims that Hollywood's influence had negative consequences for Canadian urban writing: "In American film, a few cities (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, sometimes Philadelphia and San Francisco) became the paradigm of 'real' cities, places where important things happened" (119-20). By comparison, other cities, American and Canadian prairie cities included, were seen as lacking merit and relevance and this contributed to a lack of confidence of urban prairie writers. Vanderhaeghe also believes that the histories of Western Canadian cities contributed to this insecurity. He writes: "Two world wars, depression and a decade of drought stunted their growth and frustrated their promise" (128). Consequently, it "was hard to be enthusiastic about failure without looking ridiculous" (128). It is this lack of confidence of writers outside of great cultural centres that, for Vanderhaeghe, is at the root of prairie cities' contentious absence in prairie literature.

Vanderhaeghe also names a problematic writing practice resulting from this insecurity that may have inadvertently contributed to the reason that critics have ignored the significance of urban prairie settings. He discusses some of the occasions when prairie writers wrote about urban spaces but failed to name or particularize their settings. Vanderhaeghe claims that this "no-name city" practice effaced prairie cities. In such cases, the setting became "city *qua* city, a bare bones sketch of the urban with most distinguishing features eradicated, a place faceless and, above all, nameless" (120). Using Edward McCourt's *The Wooden Sword* (1956), Vanderhaeghe illustrates the consequences of such a lack of specificity and detail: "Fictional people, like real people, draw life from their surroundings, [and] are colored and influenced by their milieu. Lacking

these supports, [McCourt's] characters float like bloodless ghosts in a grey limbo" (123).

Vanderhaeghe implies that this ambiguity actually contributed to McCourt's failure to engage the reader. Perhaps internalizing fears of derision and inferiority, other writers only named prairie cities for comic relief, as Paul Hiebert did with the city of Regina in *Sarah Binks* (1947).

Vanderhaeghe argues that such humour only served to perpetuate negative stereotypes of prairie cities. Hiebert's novel reinforces "a firmly established assumption, that cities like Regina are wastelands, which makes any suggestion that a visit to them might be intellectually stimulating, by definition, hilarious" (121). Consequently, one could argue that urban prairie writers contributed to their work's erasure and made it difficult for the critics to read their work within a specific urban prairie context.

Not to let prairie literary critics off the hook, but Vanderhaeghe's no-name city phenomenon would help explain why so little urban criticism exists. I believe Vanderhaeghe's most important contribution to the discussion is his explanation of how self-defeating the practice of no-name city is in combating regional marginality. He admits his complicity in the practice and his failure as a writer to name Western Canadian cities in his work, even when the setting profoundly influenced his characters' motives and themes of the book. Explaining that such silence is "a retreat into evasion, a failure of artistic nerve, and a refusal to assert the validity of a place and a voice," he argues "that acknowledging and celebrating origins [makes] better aesthetic sense than disavowing and disguising them" (127). Vanderhaeghe sees a subtle change in attitude in the late sixties and cites Adele Wiseman's *Crackpot* (1974) as an example of a novel which names and depicts Winnipeg successfully. However, he feels that the prairie no-name city continues to be a problem (129). Unlike writers who live in Toronto and Montreal and who freely write about the places they live in, Vanderhaeghe feels prairie writers'

marginality will always require a greater diligence to depict prairie cities without falling back onto strategies that obscure and efface them.

Melnyk's contribution to *The Urban Prairie* provides historical content and supports my understanding of prairie cities as mobile and diverse places. In "The Five City-States of the West," Melnyk proposes an understanding of the prairies as a network of five city-states—Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Calgary and Edmonton. Recognizing the model's limitations (and using the numbers from early 1990s), Melnyk's imperative is to provide an understanding of prairie cities that is relevant to the seventy percent of prairie population, or the three million out of the 4.6 million people, who live in cities in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba (138). Melnyk's city-state approach recognizes the five prairie cities as a unified conglomeration with an important artistic and cultural role in the West. The essay establishes prairie cities' mobile and culturally diverse beginnings and focuses on their geographic, political, and economic similarities in order to understand how such cities function. To this end, Melnyk restates prairie cities' connections to the railroad, but, more importantly, he discusses the role of the Hudson's Bay trading posts in the history of Edmonton and Winnipeg. These trading posts connected prairie cities to the rest of the world and "created a small, permanent concentration of [Anglo and Franco] population in a sea of aboriginal mobility" and were eventually incorporated into the modern cities' identity (140). Building on Ring's discussion of boosterism, Melnyk talks about the provincial rivalry that drove the Saskatchewan and Alberta cities to excel in various city building endeavours. Following Artibise, Melnyk divides the growth of prairie cities into three phases: first, the building or booster phase lasting from 1880s to 1920s; second, the corporate phase during which, in spite of Depression and loss of private fortunes, prairie cities continued to administer the capital, encouraged enterprise, and allowed individuals to make connections; and

third, the current regional phase during which prairie cities became distinctive “through the provision of key services in health, education and finance to the surrounding territory” (146).

Such a historical approach allows Melnyk to draw conclusions about how prairie cities function.

A problematic characteristic of prairie cities that Melnyk raises is the tension between the local identity and politics and eastern Canada’s understanding of prairie cities as “a corridor of Anglo-Canadian culture and society” (137). However, Melnyk’s discussion of a reciprocal relationship between prairie cities and their rural surroundings is helpful in understanding how prairie cities can be read as central rather than peripheral not just in local but national and international contexts (146). He interprets prairie cities as magnets which “influence smaller places and repel the influence of other cities, and so create a distinct identity” (146). Melnyk’s model also focuses on prairie cities’ distinctive features: their broad streets, low-density housing, sense of openness, and the importance of transportation therein. Unlike Ricou and Harrison, who describe the absences in rural spaces, Melnyk writes that the “sense of crowd and the largeness of multi-story buildings and time spent walking on concrete are all integral” to his experience of prairie life (141). He also describes the adaptability and ingenuity necessary to cope with mobility, diversity, and change in prairie cities. Melnyk writes: “The urban dweller is quick to learn [the city’s] special places and its danger spots, and to see its evolution, its transformation with each new influx and migration” (141). Distances between the five cities have also contributed to a steady, decentralized environment and a development of a range and variety of services which draw diverse populations (147). Because prairie cities also provide government services and educational institutions as well as “significant ghettos and areas of older housing,” they attract immigrants, refugees, and Native people, especially in Winnipeg and Regina (Melnyk 148). For Melnyk, this multicultural aspect has been a part of prairie cities since their

origins. Melnyk sees some problems with his own model: namely that the five major prairie cities are far removed from the northern areas of most of the provinces leaving vast areas without viable urban centre of influence. Even so, he believes that the current understanding of the prairies needs to change because “urban landscape—the cityscape—is the daily reality for almost seventy percent of prairie people. That reality has to spill over into our self-understanding and self-actualization” (150). His model definitely encourages a rethinking of Western Canadian cities.

As my focus is on urban writing on the Canadian prairies, the concept of regionalism has influenced my criticism. I write against its problematic aspects, but I also use region, the prairies, as an organizational unit. This approach allows me to draw on a diverse range of texts and to propose a theoretical framework for a marginalized aspect of Canadian writing. I discuss the pitfalls of regionalism and defend my usage of it in response to essays by Frank Davey and Alison Calder in the collection *A Sense of Place: Re-evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing* (1997). In his essay, “Toward the Ends of Regionalism,” Davey makes a case for halting regionalist criticism in the analysis of Canadian literature. He feels regionalism has privileged geography, concealed ideology, effaced differences, and worked in the interest of those in power to maintain a given social, political, and economic order. I agree with Davey that regionalism has contributed to the above problems, and I want to unpack these problems briefly before I explain how my work addresses these issues. First, Davey disagrees with regionalism’s underlying deterministic principle, implicit in Ricou’s and Harrison’s theories, that a person’s actions are determined primarily by their environment. In contrast, he proposes an understanding of regions, “the prairies” among them, as ideological and social creations. Like Davey, I argue that spaces are constructed; however, I am interested in the economic, historical, and cultural

factors that have led to these constructions, and I am interested in how these ideas continue to affect how identities, community, and culture is formed in Western Canada. Until these constructs are debunked and re-envisioned to make room for urban experiences, among others, they will continue to have real economic, social, and political consequences. Davey is additionally concerned with regionalism's adaptability as a construct to conceal the workings of the nation and empire, as exemplified by the ideology of the centre and margins in Canada. A continued understanding of the prairies as the frontier of the empire, and, since the second half of the twentieth century, as the margins of the nation, has predominantly served the interests of central Canada. These interests are to preserve the dominant social, economic, and political relations established during the initial onslaught of colonialism. I use historically-based literary, cultural, postcolonial, and urban theory to provide theoretical models for evaluating power imbalances and various ideologies in the urban texts I analyze. Furthermore, I am forthright regarding my own critical and political agenda, which is to expand the definition of prairie writing to include marginalized urban writing.

Davey's third concern is that regionalism minimizes differences and, out of necessity, "gives geographic location priority over such other possible interests as gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, and race" (2). While I do focus on place as shaping peoples' everyday practices and the way people dwell on the prairies, I do not imply that all people react in the same way to the prairie places they dwell in, and I by no means privilege place over gender, ethnicity, or even occupation as determinant of identity. In fact, by bringing forth prairie cities as additional prairie spaces that are complex and worthy of study, I emphasize the prairies' diversity, including diversity of gender, race, and ethnicity.

Davey's other main concern is that regionalism serves the nation-state's interests by

adversely affecting the regionalized populations and this is the aspect I struggle the most with, in my regionalist framework. Davey writes that regionalism results in a lack of engagement and political action: “the sense that power over [regions] resides and is wielded elsewhere” and the “sense of being unable to change where power resides” (11). When it comes to regional literature, there is a concern that prairie writers internalize their marginalization and resign themselves to central Canada’s construction of them and their writing. Davey even views the call for local and indigenous language and forms as negative and believes this serves “the interests of the nation-state and national canonicity by allowing the construction of the regionalist culture as atavist and nostalgic” (12). I disagree with Davey on this point because I do not believe an author’s foremost concern in choosing one’s style and form should be the reception of the canon. Nor am I willing to concede that the “regionalist” techniques he discusses necessary lead to nostalgic writing, or even to construction of it as such. However, like Davey, I worry about perpetuating the internalized marginalization, or as Vanderhaeghe calls it the “lack of confidence,” which has contributed to the absence of urban settings and the phenomena of no-name cities on the prairies (128). Even so, I believe my close urban readings bring to light prairie inhabitants’ long tradition of agency, political engagement, and ingenuity in everyday practices. A vigilant, historically and critically self-aware regionalism allows me to focus on a neglected aspect of Western Canadian literature and to contribute an urban prairie criticism, which embraces diversity of race, ethnicity, and dwelling practices on the prairies.

I conclude my look at regionalism by discussing Alison Calder’s essay “Reassessing Prairie Realism.” She elaborates Davey’s concerns and she critiques regionalism’s deterministic, ideological, and ahistorical fallacies in a specifically Western Canadian context. Calder interrogates the assumptions long held about prairie realism as the highest form of prairie

literature, and deconstructs the terms ‘regionalism’ and ‘realism’ to make room for a more complex and creative encounter with the prairie. She questions E.K. Brown’s definition and belief that the value of Canadian regional literature lies in “its ability to mirror a specific environment, to show what real ‘life’ is like” (52). Like Davey, Calder objects to the determinist understanding of geographic regions, and she points out that prairie texts “not only reflect a nation or region, but also create it” (52). Hence, prairie writers exercise their craft, imagination, and agency to emphasize certain sets of meanings over others (52). Calder also takes to task Brown’s valuation of “real” Canadian literature over realist regional literature. She points out that Brown, an outsider, decides what real life on the prairies actually means. She thereby illustrates Davey’s point how some critics from central Canada use regionalism to position themselves at the authoritative and canonical centre of Canada.

Most significantly, Calder draws attention to the ahistorical and stagnant impression of prairie writing: “[W]hen it comes to prairie realism, text, critic, and reader are all fixed in the past” (54). Calder emphasizes that critics of prairie literature need to recognize that prairie realism constructed and fictionalized a small portion of the prairie landscape at a particular point in time and that “the empirical conditions of life represented in those fictions no longer necessarily exist” (55). In my work, I attempt to remedy the influence of such an ahistorical regionalism by supplementing my urban readings with historical contexts that shed light on why urban and rural places were constructed in a particular way at a particular time. By looking at urban prairie texts from the early 1900s until 2008, I hope to show how prairie cities and their constructions have changed over time even if their populations continue to be mobile, resourceful, and diverse. Calder alludes to what is at stake and what the possible rewards may be if prairie criticism embraces diverse prairie writing and becomes historically specific. She writes:

“To admit regional change is to admit the possibility of change in general—if a region is going to function as a microcosm of the centre, as it must in this critical economy, then any flux in the region threatens the stability of the macrocosm” (55-6). My work, which acknowledges the constructed and changing nature of prairie spaces, can play a role in re-envisioning not just urban and rural prairie spaces, but contribute to altering the macrocosm, which continues to relegate prairie spaces to the margins.

To construct my theoretical framework, I am casting a wide net in urban, literary, and cultural theory, as well as in geography and city planning. I read prairie cities as abundantly mobile, impermanent, yet connection-enabling and Western Canadian urban inhabitants as creative in their everyday practices and usage of both natural and human resources. Urban and rural spaces are intimately connected and the discussion of one cannot exclude the other; however, my dissertation focuses on and seeks to redress the lack of discussion and criticism of urban prairie writing in Canada. In my work, I contend that urban and rural spaces have been depicted, constructed, and often pitted against each other throughout modern history. This serves various political ideologies and economic interests, and Raymond Williams, in *The Country and the City* (1973), illustrates this point. His analysis and social and cultural observations of rural and urban spaces are informed by and grounded in literature, Marxist theory, and history. Williams’ study of the English experience is relevant because urbanization “occurred there very early and with a thoroughness which is still in some ways unapproached” (2). Furthermore, Canada’s history as a colony of the British Empire, and the Anglo-Canadian population’s dominant influence on prairie culture, has implications for how urban spaces have been constructed and understood in Western Canada.

The Country and the City also establishes some important basic concepts and assumptions regarding rural and urban spaces. Williams writes,

[o]n the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. (1)

In response to these generalisations, Williams emphasizes that, throughout history and among various cultures of the world, people have settled and occupied rural, in between, and urban spaces in multifarious ways. Some cities, for example, came into being as administrative and religious centers, others as ports and mercantile depots, and others still as military barracks or industrial towns (1). Williams puts the vision of rural space as innocent, nurturing, and garden-like into a historical perspective, and he explains how the meanings of “rural virtues” have altered over time. To show how political and economic interests affect constructions of rural space in literature, he makes an example of the seventeenth century British poets. In response to burgeoning agrarian capitalism, they idealized the country and what they believed to be an earlier more reciprocal economic and social system (35). Williams exposes ideology and nostalgia behind such constructs by arguing that the feudal agricultural system was as dehumanizing and exploitative as any economy introduced later (37). Similarly, Williams discusses how the social process at the beginning of the seventeenth century was seen as a contagious infection from the city, even though rural production still dominated the economy, and social organization and practices in the city were “generated by the needs of the dominant rural class” (53). Williams shows that urban and rural spaces are interconnected, and he explains

how the comparisons of immoral city to innocent country, “served to promote superficial comparisons and to prevent real ones” (54). By assigning virtue and vice to particular environments, men and women could avoid looking more closely at themselves and their actions, which in many cases supported a social and economic order that oppressed many and rewarded few.

The historical context that Williams provides does not just allow the reader to understand the multifarious and constructed nature of both urban and rural spaces, but it also shows the political, social, and economic forces driving the ideology and construction of these spaces. Williams also argues that the economy, and capitalism in particular, has shaped the history of rural and urban spaces: “Its abstracted economic drives, its fundamental priorities in social relations, its criteria of growth and of profit and loss, have over several centuries altered our country and created our kinds of city” (302). In Canada, the worth of various regions and the rural, urban, and in-between places in them, has too often been attributed to the geography and the climate, thus concealing the disparate power relations and the exploitation of resources that take place in those regions. Williams’ emphasis on economic factors and on the work of ideology in literary constructions of rural and urban spaces reinforces Calder’s ideas in the context of the prairies and prairie realism.

Williams also enriches our understanding of cities through his exploration of urban narratives and literary techniques. He uses Charles Dickens’ writing to illustrate London’s diverse and random nature even if “this miscellaneity and randomness in the end embodie[s] a system: a negative system of indifference; a positive system of differentiation, in law, power and financial control” (153-4). For Williams, the haphazardness and order describe the city’s double nature, a concept that other theorists and writers return to, from Walter Benjamin to Michel de

Certeau. In his discussion, Williams aligns the city with the genre and techniques of the modern novel. He writes, “the experience of the city is the fictional method; or the fictional method is the experience of the city. What matters is that the vision—no single vision either, but a continual dramatization—is the form of the writing” (154). Like the city, the novel’s structure accommodates multiple, fragmentary, and conflicting scenes, perspectives, characters, and events. Furthermore, according to Williams, Dickens’ description of London’s citizens captures the distinctively urban mobility of

random passing of men and women, each heard in some fixed phrase, seen in some fixed expression: a way of seeing men and women that belongs to the street. There is at first an absence of ordinary connection and development. These men and women do not so much relate as pass each other and then sometimes collide. (155)

Here, Williams draws attention to movement and chance as being integral to understanding how urban dwellers interact.

Fundamental to my understanding of prairie cities, and how their inhabitants navigate them, is Michel de Certeau’s theory in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). He claims that, through the everyday practices of living in the city, individuals consume, authenticate, and redefine the mapped-out city of urban developers, city planners, government, and the police. De Certeau is interested in the agency and creativity of the disadvantaged or—as he phrases it—how “the weak make use of the strong” (xv) every day and how their “inferior access to information, financial means, and compensations of all kinds elicits an increased deviousness” (xvii). Using an example of Spanish colonizers and the colonized Indigenous populations, he explains:

[Indigenous people] *made of* the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them

not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. (xiii)

While de Certeau does not provide a comprehensive list of everyday practices, and problematically does not define them, he lists talking, reading, walking, shopping, and cooking among them, and he discusses their spontaneous and tactical nature in contrast to rational and calculated strategies of urban organizations and institutions (xx). For de Certeau, “tactic is an art of the weak” and it is “limited by the blindness (which may lead to perspicacity) resulting from combat at close quarters, limited by the possibilities of the moment” (38). Some examples of rhetorical tactics of the weak that de Certeau uses come from Freud’s studies of wit; he names them as “verbal economy and condensation, double meanings and misinterpretations, displacements and alliterations, multiple uses of the same material” (39). I identify some of these rhetorical tactics in the work of the immigrant and Aboriginal urban writers in my thesis. The devious nature and the opportunistic, instantaneous, and fragmentary character of everyday practices allows individuals to escape the bounds of others’ planning and control and to exercise agency, even in the context of extreme oppression.

Since the everyday practice of walking in the city figures prominently in all the urban novels I discuss, I want to develop an understanding of how walking allows citizens to defy order, fragment logical trajectories, and alter city spaces. De Certeau develops his idea of walking among the city streets in contrast to the panoptic view from the 110th floor of New York’s World Trade Center. The bird’s-eye-view represents the utilitarian view of the authorities. They divide and map the city into functional parts and reject “everything that is not capable of being dealt with in this way and so constitutes the ‘waste products’ of a functionalist administration (abnormality, deviance, illness, death, etc.)” (94). In contrast, walkers can revel in

the city's random and obscured nature. He writes: "[Their] bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms" (93). Bodies, or the interactions of bodies with one another, bring into this process of walking race, ethnicity, and gender. These identities are integral to the way individuals exercise their creativity within the networks of urban surveillance and structures of power. While paths and trajectories can be read or mapped out, the possibility-ridden and fleeting act of passing by cannot be. De Certeau explains that walking is limited by a spatial order (city limits, bridges, and buildings); however, his emphasis is on the individual who exercises agency and actualizes the possibilities she encounters. The individual can increase the available possibilities by creating shortcuts and detours. Conversely, she can forbid herself "to take paths generally considered accessible or even obligatory" (98). De Certeau's theory of walking captures the fragmentary, instantaneous, elusive, and opportunistic character of urban experience, and it helps to understand not only the actions of characters in literary texts, but those of urban populations at large.

De Certeau aligns walking with rhetorical tactics and writing. He writes that stylistic figures and "[t]he art of 'turning' phrases finds an equivalent in an art of composing a path (*tourner un parcours*)" (100). Like a writer, who has a style and favours certain techniques, the walker chooses paths, interrupts them, and makes contact in an individualized way. Furthermore, de Certeau advances the comparison of walking and writing by claiming that architects and city planners are like linguists and grammarians, who insist on proper meanings and normative language in contrast to "the drifting of 'figurative' language" (100). In the real world, however, neither writers nor walkers can live up to the ideal of proper meaning, grammar, or proper use of

space (100). While Williams links the development of the novel with the city, de Certeau discusses “the long poem of walking” (100). This long poem “inserts its multitudinous references and citations into [organizations] (social models, cultural mores, personal factors),” thereby complicating and altering their meanings (101). Finally, de Certeau suggests that the stylistic figures that are particularly associated with urban spatial practices are synecdoche (naming part of an object to represent the whole) and asyndeton (eliminating linking words between phrases or sentences). He writes: “Synecdoche makes more dense: it amplifies the detail and miniaturizes the whole. Asyndeton cuts out: it undoes continuity and undercuts its plausibility. A space treated in this way and shaped by practices is transformed into enlarged singularities and separate islands” (101). Both of these devices lead to a fragmentary, nonlinear structure and narrative; they provide dissonance and ambiguity in meanings; and they evoke the kind of mobility and diversity I associate with urban spaces. Synecdoche and asyndeton also fit in well with de Certeau’s aforementioned devious techniques used by the weak, such as multiple uses of the same material, alliterations, puns, and parody. Through de Certeau’s ideas of everyday practices and the increased deviousness of the weak, I explore how mobility functions in the lives of prairie citizens and how it translates into their figures of speech and their literatures.

To advance de Certeau’s concept of everyday and devious practices, I use Tim Cresswell’s *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (1996), which discusses transgressive urban practices, such as graffiti writing. Cresswell explains how transgressive urban practices are intimately connected to the time and place they originate, but he also demonstrates how ideology and power relations underlie the construction of these practices as deviant and destructive. I believe his work can be used to explain why immigrant and aboriginal dwelling practices and mobility have been regarded negatively on the Western

Canadian prairies. Cresswell depicts graffiti's emergence out of specific circumstances: the poverty and breakdown of urban services in New York City in the 1970s. He explains how the media, the government, and the public simultaneously developed discourses constructing graffiti as filth, contagion, and violence (37). Picking up on threads found in Williams and de Certeau and using the theory of Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva, Cresswell makes connections between metaphors of impurity and disease, fears of disorder, and ideas concerning appropriateness of places with regards to graffiti. He discusses how dirt and obscenity "represent not just a spoiling of the surface, but a problem that lies much deeper (in terms of hygiene, for instance), graffiti as dirt is seen as a permanent despoiling of whole sets of meanings—neighborliness, order, [and] property" (40). To the city authorities in New York, graffiti presented a threat and disruption of accepted spatial boundaries, order, and economy; therefore, the authorities resorted to extreme measures to remove it. Cresswell contends that graffiti's "otherness" was "connected to its assumed source, the ethnic minorities of urban New York" (43).

In Western Canadian literature, immigrants, Aboriginals, and the urban poor have been depicted as dirty and immoral, and their mobility is framed as being out of place and deviant because it threatens colonial meanings and order. Urban immigrant and Aboriginal writers are aware of the power imbalance and ideology underling such depictions. They challenge and subvert these depictions in their writing by portraying transgressive practices and by using devious literary tactics to propose alternate meanings of home, community, and property. For example, it is not a coincidence that Adele Wiseman's and George Ryga's urban characters are involved in prostitution and boxing promotion and live in dilapidated homes or hotel rooms. However, Cresswell emphasizes that it is important to understand the social, political, and economic context of these transgressive practices because they can be co-opted by those in

power to their own ends.

Finally, Cresswell's discussion of graffiti in 1970s New York allows him to propose a definition of place that I find particularly helpful in reading Western Canadian spaces. He writes that place has "no natural and transcendent meaning. The meaning of a place is the subject of particular discourses of *power*, which express themselves as discourses of *normality*" (original italics, 60). I believe that place is important for making sense of how people generate meaning and navigate their world, but, like Cresswell, I think we need to frame our analyses differently. He urges that rather than asking what does a place or action means, we should ask "How do places (and actions in them) get the meanings they do? Who gets to say that certain meanings are appropriate?" And, eventually, "Whose world is it?" (61). By answering Cresswell's questions, critics can counteract essentialism, nostalgia, and stereotypical associations of the country and the city and read prairie places as networks of power and resistance where Western Canadians, through their everyday practices, exercise their agency.

In addition, I use Cresswell's theories of mobility to understand the everyday dwelling and mobile practices of Western Canadians. I believe mobility is underrepresented in literary criticism of prairie literature and that it is too often read as threatening and deviant, and I challenge the idea that mobile places and people lack community and culture. In his book *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World* (2006), Cresswell acknowledges the contributions of de Certeau, Bakhtin, and Deleuze and Guatarri. He utilizes the figures of the flâneur, the nomad, the exile, and the tramp in his theory about the contested meanings of mobility. Like the country and the city, with their positive and negative associations, for Cresswell, the ideas of "[m]obility as progress, as freedom, as opportunity, and as modernity, sit side by side with mobility as shiftlessness, as deviance, and as resistance" (1-2). Cresswell defines movement and

mobility by comparison: “Movement is the general fact of displacement before the type, strategies, and social implications of that movement are considered” whereas mobility contextualizes movement politically, socially and economically (3). Cresswell proposes that mobility is not in opposition to place but rather “the dynamic equivalent of *place*” (3) and that mobility has the same capacity as does place for establishing connections and making community and home.

As Williams does for urban and rural spaces, Cresswell traces the political and social history of mobility as far back as Middle Ages. He demonstrates that meanings of mobility were affected by historical context and reflected the ideologies of the powerful as well as the fears of the rest of the society. For example, except for the very few, “to be mobile in the Middle Ages was to be without place, both socially and geographically,” a state to be feared and avoided at all costs (11). Cresswell relates how the understanding of mobility as progress and freedom emerged in relation to Galileo’s science, William Harvey’s anatomy, and Thomas Hobbes’ political philosophy. He concludes that “mobility is central to what it is to be modern,” but at the same time it threatens the established order (20). Cresswell also sees mobility’s universality as making it susceptible to various ideologies, and it is in a political context that Cresswell explains how fear and suspicion of mobility has become entrenched in many social sciences using the term “sedentarist metaphysics” (26). The phrase comes from an anthropologist Liisa Malkki “who, in her writing on refugees, has noted a tendency to think of mobile people in ways that assume the moral and logical primacy of fixity in space and place” (26). Cresswell argues that many social scientists study identity in terms of property, homemaking, and place. In contrast, they view mobility as pathological, dysfunctional, and involving “a number of absences – the absence of commitment and attachment and involvement – lack of significance. Places marked by an

abundance of mobility become placeless” (31). However, mobility, as much as cultural production and home making, has been responsible for the creation of modern society’s social and economic systems, especially in Western Canada. In fact, Cresswell makes an example of the railroad (one of Canada’s national symbols) as an agent of mobility because it was essential in changing goods into commodities and expanded the capitalist markets (6).

In contrast to sedentary metaphysics, Cresswell proposes his own metaphysics of flow, mobility, and becoming. He gives examples of mobile metaphysics in other disciplines and proceeds to individual case studies, but he does not provide an overarching framework, which makes the practical application of his theory challenging. Cresswell does suggest that anthropologists study “routes” and how people construct identity through travel. He calls for getting rid of moral judgments of mobile populations. Cresswell advocates that, instead of comparing mobility to place, it would be more worthwhile to compare various mobilities to each other, for example comparing Aboriginal mobility to that of Eastern Europeans in Western Canada. In my thesis, I argue that sedentary metaphysics work side by side with colonial ideologies in prairie criticism to discriminate against Aboriginal, Metis, and ethnic European immigrants in Western Canada and to represent these mobile groups as lacking connection to place, people, and culture. Although it may only be a beginning of the kind of work Cresswell imagines, I read the Western Canadian prairies as mobile places. I present prairie inhabitants as mobile citizens, who play their part in the networks of resistance and domination by dwelling, walking, and other everyday practices. Thereby they saturate the places they inhabit with unique sets of meanings and desires.

To connect urban, postcolonial, and postmodern theory, I use Jane M. Jacobs’ *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (1996), which redresses the lack of postcolonial theory

that explicitly deals with cities. Besides constructing a theoretical framework, Jacobs looks at sites in London, England as well as in Perth and Brisbane, Australia to show the diversity and adaptability of imperialism. More importantly, she examines “the complex range of postcolonial formations which unsettle, negotiate and at times overtly resist imperialist structures of power” (11). Her Australian perspective is relevant as both in Australia and Canada the indigenous population’s access to social and economic power and resources continues to be disproportionately low. In these countries, colonial contact and its legacy cannot easily be relegated to the past. Jacobs describes the history of colonial cities, which were built to administer the flow of resources back to the cities in the empire as well as to segregate, regulate, and control indigenous populations. Jacobs argues that the constructions of difference and privilege established during colonization are still evident in contemporary postcolonial cities. These ideas manifest in inner-city racial segregation, nostalgic preservation of imperial historic buildings, and primitivism and commodification of indigenous culture. However, Jacobs also sees such cities’ unpredictable and random nature and diversity as providing opportunities to upset imperial organizations “through stark anticolonial activities, but also through the negotiations of identity and place which arise through diasporic settlements and hybrid cultural forms” (4).

In her work, Jacobs also considers and evaluates the pioneering postcolonial theory of Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) and Homi Bhabha’s in *The Location of Culture* (1994). While she acknowledges the criticism that Bhabha’s theories lack historical specificity, underplay the agency of the colonized, and rely on Eurocentric models, Jacobs finds Bhabha’s concept of hybridity relevant and important to her understanding of how people operate, dwell, and express their identities in colonial urban spaces. She writes: “Hybridity is not just a mixing

together, it is a dialogic dynamic in which certain elements of dominant cultures are appropriated by the colonised and rearticulated in subversive ways” (27-28). Jacobs’ understanding of Bhabha’s notion of hybridity complements de Certeau’s practices of everyday life and Cresswell’s transgressive practices, all of which allow colonized and underprivileged citizens to exercise their agency and express their meanings and desires within the colonial urban spaces they inhabit. Jacobs also sees productive “cross-fertilization” of postcolonial and postmodern theory which is known for “deconstructing Master narratives, unsettling binaries and admitting marginalised knowledges” (29). Both theories pay “attention to the relationship between discourse and power, the socially constituted and fragmented subject and the unruly politics of signification—the workings of irony, parody, mimicry” (29). Even so, in spite of postmodern strategies’ ability to subvert colonial discourses, Jacobs cautions against minimizing the significance of the racialised colonial and neo-colonial structures of power which continue to define colonial cities and their citizens’ identities (31). My attention to historical, social, and economic circumstances in which postmodern and devious literary practices take place will prevent my work from falling into such a trap.

Finally, Jacobs discusses how, in contemporary cities, debates around identity and culture are filtered through notions of tradition and authenticity versus commodification and appropriation. Such debates are especially relevant in the work of immigrant and Aboriginal writers whose work is not judged on its merits alone but on its ability to depict their “authentic” culture and identity. I contend that Western Canadian cities continue to be affected by their colonial beginnings. Even so, in these spaces, negotiations of identity by mobile immigrants and Aboriginal populations result in particularly contradictory, innovative, and devious perspectives, everyday practices, and literatures.

Building on de Certeau's deviousness in everyday practices and Bhabha's and Jacobs' notions of hybrid negotiations and resistance, I employ Mikhail Bakhtin's theory about language in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981). Like the above theorists, Bakhtin analyses literature within a larger social and political context. His theory of how language works in the structure of the novel supplements the theories I have already explored and provides new ways to read the conflicting forces in western Canadian urban literature. First, Bakhtin's idea of language as a dynamic system that is in flux is essential to my reading of urban prairie writing. In the introduction to *The Dialogic Imagination*, Michael Holquist describes Bakhtin's notion of language as "a ceaseless battle between centrifugal forces that seek to keep things apart, and centripetal forces that strive to make things cohere" (xviii). Bakhtin explains that disciplines such as philosophy of language, linguistics and stylistics (including literary or what he calls "correct language") work toward a simplified notion of unitary language (270). These disciplines oppose the random, messy, and loaded nature of everyday language and speech (270). According to Bakhtin, although these disciplines attempt to systematize, unite, and centralize aspects of language, the centrifugal forces in language work to destabilize and challenge such ordering and compartmentalizing. For him, the destabilizing and decentralizing forces in language are more tenacious than the unitary forces. Holquist writes that the centrifugal or decentralizing forces "determine the way we actually experience language as we use it—and are used by it—in the dense particularity of our everyday lives" (xix). Bakhtin's ideas about language are encouraging for the marginalized ethnic and Aboriginal prairie writers, who attempt to use the language of the colonizer to unsettle established meanings and order. The conflicted nature of language allows them to express alternate meanings, to negotiate structures of power, the canon, and established ideologies, and to possibly establish new economic and social systems.

Furthermore, Bakhtin's central idea of heteroglossia complements Cresswell's theory that places embody competing mobilities and that they are dynamic networks of dominances and resistances. Rather than defining it, Bakhtin is better at illustrating at how heteroglossia actually works in the novel. However, like Holquist, I believe that heteroglossia is related to Bakhtin's "extraordinary sensitivity to the immense plurality of experience" (xx). For pragmatic purposes, I define heteroglossia as the term that encapsulates the contested nature, plurality, and specificity of language in a particular time and place. Holquist explains heteroglossia's social and circumstantial nature: "At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions—social, historical, meteorological, physiological—that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (428). Holquist also adds that polyphony and carnivalization are "two specific ways in which the primary condition of heteroglossia manifests itself" (xix). It is difficult to define heteroglossia because, for Bakhtin, heteroglossia is closely related to the concept of dialogism or the dialogic nature of language. Bakhtin explains that speech "finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value.... It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgements and accents" (276). Holquist adds that through a dialogic viewpoint everything "is understood, as a part of a greater whole—there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (426); therefore, it is important in literatures riddled with difference and unequal power relations to read for plurality, interconnections, and dialogue of meanings. Even though Aboriginal and immigrant writers use the English language and participate in its colonial discourses, their situations at the time of their writing, their values, their

cultural perspectives, their social realities, and their experiences enter the dialogue to alter and contribute to a larger system of meanings.

The intellectual and physical environment of Western urban space contributes to “devious” literature. In urban prairie texts experimentation appears in contest and dialogue with more traditional themes, literary traditions, and techniques. Bakhtin’s theories support pluralism and hybridization in language, which means that language has the capacity to destabilize institutional, legal, and organizing forces and to condition change. His theories of dialogism and heteroglossia propose that texts are historic yet dynamic, in dialogue with all types of discourses. Most importantly, like many of the urban prairie texts I explore, Bakhtin’s work proposes that writing and literary texts are foremost social, involved and involving. Literature takes part in the endless dialogue and can connect people and create communities. I argue that once urban literature enters the dialogue, it can alter prairie criticism. In my dissertation, Bakhtin’s ideas provide a theoretical umbrella for a politically and historically engaged literary criticism.

More directly, in my first chapter, I use Raymond Williams’ theory of the constructed nature of rural and urban spaces to read three canonical, realist prairie novels: Frederick Philip Grove’s *Settlers of the Marsh* (1925), Martha Ostenso’s *Wild Geese* (1925), and Robert J.C. Stead’s *Grain* (1926). I briefly explore the traditional readings and established criticism of these novels, which place man in conflict with nature and explore the detrimental results of this conflict on human relationships. I show that even though actual depictions of urban spaces in these novels are rare, the ideas and constructions of the city have always been there. I discuss how Grove, Ostenso, and Stead construct rural places and people in Western Canada by comparing and contrasting them with urban characters and ideas. In addition, I argue that these constructs are driven by political, social, and economic agendas related to colonization and

power based on race, gender, and labour. Finally, I read Douglas Durkin's novel, *The Magpie* (1923), to highlight themes of competing mobilities, of political and social engagement, and of community. I argue that Durkin's characters, through everyday practices of walking and dwelling, negotiate economic, social, and political institutions of the city and propose alternate meanings of community and labour.

I use Tim Cresswell's theories of "sedentary metaphysics" and mobility in the second chapter of my thesis to argue that, even though Winnipeg is a place of competing mobilities and impermanent dwelling practices, its inhabitants are capable of making significant connections to each other and to their environments. Using Cresswell's theory of mobility and mobile practices, I examine *Winnipeg Tribune* journalist Lillian Gibbons' articles on Winnipeg homes from the 1930s to the 1970s. I examine her work compiled in *Stories Houses Tell* (1978), *My Love Affair with Louis Riel* (1969), and found in the City of Winnipeg Archives. Gibbons combines popular journalism and history to examine Winnipeggers' dwelling practices. She gives an impression not only of a mobile population but also of mobile buildings, city spaces, and neighbourhoods. Gibbons suggests that, in spite of its conservative institutions, Winnipeg, as an example of Western Canadian urban space, changed dynamically, if not always for the better. Gibbons' writing is not literary, but it provides an urban voice during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, when it was rare to depict prairie cities in Western Canadian literature. Her journalism shows how Western Canadians made meaningful connections to the urban spaces, their material possessions (or lack thereof), and their Aboriginal, Metis, or immigrant pasts through the recollections of their homes. I argue that a better understanding of the everyday practices of Western Canadians leads to a literary criticism that takes into account these mobile practices and their historical and cultural context when evaluating and drawing conclusions about Western Canadian urban

writers' techniques and purpose.

My third chapter focuses on the immigrant urban experience on the prairies. Ralph Connor in *The Foreigner* (1909), and Ukrainian-Canadian Vera Lysenko, in *Yellow Boots* (1954), were among the first to set significant parts of their novels in Winnipeg. Reading for urban themes and elements in these earlier texts allows me to show the progression of urban themes and techniques in the Hungarian-born John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death* (1957), the Jewish-Russian-Canadian Adele Wiseman's *Crackpot* (1974), and the Ukrainian-Canadian George Ryga's *Night Desk* (1976). These three works are set entirely in prairie cities and take to task the seedy, dark world of outcasts, prostitutes, and fight promotion in Edmonton and the immigrant struggles, prostitution, and grittiness in Winnipeg's North End. While I interrogate the work of ethnic scholars and utilize de Certeau's ideas of everyday practices, I argue that *Crackpot* and *Night Desk* use intertextuality, wordplay, and transgression to depict cities where resourceful immigrants form communities and connections that are beneficial in negotiating both their ethnic and Canadian identities and cultures. I propose the works of Lysenko, Marlyn, Wiseman, and Ryga portray communities that are not modeled on patriarchal social order and labour that is not related to amassing material possessions and land but can be artistic and personal.

My final chapter explores the innovative poetic works of Marvin Francis, *city treaty* (2002) and *bush camp* (2008). I argue that these two texts, and much of Francis' unpublished work at University of Manitoba archives, internalize the devious everyday practices of walking, graffiti writing, and loitering. These texts translate these urban practices into literary heteroglossia, intertextuality, fragmentation, and playfulness that accurately represents modern Western Canadian experience from an urban Aboriginal perspective. In his writing, Francis

explores urban, rural, and in-between spaces on the prairies. In context of de Certeau's and Jacobs' theories, I contend that he is more successful than other prairie and Aboriginal writers before him in negotiating a hybrid identity, home, and culture by focusing on mobility and the interconnections between urban and the rural spaces, rather than on their differences. Francis' explorations of labour and art are especially relevant for those who are looking for ways to move past an understanding of dwelling on the prairies as being a bleakly antagonistic and alienating struggle against nature. Studying Francis in this context removes him from the marginalized perspective in which much of Aboriginal writing is still read today. I assert that Francis' writing refuses to be read as nostalgic; instead, it is engaged, mobile, and forward-looking and has the potential to transform and alter the understanding of Western Canadian writing and cities.

In my thesis, I argue that mobile, urban, and postcolonial readings can open prairie criticism to new ways of understanding Western Canadian literature and the diverse peoples who dwell and move through rural and urban spaces on the prairies. In the future, I hope the theoretical approach to mobility I am developing will be used by critics in other disciplines and contexts. As there is no clearly established or recognized Western Canadian urban criticism, I have utilized unconventional and canonical texts in new ways in order to bring recognition to urban writing that has existed and continues to develop on the prairies, while critics struggle to find meaningful ways to engage with it. My reading of Western Canadian urban writing through everyday mobile practices and devious writing techniques offers a new and much-needed approach to this discipline.

Chapter 1

The Urban and its Manifestations in Prairie Novels of Grove, Ostenso, Stead, and Durkin

In this chapter, I look primarily at Frederick Philip Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh*, Martha Ostenso's *Wild Geese*, and Robert J.C. Stead's *Grain* and, unlike other critics, I argue that while actual depictions of urban spaces in these novels are rare, the ideas and constructions of the city are present. I explore how Grove, Ostenso, and Stead construct their rural spaces and protagonists in contrast to the urban. I conclude my discussion by looking at a less well-known urban realist text by Douglas Durkin, *The Magpie*. While Durkin's text uses the rural to critique the urban, I focus on his exploration of public, social, and political spheres of prairie life and the diversity, mobility, and community he presents in his depiction of Winnipeg. My readings of these novels are influenced by Raymond Williams' argument in *The Country and the City*—that urban and rural places are constructed in opposition to one another to serve economic and political interests of those in power. To minimize nostalgia and the workings of ideology, Williams puts in historical context both the positive and negative ideas that have come to be associated with rural and urban spaces: the country as natural and virtuous or as backward and limited, and the city as a place of culture and learning or as a place of vice and artifice. Williams explains how certain negative constructs of the city emerged. He brings up how the social process at the beginning of the seventeenth century was seen as a contagious infection from the city where the traditional order was “invaded and destroyed by a new and more ruthless order” (49). These early modern ideas of depravity, corruption, and ruthlessness are still associated with urban spaces in the twentieth-century work of Canadian prairie novelists Grove and Durkin.

Williams' cultural analysis and conclusion that “[t]he exploitation of man and of nature, which takes place in the country, is realised and concentrated in the city” (48) supports my own

understanding of the interconnected nature of urban and rural spaces. In Western Canada the fur trade, rural agriculture, and resource industries were, and continue to be, intimately connected to the kinds of cities that have grown and the services these prairie cities have developed to serve the needs not just of their own populations, but also those of the surrounding territory. In his work, Williams argues that the comparison between the city and the country is often used to prevent a closer analysis of the existing political and economic power imbalances, and he views capitalism as the key factor in producing today's rural and urban spaces all over the world.

In my analysis of these early realist prairie novels, I argue that, even though Grove, Ostenso, Stead, and Durkin complicate readings of the wicked city versus the innocent country, they deliberately contrast the urban and the rural to create tension and drama in their novels. I believe such juxtaposition of the city and the country, with the predominant depiction and emphasis on the rural, has resulted in prairie cities being associated with shiftlessness and homelessness, liberal morality and sexuality, as well as aestheticism and artificiality. As a result, rural spaces are constructed as natural and pure; rural identity becomes heroic; and rural characters possess integrity, self-discipline, and heightened moral codes. In Canada, such meanings of rural and urban places also conveniently perpetuate ideologies of regionalism, nationalism, and imperialism. The prairies are read as places where virtuous and hard-working Western Canadians participate in farming, physical labour, and resource extraction. Their work contributes to the wealth of Central Canada, as it once did to the British Empire. In contrast, other Western Canadians who engage in, among all other sort of wickedness, white-collar and artistic work typically associated with the city are devalued. However, I argue that the presence of urban characters in these realist novels proposes alternative meanings of mobility, family, and economy. Unlike critics who discount the main characters' retreats to the city as unconvincing,

as McCourt does for Stead's novel, I contend that the urban elements in these texts make the choice to leave for the city as viable as the choice to remain on a farm.

Most readings of Grove's *Settlers of the Marsh* center on the book's protagonist, a Swedish immigrant, Niels Lindstedt and his futile struggle with the land in a pursuit of happiness and wealth. Dick Harrison in *Unnamed Country* writes that, "[t]he more Niels struggles to master his environment, the more isolated he becomes" (116). Furthermore, Niels fails to achieve his desires because he ignores the internal conflict "between his conscious will and his own nature" (115). While some critics have proposed biographical, immigrant, and feminist readings of *Settlers of the Marsh*, none of the recent work addresses urban themes. In my discussion of the novel, I focus on the urban characters of Mrs. and Mr. Lund and Clara Vogel. In contrast to Niels and other rural characters, these urban representatives contribute alternate sets of meanings of labour, fulfillment, and community in the text.

From their introduction in the novel, the Lunds challenge the patriarchal organization and productive economy of the farm. Their home stands in stark contrast to the most successful farmers of the settlement, the Amundsens. In fact, Niels Lindstedt compares the Lunds' "shabby, second-hand, defunct gentility of it all, and the squalour in which it was left, with the trim and spotless but bare austerity of Amundsen's house" (31). To the innocent Niels, the decay, shabbiness, and disorder in their environment mirror Mr. and Mrs. Lund's concern with appearances and their dishonest behavior. During Niels' first visit, the Lunds establish their connection to the city and display their pretensions to higher education. They embarrass each other when Mr. Lund lies about going to the Agricultural College and Mrs. Lund about being a trained nurse: he fed pigs at the college, and she scrubbed floors at the hospital (35). The Lunds are also associated with urban economy because, due to their debt, their crops have to be sold

cheaply in advance, and they survive on wage labour typically associated with urban economy. It is Mrs. Lund's post office position and her winter work in the city as a domestic servant that provides for the family. This arrangement leads to a power imbalance whereby Mrs. Lund becomes the mobile head of the family and Mr. Lund, in order to save face and get out of more work on their farm, claims infirmity and blindness. Niels is disturbed by the role reversal in their marriage, especially when he witnesses a physical fight, during which Mrs. Lund overpowers and scolds her husband: "[S]he bowled him over as if he were a child. He lay on the ground, groaning" (59). Lund's shirking of physical labour and lack of success as a farmer infantilizes him and his entire family. Niels comments: "The trouble with [the Lunds] was that they were children one and all" (39). Niels' industry, accumulation of resources, and physical labour in comparison to the Lunds' unstructured, opportunistic, and wasteful economy makes him appear all the more hard-working and heroic.

Mr. Lund's lack of wealth translates not only into lack of physical strength but, more importantly, into a lack of humanity and integrity. While he is, in the early part of the novel, merely incompetent and child-like, in the later part of the novel he becomes much more sinister. Niels describes Lund at his daughter Olga's wedding: "There he sat, shading his eyes; and a singularly insincere smile played about his decaying teeth. It was almost visible that he hated to see his daughter go: it meant two strong arms less on the place, not of his own" (50). Lund is described as lacking fatherly love, being physically repulsive, and artificial in all emotional displays, to the point that he becomes grotesque and unnatural. Niels again brings up his falseness when Lund attempts to borrow money describing his voice as "grating with artificial cordiality" (72). When Niels will not lend him the money, Lund manages to harass Old Sigurdson into giving him a loan. Not unlike other characters associated with urbanity that I

discuss later in this chapter, Lund uses his verbal skills and devious mobility to shirk responsibility. He disappears, leaving his family in debt and ruin.

Although Mrs. Lund is shown in a better light than her husband is, her personality and generosity is portrayed as being artificial, foolish, vulgar, and associated with urbanity. First, this is reflected in her appearance: “Mrs. Lund wore a glaring waist which would have drawn attention in a city and seemed entirely out of place where she was” (25). Instead of being honest about her poverty and resigning herself to it, Mrs. Lund masks and resists it by dressing flamboyantly, or by lying. Her future son-in-law, Lars Nelson, claims that her generosity to her neighbours in spite of her own poverty is, in part, for show: “Whatever she has and anybody needs or wants she gives away and goes without herself. But it isn’t merely good nature; it’s part thriftlessness and part ostentation” (37). Even though Mrs. Lund’s wage labour and ‘wasteful’ generosity makes her popular and welcome among Swedish, German, and English immigrants and provides her with access to the community and its human resources, Grove suggests that the Lunds’ lack of success on the farm matters more. The Lunds, in comparison to rural, hard-working, and honest Niels, are depicted as wasteful, being too concerned with appearances, and lacking moral integrity. I believe, however, that their resourcefulness and adaptability allows non-capitalist economy and non-patriarchal meanings of family to enter the text. Finally, if we agree with Williams’ assertion that the innocent country and wicked city comparison often obscures larger issues, I would argue that both Niels’ and Lunds’ prairie economies caution the reader. There are human costs of mobility and of the exploitation of land and accumulation of resources, in both rural and urban spaces.

Before Clara Vogel comes to embody artificiality, mobility, indecency, and other urban evils in *Settlers of the Marsh*, Niels is attracted to her emotionally and physically, precisely

because she is unlike the other farm women. Both in her dress and manner Clara Vogel embodies a femininity, boldness, gaiety, and mobility rarely seen in farm women who perform physical labour. Niels remarks on her vitality and confesses that “beside her, the others looked neuter. But more than anything else her round, laughing, coal-black eyes attracted attention. They were in everlasting motion and seemed to be dancing with merriment” (29). In the above scene, Niels also admits that he feels protective of Clara. However, at Nelson’s wedding, he is threatened when Clara’s flirting, overt sexual advances, and verbal prowess challenge his perception of being in control of his own body: “He felt as if somebody were piling a crushing weight on him.... His chastity felt attacked. He wanted to get away” (52). Clara provokes contradictory feelings of attraction and fear in Niels, both reinforcing his masculinity as well as challenging it.

Before he meets Clara, Niels meets—and sets his affections on—Ellen Amundsen, and he inevitably compares his feelings for Clara to his feelings for Ellen. Like Niels, Ellen is hardworking, enjoys the physicality of farm work, and although she is not as emotionally and sexually naïve as Niels, she exemplifies rural virtues in the text. While in retrospect Ellen may seem the better partner for him, early in the novel there is much more ambiguity and contradiction when it comes to what both Ellen and Clara offer Niels and the kind of activity, mobility, and productivity they inspire in him. He admits his conflict between “the desire to see Ellen and to have her quietly, critically gaze at him out of her eyes as if she were searching for something in him; and the desire to see, and to listen to, the other woman whose look sent a thrill through his body and kindled his imagination” (57). Both women are shown as having something unique to offer, and in the first third of the novel Niels’ choice between them is less clear-cut. However, Niels’ first choice ends up being Ellen because of her usefulness as a partner in the economy and labour of the farm. Ellen’s suitability is evident in

Niels' two visions of a homestead. In the first dream, he imagines being with Ellen: "Himself and a woman in a cosy room, with the homely light of a lamp shed over their shoulders, while the winter winds stalked and howled outside and while from above the pitter-patter of children's feet sounded down" (45). In comparison, later in the novel, he imagines being in the homestead with Clara: "No pitter-patter of little children's feet sounded down from above; nor were they sitting on opposite sides of a table in front of a fire-place. He was crouching on a low stool in front of the woman's seat; and he was leaning his head on her" (56). Clara offers him herself in an emotional and sexual economy that Niels does not understand, and this vision of himself makes him feel submissive to her. On the other hand, Niels believes that his relationship with Ellen will include children and offer him a sedentary future in Canada. Ellen seems to offer him a vision of himself as a patriarchal homesteader who stays put and achieves material wealth, integration, and acceptance both through his own work and through the work of his wife and their children. However, once Ellen refuses his proposal, Niels, unable to make his vision of the future a reality, falls to the temptation of Clara and, symbolically, to the temptations of the city.

In the book, Niels' powerlessness and uneasiness in the town parallels his unease with Clara. His first description of the town is of a train station where, as Niels aptly surmises, townspeople await an incoming southern train in "a pretext for joining a crowd or for meeting those of the opposite sex" (86). Although he seems to take little pleasure in mobility, excitement, and the possibility of contact, Niels becomes aware of the diversity of people getting off the train. Among the crowd he spots a "lady dressed in the height of fashion" in a "mannish summer coat of 'tango' colour; and a wide lace hat" who turns out to be Clara (86-7). When they agree to have dinner at the hotel, Niels is not only made uncomfortable by Clara, who is "pointedly sweet and measured" (88), but he is also rude to the rouged and powdered waitress to whom he does

not know how to speak. Niels relates that in town he feels at the mercy of others:

Store-keepers tried to sell him what he did not want; at the hotel they fed him with things he did not like. The banker with whom he had sought no interview dismissed him at his own imperious pleasure.... And the attitude of superiority everybody assumed.... They were quicker at repartee—silly, stupid repartee: and they were quick at it because they did not do much else but practise it. (89-90)

At the farm Niels' ownership of land, physical strength, and hard work are highly valued, but in town he is vulnerable to chance meetings and to strangers who can outmaneuver him with quicker tongues and wit. Clara belongs to these smooth talking townspeople, and on his trip home he begins to describe her as an artful woman (90).

The next time Niels goes hauling wheat to Minor with Hahn, he experiences artfulness combined with depravity. Outside the town's hotel, the two farmers meet three smiling women whose heavy makeup and bright, fashionable clothes prompt Hahn to say to Niels, "They're from the city" and "One of them'll be your wife...for an hour or so" (118). Niels responds: "I don't intend to marry a whore" (118). This leads to a later explanation by Hahn that he prefers to visit prostitutes in town so his wife does not find out, but that such women exist "in every district. If there weren't, the boys wouldn't leave the girls alone. There's one in yours" (118). This incident resonates with Grove's portrayal of Clara's movement between the country and the city, her ease with "artful" city ways, and her stylish clothes and use of makeup. Without too much subtlety, Grove associates Clara Vogel with the city prostitutes, even before the reader learns of her past. In this context, the stage is set for Niels' next visit to town during which he runs into Clara. This time he is unable to physically resist her; he has sex with her; and he marries her out of obligation (119-121).

The correlation of urbanity with art, artificiality, luxury, pleasure, and immorality as opposed to the naturalness, hard work, self-discipline, and sincerity of the country comes to a head in *Settlers of the Marsh* when Niels brings Clara, now Mrs. Lindstedt, to live on his farm. Almost immediately the urban clashes with the rural as Niels is unable to understand the aesthetic pleasure Clara takes in the furnishings she brings from the city to fill her bedroom. They include a wide bed with satin covers, a dressing table with large mirrors, “a chiffonier filled with a multitudinous arrangement of incomprehensible, silky and fluffy garments,” and “a set of sectional bookcases filled with many volumes” (127). Niels is also shocked by, and objects to, the art Clara brings into their house because it includes reproductions of famous nudes. Even the possible excitement of city nightlife, the mobility and outlet it offers for self-expression and engagement with others, seems lost on Niels when he wonders why

[Clara] often became gay, sometimes reckless when the day was gone. ‘I wish there were a show around the corner,’ she said once; another time, ‘If only there were a street nearby, with electric lights and a crowd of people rolling along; with faces to watch and clothes to criticise....’ (136).

Clara longs for the sense of excitement and engagement that entertainment, cultural activity, and the movement of people can provide in an urban environment, or what Williams describes as a “sense of possibility, of meeting and movement, [which] is a permanent element of [his] sense of cities”(6). While Clara’s interest in nightlife, art, and literature are incomprehensible to Niels, it is in relation to farm work that his profound dissatisfaction with his wife begins to show. In his eyes she becomes artificial, inhuman, and contemptuous.

From the beginning of their union, Niels is annoyed that any aspect of his marriage, even sex, should interfere with his work. He finds Clara’s desires distasteful and complains that they

rob him of his sleep (126). When Niels suggests that Clara could look after the garden and the cows, Clara responds with, “I *will* try to keep house for you. But that is all I can undertake. I am not the kind of woman that works” (129). She is mainly speaking of physical farm labour because she worked as a salesgirl in a book and art store before her first marriage (128). Clara explains the kind of labour she dislikes: “To wash dishes, to sweep a house...to do anything on time, regularly, as a routine, day after day: all that is a horror to me” (155). Repetitive, physical work frustrates and bores her, but, because on the farm this type of labour leads to large-scale production and accumulation of goods, it is viewed as the work that matters most and Clara is vilified and demonized in the novel. Like Mr. Lund, Clara comes to embody the falseness, decay, and immorality associated with the city. This is visible in the text through Niels’ description of her appearance and her use of makeup. For example, when Niels discovers that Clara colours her hair, he uses it against her to re-envision her as artificial and unnatural (132). Soon after, he catches her asleep in bed, without her makeup, when she is supposed to be getting his breakfast ready: “Another face looked out at him, like a death’s-head: the coarse, aged face of a coarse, aged woman, aged before her time... aged, not from work but from...what?” (133). By portraying Clara as lazy, unnatural, and decaying, Niels can justify distancing himself from her, avoiding his responsibilities toward her as a partner, and escaping into physical work on the farm.

While it is impossible to fully take on the complexity of Clara and Niels’ relationship within the limits of this chapter, Clara’s choice to go to the city in order to test Niels’ feelings reinforces her connection with the city in the novel. When Niels asks her what she did in the city, she replies, “I amused myself. I had a good time. In the company of men who appreciate me. Men who are not dumb brutes. Men who seek me for the sake of what I am.... they incidentally desired my body also” (154). Realigning herself with culture, art, amusement, and pleasure,

Clara desperately tries to make Niels understand that her skill at conversation, interest in literature and art, and passion and desire for life are appreciated by others. Clara brings forth a different economy in the novel, one that focuses on pleasure and desire rather than bearing children, farm labour, and accumulation of natural resources.

Clara explains that it was her desire that made her agree to marry Niels and that she thought this desire would allow her to be with him even when everything about living on the farm was abhorrent to her:

I wanted you for years before I had you. Love is a fleeting thing with me. Desire is not...

As I said, I thought I could waive my need for stimulants. I could spin myself into a cocoon with reading. I thought I could force myself to do the work which is indispensable in a house. (155)

The passage above illustrates that Clara views temporary labour as means to achieve immediate and individual emotional and physical needs. She does not see value in continual work for gradual self-improvement or a greater purpose in the accumulation of resources. In many ways Clara and Niels both desire self-fulfillment and security, but Clara's individualist and non-permanent—what many would consider wasteful—economy does not fit the nationalist and patriarchal agenda so prominent in these early realist texts. The contrasting sets of meanings play themselves out in her actions, and Clara becomes unfaithful to Niels when she comes to understand his indifference toward her. Regarding the third time she goes to the city, she reveals, “I threw myself away, body and all. It was nothing to me. I thought it would mean much to you” (156). In this case Clara's words do not just challenge Niels' masculine pride, or his rigid belief that sex outside of marriage is wrong, but she also challenges the economic principles of ownership, accumulation, and preservation which are a part of Niels' worldview. By throwing

herself away, Clara defies Niels' ownership of her, and she spoils and contradicts the productive and reproductive sets of meanings around bodies and labour especially that of women.

In his criticism of *Settlers of the Marsh*, Laurence Ricou reads the book as a dynamic and honest portrayal of man's fallible nature and limited understanding of the world and views Niels as responsible for his destruction:

he insists on marriage when he wants only physical satisfaction; he is completely unable to understand the attractions of the town; he is insensitive to his wife's need for respect as a woman and companion; he cherishes a simplistic moral code which demands that crime must be mightily punished. (49)

While I agree with Ricou, I believe an urban reading can offer more. Even though in the end Niels murders Clara and she is excised from the novel on every level, an urban reading does not just provide a condemnation of patriarchal and misogynous economy in the novel. An urban reading of Clara and the Lunds also introduces alternate sets of meanings of labour, gender, and community in the novel. Although these are not necessarily less problematic than the original assumptions, these meanings imply there are alternatives to these patriarchal and capitalist systems.

Like *Settlers of the Marsh*, most conventional readings of Ostenso's *Wild Geese* focus on Caleb Gare, the main rural character, and his attempts to dominate his family and the prairie landscape. As recently as 1998, Deborah Keahey, in *Making It Home*, concentrates on Caleb's actions in context of imperialist expansionism, and writes that Caleb forms "his own identity through the digestion of all that is Other, the past, the land, cultural difference, the bodies and spirits of his wife and children... to make a home in the prairie space he must possess it, expand himself to contain it" (17). However, I look at the way Ostenso, in her predominantly rural novel,

uses the urban to contrast with and define the rural. Interestingly enough, unlike Grove's book, which is told from the perspective of its rural protagonist Niels, *Wild Geese* is chiefly framed and contextualized by its urban outsiders. These outsiders to Oeland, the northern Manitoba community, are Lind Archer, the newly arrived school teacher staying with the Gare family, and Mark Jordan, a city architect with local connections who comes to rest his frayed nerves and to work on the farm of the Hungarian Anton Klovacz. While Ostenso's free ranging narrative enters the minds of the novel's rural characters as well, it is Lind and Mark who, through their reflections and conversations with each other, assess the community, and with their mere presence incite characters, such as Judith Gare, to rebellion. In the book, Judith comes to represent an in-between character who longs for what the city has to offer and rejects the negative aspects of her rural experience, in part, because of her interaction with Lind and Mark.

The characterization of Lind and Mark confirms the division between the rural and the urban. Ostenso emphasizes their education, appreciation of art and music, articulateness, and civility in contrast to the rural characters' closeness to nature, emotional severity, physical work, and lack of self-expression. In *Wild Geese* as in *Settlers of the Marsh*, the rural space is constructed as natural, true, and physical, but, in *Wild Geese*, it is re-contextualized in terms of the book's antagonist Caleb, whom Lind describes "as harsh, as demanding, as tyrannical as the very soil from which he drew his existence" (33). Lind feels stifled by her interactions in the Gare household, and she longs for "someone of her own world to talk with, someone to whom she might escape from the oppression of the Gares" (38). As the novel progresses, Ostenso sets up the city's other-worldliness in comparison to the country. Without actually describing it, Lind and the other characters come to refer to the city as "the world beyond" (47), "another world" (53-4), "outer world" (158), or "lovely, gentle world where Lind came from" (201). This

othering of the urban space allows the book to retain its focus on the rural at the same time as it points to what the rural world lacks. One of these lacks that Mark identifies is emotional diversity and expression. Describing the farmers he has met in Oeland to Lind, Mark remarks that “[t]hey seem to have no confidence in the soil—no confidence in anything save their own labour. Think of the difference there would be in the outward characters of these people if the land didn’t sap all their passion and sentiment” (77-78). Lind and Mark are the urban foils for the rural characters, and they articulate the essentialist idea that the setting predominantly defines people’s actions: the hard physical labour associated with farming stifles rural inhabitants’ faith, passion, empathy, and self-expression. This emotional austerity stifles the mobility and agency that would allow them to act and break out of their honourable but passive and mute existence. However, I believe a closer reading of the urban characters Lind and Mark and even of the in-between characters Judith and Sven Sandbo—can lead to a richer discussion and can propose alternate sets of meanings of labour, home, and community not just for urban but for rural spaces on the prairies.

Like Clara in *Settlers of the Marsh*, the characterization of Lind in *Wild Geese* is used to perpetuate the division between the urban and the rural. Lind is a foil to Caleb and, more importantly, to the Gare women, Caleb’s wife Amelia and his daughters Ellen and Judith. Ostenso carefully depicts how Lind’s appearance and city clothes, her regard for reading and learning, her recognition of spirituality and fine things in others, and her appreciation of sensual experiences and beauty stand in contrast to the other women in the book. When Judith watches Lind undress, she is struck by her “trim outer clothing” and “dainty silk underthings” (18). Amelia hates the girl, if only for a moment, noticing “how pretty she was in a blue silk gown that seemed to make her hair even more lustrous and her skin more delicate” (36). Not only is Lind as

beautiful as a piece of art, she is also sensitive to the beauty around her, from her recognition of Judith's spirit and vitality to her appreciation of nature when she speaks of spring in the north to Fusi Arnason (31). Unlike her rural counterparts, Lind's relationship to the land is not antagonistic or exploitative, and she is able to appreciate the beauty of the rural world and to articulate her wonder. Lind's speech and articulateness draws attention to the fact that speech is a viable resource on the prairies, and that it can be used to subvert the existing economy.

In addition, Lind becomes a culturalizing and civilizing influence upon the Gare daughters. She is indignant when Caleb denies Judith further education, and she tells his older daughter Ellen, "You are bright, intelligent—with a little education you could make a great deal of yourself" (72). Lind's education gives her access to choose the sort of labour she performs, and in the end what allows her to influence the Gare women is her social, financial, and physical mobility. She does not have to work physically like them, and she is not solely dependent upon Caleb. Even though she is worried that he might spread rumours in order to damage her reputation, Lind can freely come and go in his household, and she admits that she could escape the oppression of the farm and visit the city over the summer break were it not for her attachment to Mark. In contrast to the rural characters, Lind exemplifies someone whose relationship to the land is not just based on economic and practical concerns, someone who is appreciative of art, beauty, and intelligence, someone who is able to articulate her desires, and someone who has the mobility, spirit, and resourcefulness to make them real.

While at times Lind's description of Judith Gare is problematic and patronizing, their friendship is central to the themes of *Wild Geese*, and Judith's struggle to understand herself more deeply and articulate her desires more effectively can be read as a negotiation between her rural and urban selves. When Judith speaks out against Caleb's frugality and mistreatment, Ellen

remarks that Judith has “been that way ever since the Teacher came. As if nothing here is good enough for her anymore” (38). Lind’s presence and mobility allow Judith to envision a different existence for herself, and Lind becomes a catalyst for her rebellion against her father. Because of Lind, Judith also begins to better understand her relationship to the land, her sexuality, and her emotional and intellectual needs and desires. In the woods, Judith undresses herself near a pool of water, lies in the damp earth, and reveals that, “[t]he fields that Caleb had tilled had no tenderness, she knew. But here was something forbiddenly beautiful, secret as one’s own body” and that it was Lind’s “delicate fingers [that] had sprung a secret lock” in her (53). Judith recognizes that in comparison to her father’s exploitive farming practices, a less antagonistic and more nurturing relationship with the land is possible. She also comes to understand herself, her passion and rage, not just in context of the land or the rural environment: “She recognized in herself an alien spirit, a violent being of dark impulses in no way related to the life about her” (90). While it is framed in ominous and negative context, Judith articulates the idea that it is not just her environment but her own personality and free will that determine her choices and actions. Judith contradicts the determinist idea that prairie landscape creates only a one type of person.

Unlike her sister Ellen, who dismisses Lind’s attempts to connect over music and books, Judith hungers for the beauty, the emotional release, and the self-expression that music can offer. Judith hears a waltz on the phonograph while visiting Mark with Lind and Sven. When she watches Lind and Mark dance, she is overcome by her emotions and reveals: “It was all so new to her, and yet it seemed part of the thing to which she belonged” (95). Judith discovers that the rural and the urban do not need to be at odds and that physical labour does not make one incapable of enjoying beauty or music. Even so, in the book, Judith struggles to overcome the

idea that she is only capable of physical farm labour, which her father's mistreatment and exploitation has ingrained in her. Doubting herself, Judith internalizes the natural and animalistic rural stereotypes:

She, Judith, was just an animal, with an animal's passions and sins, and stupid, body strength. And now she held an animal's secret, too. She was coarse, brutal, with great beast-breasts protruding from her, and buttocks and thighs and shoulders of a beast. What was she to be comparing herself with Lind? (188)

Nonetheless, it is precisely this comparison that makes Judith see that she is more like Lind than she is like her brutal father. In the end, Judith's pregnancy gives her the strength and motivation to leave the farm. At this moment, Judith articulates what makes her different than the rest of her family: "She belonged to another, clear, brave world of true instincts, she told herself. They were muddled, confused souls, not daring to live honestly. Living only for the earth, and the product of the soil, they were meagre and warped" (224). In another contradictory move, Judith associates her actions and move to the city with true instincts and honesty in comparison to the farm work of her family, which is, in her interpretation, not noble but misguided and false. Judith's exposure to Lind's urban perspective allows her to voice her own difference and critique the kind of economy that puts the accumulation of resources above aesthetic pleasure and emotional fulfillment and growth. Ultimately, Judith leaves with Sven for the city to follow the promise that Lind's urbanity offers her—access to art and music, education, and the possibility of constructing alternate meanings for work and family.

Mark is the other main urban character in *Wild Geese*, and like Lind, his mobility, education, and bearing is emphasized. He is shown as hard-working, generous, and honourable in his behavior toward Anton and his family. However, through Mark's depiction in the novel, a

more critical understanding of urbanites as artificial, self-important, and fragile or effeminate comes through. Lind first learns about Mark's generosity, good humour, and education from the Klovacz children, who tell her that along with a gramophone and books he has "brought them candy from the city and had let them search his pockets and keep all the silver they found there" (61). When Amelia, Mark's birth mother, sees him, she is suitably impressed and describes him as "a man of the world... education lay on his brow like a light" (87). However, at the same time Amelia worries that appearances are important to Mark and his city friends and that his self-esteem will be damaged by the knowledge of his true parentage, so she chooses to keep it a secret from him (88). At the end of the novel, both Amelia and Lind "protect" Mark from the revelation of his parentage, implying that urban men are more sensitive, weak, and prideful when it comes to their reputations. Earlier in the novel, Mark reinforces some of these ideas when he criticizes his city acquaintances, an architect named Arbuthnot, his wife, and their friends—"who would leave their tracks on pavement, if self-importance counted for anything" (48). While Mark critiques the self-importance and pretensions of his city friends, the novel does not completely exempt him from these same sins. The pomposity in his speech is evident, for example, when he talks about Sven: "Sven is a decent chap, too. Funny how you see interest in classes up here that you would ordinarily not think about. Too much civilization is a stifling thing" (107).

Still Mark's self-importance—associated with his urbanity—is overshadowed by his honourable behaviour toward Anton. Mark encourages Anton not to sell his hay to Caleb who is trying to swindle the dying man (176). When Anton dies, Mark stands up to Caleb who uses his authority and social standing to keep Klovacz from being buried in the local Protestant cemetery because he is a Catholic (204). In comparison to Caleb, Mark's education, vulnerability, pride, and generosity constitute a different type of masculinity and economy in the novel. His belief in

fair labour and social practices and in more equitable relationships between men and women are visible in his treatment of Anton and Lind.

In *Wild Geese*, the comparison between the urban and the rural, in part, constructs Caleb Gare and his behaviour as being determined by the severity of the rural prairie landscape. However, I argue that the urban characters are more than just foils for Caleb. Regardless of their self-importance or their pride, Lind and Mark offer Judith and Sven examples of lives that value art and education, lives in which physical labour does not take precedence over mental labour, and lives in which one is free to leave in search of a more fulfilling life or to choose to stay. The alternate meanings of work, family, and relationships to the land that the urban characters offer not only critique Caleb's actions. These characters offer alternate models to the patriarchal organization of the family farm and to the "imperialist expansionism" that Keahey discusses.

Unlike *Settlers of the Marsh* and *Wild Geese*, which emphasize a superficial comparison between the urban and the rural, the earliest mention of the city in Robert Stead's *Grain* sets up the interdependence of the country and the city. In support of Williams' point that urban and rural spaces and economies are intimately connected, a passage in *Grain* implicates Jackson Stake, the patriarch of the family farm, in urban growth. Stead explains that the movement of people to the city would not "have taken place but for the application of machinery to land, so that now one farmer may raise enough wheat to feed many hundreds of city dwellers" (41). In spite of this important insight, the novel, for the most part, resigns itself to using its urban characters as foil to Gander, Jackson's second-oldest son, the novel's rural hero. As with the aforementioned texts, prairie criticism focuses on Gander and his relationship to the land. For example, Ricou views Gander as being "pulled between the traditional love of the land and the fascinating world of machinery and technology," and he sees Stead as depicting "nobility

inherent in the average man and in the commonplace event” of farming (34). Harrison’s reading of Gander is slightly darker. He views Gander’s use of machines as a way of exerting power over the land and believes this causes his “alienation from the land” (107). In a recent article, Jenny Kerber reads *Grain* as an environmental critique of industrial agriculture and military and agricultural discourses. Kerber believes Stead critiques the discourses which encouraged overproduction and justified the costs of the First World War on “the home front—to the environment, to human relationships, and to the creative self” (59). Again, however, none of these critics deal with urban motifs. In my reading of *Grain*, I focus on the urban characters and the alternate meanings of labour, mobility, family relations, and masculine and feminine roles that they propose in the text.

Very early, the novel sets up a conflict between Jackson Stake and his oldest son Jackson Jr., or Jackie, who comes to embody negative urban characteristics. Jackie is frustrated on the farm because, in spite of his work, he does not get any wages and needs to ask his father for all of his spending money. He complains, “every time I want a dollar I got to go bowin’ and scrapin’ to you, just like Mother does” (43). Jackie tells his father he is considering leaving for the city. His father tries to dissuade him by comparing the social safety net and labour security of a family farm with the instability of wage labour. Jackson Senior tells Jackie that he will be eating at a soup kitchen and that “there ain’t no jobs chasin’ young fellows like you up and down the streets o’ Winnipeg in January” (42). After Jackie leaves for the city, Jackson explains that he would have given him part of his land once he married “an’ a team, an’ the use o’ the machinery until he [could] buy his own” (45). However, Jackie’s labour would only have been rewarded if he became a farmer, stayed put, got married, and participated in the patriarchal and sedentary world of his father.

By comparing Jackie to Gander, Stead implies that mobility and lifestyles that do not involve homesteading are lazy, shiftless, and rootless. Unlike Jackie, Gander thinks nothing of hard work on the farm and does not want to get paid for his labour. In contrast to his brother, Gander's obedience to his father and devotion to farm work, at least at the beginning of the novel, are constructed as embodying family loyalty and co-operation: "He loved to work in the fields with his father, for there they worked as man and man... They were friends and chums together" (59). Gander identifies with his father and the masculinity defined by physical labour to such an extent that he comes to oppose Jackie and his mother out of loyalty to his father. Like Jackie, Gander's mother questions Jackson's complete authority to dispose of the farm income as he pleases. She also questions the organization of the farm when she complains and requests help with housework, livestock, and gardening. While Stead chooses to show Gander in a favourable light, one could argue that it is not loyalty that motivates him but selfishness. In preserving the status quo, Gander avoids the household labour that he dislikes and supports a patriarchal order, which may eventually lead to him inheriting the family farm. By associating his brother Jackie with his mother in the novel, Gander also makes him appear as weak and effeminate. These images and ideas are reinforced later in the book when Jackie returns. Instead of redeeming himself through physical work, he eventually comes to avoid it and takes off again when it turns out that young Reed Beach is his illegitimate son. His refusal to participate in the economy of the family farm and his rejection of his own son, even though this might be best for the boy, becomes further evidence of Jackie's moral weakness.

The construction of urban space as a place of shiftlessness, homelessness, and moral corruption is furthered by the characters of the hired men in the novel and by Bill in particular. After Jackie leaves for the city, Jackson is forced to hire a stranger, but

by the freeze-up the hired man was paid off and turned at large. What might become of him through the winter months of unemployment was no concern of Jackson Stake's; possibly he would drift into Winnipeg where, after his money was spent, a compassionate city would see that at least he had something to eat. (55)

Again Stead's narrative voice sets up the interconnectedness of the urban and the rural economies. City organizations helped support these indispensable farm labourers once farmers like Jackson let them go. The novel briefly complicates the view of Jackson Senior by displaying some of his greed and states that "[t]he practice of paying for labour of any kind was a new one to Jackson Stake, and he took to it rather badly" (55). However, Stead reasserts Jackson's authority and good character through the foil of Bill whom he hires at the local hotel, to help with the harvest. While Bill is considered a satisfactory worker and while he is trusted with most of the labour—even with the children—the reader is told "Jackson Stake, scenting his weakness—a weakness from which he himself was not entirely immune—so planned the work of the farm as to keep Bill's feet out of the paths of temptation" (62). Although Bill is an adult man, like Mr. Lund in *Settlers of the Marsh*, he is constructed as childlike and morally weak. The narrator implies that Bill's stories might be responsible for corrupting young Gander. However, one could argue that Bill's ideas are simply connected to his opposition to the system, which equates morality and social standing with wealth and ownership. When he speaks of women, especially those of his acquaintance who are "workin' girls," Bill says, "Believe me, they're all alike, but they don't all have the same chance. They've set up a system by which a man or a woman that's got a home can be decent and respectable—although they don't all do it—but what about us folks that haven't got any home?" (63-4). While Bill, like Jackie, leaves for the city and is viewed negatively in the end, his example provides an alternative mobile lifestyle and a

subversive critique of the Stake household and of the patriarchal economy that serves the nation and the empire. The existence of Jackie and Bill allows characters like Cal Beach and Geraldine Chansley, more positive urban representatives, to be introduced in the second half of the novel.

It is through the character of Jerry—or Geraldine—Chansley, a city cousin of Elsie Fyfe's, that Gander comes to be interested in what urbanity has to offer. Jerry appears late in the novel and is compared to Josephine Burge or Jo, Gander's childhood sweetheart who has married Dick Claus, Gander's classmate who served in World War I. It is through his relationship to these two women that Gander and his labour are re-contextualized in the book. Earlier in the novel, the reader learns that "Jo was proud of Gander, but she was not blind to his defects. He was awkward; he was shy; the boundary of his world was little further than his father's farm... She wanted to see the stoop taken out of his back, the hitch out of his gait, the drag out of his legs" (106). Jo, for the first time in the text, articulates the social faults associated with Gander's farm labour. By the time Geraldine appears in the novel, Gander's farm work comes to be seen as more of a rut, a routine, rather than as a rewarding occupation. This idea continues with the references to Gander's furrow, which refers to a long line or depression dug in the earth by a plow for planting seeds. Stead explains, "[f]or Gander the furrow was that unending routine which encircled his father's farm. It was a routine from which he had no desire to be disturbed" (141). The furrow references along with the descriptions of a physical stunting of his body lead to a vision of Gander as a broken work horse, sticking to a task because he has neither the imagination nor the motivation to get out.

In comparison to Gander, Jerry represents aesthetic beauty and artifice, the positive and negative aspects of art and intellectual labour. At first Gander hears Geraldine but is not seen by her: "a ripple of laughter caught his ear. It arrested him; he could not place the voice. There was

music in it... something in that laughter had dug into strange, unused cells in his being. It was happy, spontaneous laughter” (142). From her very first appearance, Jerry comes to be associated with music, art, and pleasure; her laughter is free, joyful, and spontaneous in comparison to the oppressive linearity and routine of Gander’s farm work. When Gander goes driving to seek her out, he nearly runs her over as she collects flowers in the middle of the trail. Gander extends an invitation for a car ride. For all her boldness, Jerry expects Gander to open her car door. Jerry’s appreciation for beauty and her spontaneity is undercut by the artificiality of her mannerisms and expectations of chivalry when it comes to courting. Even so, Gander’s sincere response proves that he believes Jerry’s appreciation of nature is genuine because at sunset “he found himself wandering over the fields... He watched the light climbing up the sky, touching tatters of cloud into golden flame. She had said the sky was beautiful. For the first time Gander watched it—and wondered” (151). Jerry’s attention to and appreciation of her surroundings forces Gander to think of the land around him as more than a place of labour and exploitation.

Furthermore, by comparing himself to Jerry, Gander realizes that wit and intelligence can be as powerful and disarming as his physical strength. When he first meets her, Gander complains that Jerry is “much too smart” and “too quick with her answers” (147). Jerry and Gander’s conversation in the car, which is on some level quite trite, is described as a verbal match. It leaves Gander pondering: “[W]hen the thought had finally taken shape it landed on him with the impact of a prize-fighter’s fist. She had got the information she wanted, without evasion or delay, but she had not so much as told him her name!” (149). When he realizes Jerry has outmaneuvered him, Gander recognizes his own social deficiencies and the upper hand Jerry’s wit, conversation, and social skills give her. Although Gander still imagines impressing Jerry with some kind of physical display, Stead depicts the extent of Jerry’s influence over Gander by

using metaphors associated with labour: “The walls of his furrow were beginning to crumble” (150). Gander’s perception of his farm work and his world is challenged, and he becomes vulnerable. This evokes the reader’s sympathy. It is also at this moment in the text that Gander reaches out to his mother, not by offering her twenty dollars like he does earlier in the novel, but by volunteering to help her plant cabbages. This offer is so unexpected it shocks her. There is a strange irony in the text because, when his mother speaks to Gander about Jerry in the garden, she says, “A very nice girl, no doubt. But these city girls—they ain’t cut out to be a farmer’s wife. Did you see her hands?!” (151). She does not realize that it is actually the city girl that has inspired Gander’s first real act of empathy and kindness towards her in the novel. By upsetting the power dynamic and meanings associated with physical labour, Jerry helps Gander, even if it is only for a moment, to envision women and their labour in more equitable terms.

Finally, it is through Jerry that the ideas of urban and rural, intellect and physical strength, artificiality and authenticity come to a head in *Grain*. Jerry asks Gander if he has ever wanted to go to the city and tells him about her brother who owns a garage: “[I]f you decide to come, I will speak to him to give you a job. Then you can spend your nights at a technical school, and brush up—all those things you have neglected so much, Gander” (164). While her motives may be selfish and the assumption that she knows what is best for Gander is presumptuous, Jerry accurately assesses Gander’s weaknesses. She is by no means being unkind when she tells him, “That is what you lack here, Gander... You don’t see enough people. New people give you new ideas, and make life more worth living. Don’t you see? They draw you out” (164). Unfortunately Gander feels hurt and insulted by Jerry’s suggestions and he physically restrains her, verbally threatens her, and drives her away. Through Jerry, like Clara in *Settlers of the Marsh*, a different economy enters *Grain*—that of bettering oneself through one’s education,

through social interaction, and through art. Unlike the economy of the homestead, which cloaks the ideology of working for the nation and empire toward greater resource production or extraction, “working” on oneself is individualistic and selfish, but in ecological terms it is much less destructive than farming. In part because of Jerry, Gander begins to be more introspective and mentally engaged with the world and with the people around him. Finally, Jerry’s proposal of a different life for Gander allows the reader to imagine it as well.

Cal Beach, another in a string of hired men, also forces Gander to rethink his relationship to the land, his family, women, and labour. In comparison to Gander, Cal possesses “self-confidence in meeting strangers which is not often acquired in the furrow” (157) and is introduced as the stereotypical over-educated, neat, effeminate, urban character in the novel. Cal is even not ashamed of his university education. Once Gander realizes that Cal has no ill intentions and works as hard as the rest of the men, he regards him as his father did Bill the hired man, an eccentric figure to be indulged. Cal’s characterization becomes more complex when his eccentricities begin disrupting the organization, order, and the power dynamics of the family farm. Gander finds Cal helping the women in the kitchen turning the handle of the cream separator (161); Cal also surprises Gander by telling him that women on the farm have too much work to do (162). This upsets Gander, since Cal implies that he and the other men could contribute to the housework as well. Keahey, in *Making It Home*, points out that, while in most prairie fiction the work in the fields is considered a man’s place and the interior of the house is controlled by women, Stead “challenges Gander’s rigid gendering of domestic space and activities” through Cal (22). Furthermore, Cal frustrates Gander by reorganizing the farm: “With the aid of a team and skids he lined up the two portable granaries and the blacksmith shop, making a sort of street which Gander and Grit appropriately christened ‘Beach Boulevard’”

(166). Gander attributes Cal's neatness to artifice, concern with appearances, and his sister Minnie's influence, which is in line with Cal's feminization in the text. While these may be annoyances at first, Gander perceives what is at stake for him in his family embracing Cal's initiative in everyday chores: "[H]e was being ousted out of the premier position on his own father's farm" (166). Any change to the farm challenges the old order and threatens Gander's privileged place in it. However, once Cal marries Gander's sister Minnie, clears non-farmable land, builds his bungalow there, and moves out, he stops being a threat to Gander's position on the farm and Gander becomes more receptive to his ideas.

By acquiring land, not for farming but in order to have somewhere to live and write, Cal expands Gander's idea of home and labour, especially since he is both successful and happy living off his mental and artistic labour. At first Gander is skeptical of Cal's and Minnie's venture calling their lifestyle "disgracefully leisurely":

There were times, it is true, when he found them at work—or what they called work—Cal dictating and Minnie pounding her typewriter, but these days were rare occasions; mostly they... would sit and look at the sunset on the lake with something in their eyes that puzzled Gander beyond words. (188-9)

Cal and Minnie do not only appreciate the beauty of their surroundings, but their creative labour depends on them being inspired by nature. In addition, Gander is taken aback by the emotional and physical affection between Cal and Minnie, and the "brazen" freedom with which they display it. Gander is shocked by the possibility of equality in work and desire between men and women, when the conditions of intense physical labour do not necessitate strict gender divisions. Stead shows that he becomes more receptive on the personal level to what Cal, his sister Minnie, and their lifestyle has to offer. In fact, when Gander realizes that his physical labour on Jo and

Dick Claus' farm can only go so far in helping them, he uses his brain rather than his muscles and asks Cal if Dick can stay with him and Minnie. He explains: "[I]f he was down here by the lake, where things are pleasant an' quiet, an' away from the worry of the farm, it might go easier with him" (196-7). Gander realizes that there is therapeutic and aesthetic pleasure to be gained from living by the lake and by being surrounded by affectionate and caring people.

Finally, Cal's mobility and his response to Jackie's return to the farm—and the possible challenge to Reed's paternity—establish him as a chivalrous example for Gander. While the novel is slightly awkward in the execution of this subplot, Cal ends up stealing away in the night and leaving the Stake farm, only to return once Jackie is gone. Later in the text, when Gander is struggling with his love for the married Jo Claus, Minnie reveals Cal's story. She tells Gander that Jackie, their eldest brother, is Reed's father and "[f]or Reed's sake, Cal left here, that the secret might be safe" (204). Minnie sees how troubled her brother is because he has placed himself in such a difficult situation by getting so intimately involved with Jo and Dick. She says, "If I were you, I would get out, Gander. The world is big. If you get out you may forget—at least, you will get away from the edge of the precipice. If you stay here you will always be in danger of slipping over" (202). Gander is resistant at first, believing that running away is cowardly, but he reevaluates his options upon hearing Cal's story. He asks Minnie, "Sometimes it is the brave man that runs away, isn't it?" (204). Gander's leaving for the city is not shown in the most positive of lights. He leaves, in part, to preserve his and his family's reputation. By using Cal as a model, though, Gander's action and mobility is constructed as a moral choice for him. Unlike the shiftlessness of Jackie and Bill, Gander's goodbye note to Jo implies that he plans to pursue work in the garage and the life anticipated for him by Jerry.

In his 1969 introduction to the novel, Thomas Saunders writes that the "loss of Gander's

one love [Jo Burgess] should have led him to lose himself, not in the city, but in his other love, the land. The contrived, unnatural ending, with the introduction of alien characters to make it possible, is the most serious flaw in *Grain*” (x). I disagree: Gander’s choice to leave for the city, in contrast to his earlier desire to remain on the farm, is not unbelievable in light of the urban characters’ influence on him in the text. Whereas Gander may never become quite as “urban” as Cal, Call allows Gander to see the possibility of a more aesthetic and spiritual relationship with the land, the possibility of a more equal and affectionate romantic relationships with women, and the possibility of a mobile and less routine existence for himself. A determinist reading of urban and rural spaces on the prairies assigns blame to the city and the country for “creating” men like Jackie and Gander. By proposing different meanings of mobility, labour, family, and community, urban characters in rural settings complicate established readings of these spaces and introduce possibilities for altering the economies and relationships with land that are both destructive to the environment and to the people who occupy it.

Unlike his contemporaries Grove, Ostenson, and Stead, Durkin in his 1923 novel *The Magpie* explores the public, social, and political aspects of Winnipeg. He uses the rural to construct his urban space and to critique urban society’s economy and political corruption. However, I focus on the way he depicts and develops the prairie city as a place of diversity and mobility in his novel. *The Magpie* is set in Winnipeg after World War I, and the action begins when Craig Forrester, an ex-soldier, returns to his seat on the Grain Exchange and marries into a wealthy industrialist’s family. Craig quickly becomes disillusioned with the way his father-in-law, Gilbert Nason, and other wealthy citizens attempt to curb the city workers’ protest and unionization. In his discussion of *The Magpie*, the historian Robert Wardhaugh admires Durkin’s realist portrayal of Winnipeg and explains that the prairie economy was experiencing a bust

during the early twentieth century: “The Great War brought temporary relief to agriculture but while the rural areas in the Prairie West were bolstered, the urban areas continued to suffer economic decline” (60). Originally a farm boy, Craig longs for what the country has to offer, but he feels the city is where he belongs if he is to contribute to the new society and the future he fought for as a soldier. When he reminisces about the farm at the beginning of the book, he tells himself “those were the symbols of the old life... The world had changed—it could never be the same” (8). The implication here is that the rural prairies, with their stereotypically more innocent and natural way of life, are politically and socially stuck in the past.

However, at least at the beginning of the novel, Craig voices the interconnected nature of the rural and urban agrarian prairie economy. The novel makes it clear that Craig’s work on the Grain Exchange is continuing the work of his father, John Forrester, who stayed on the farm but wanted Craig to “learn the business of bringing the wheat to the people of other lands that can’t grow it the way we can” (6). The narrator, via Craig, also describes the Grain Exchange as being intimately related to the labour on the farm:

Here was the great funnel through which a billion bushels of grain passed annually from the broad acres of the Canadian prairies on its way to the nations of the world... Once inside the walls of the building, a man became a citizen of the world, he saw from afar the hands of millions uplifted and heard from beyond the seas the ceaseless cry for bread.
(44-5)

The above passage appeals to humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism and conceals the nationalist and imperialist nature of capitalist production; namely that, the few, farmers and industrialists alike, who feed the many exploit natural and human resources for profit. In “The Red Peril and the Canadian Bourgeoisie: Durkin's *Magpie*,” Kenneth James Hughes explains that Craig’s

“acceptance, however, of economic inequality, with the simultaneous insistence on social equality, makes him the middle-class representative, the type, of forces of social democracy” (5). Such an understanding of Craig’s character explains why he does not interrogate the connections between the urban and the rural economies. Durkin’s urban-rural comparison again positions the fault in the environment: in Durkin’s case the fault lies in the prairie city and its corruption of human beings. Referring back to Williams’ theory, such a comparison allows Durkin to avoid taking on directly the imperial and capitalist economies, which at the time led to hardships for both urban and rural prairie inhabitants. However, in contrast to Grove, Ostenso, and Stead, who avoid taking on politics and the public and social life of Western Canadians, Durkin constructs an urban prairie space which is diverse and mobile and which allows prairie citizens to make connections and communities, in a way that the rural inhabitants in rural novels do not.

The Magpie shows post-World War I Winnipeg to be a dynamic and a divided place. Wardhaugh explains that in 1919 Winnipeg was fractured in terms of class and ethnicity. For the British elite and middle class populations, “[t]he antagonism aimed at the ‘foreign element’ that had flooded in as a result of the immigration boom was combined during wartime with the distrust of ‘enemy aliens’” (60). With the Russian Revolution of 1917, this antagonism was transferred onto the eastern Europeans who were described as “Bolsheviki” (60). Durkin represents the spectrum of such fears and attitudes through his characterization of men like Reverend George Bentley, Gilbert Nason, and Lasker Blount. While class and ethnic divisions manifest themselves in the layout of the city and its organizations, such tensions and mix of people make for diverse social and political experiences. In *The Magpie* this diversity, especially when it comes to class, is depicted through the various homes in the text. The first example is the home of Millie and Jimmy Dyer, a working class sergeant who served overseas with Craig. The

house is located down Portage on the western outskirts of the city and Craig describes it as “a little green and white ‘shack’” with a small porch and a vegetable and flower garden (16). Among the sparse wicker furniture, “[a] tall vase full of fragrant peas stood beside a book on the table in the middle of the room” (17). In spite of their poverty, the Dyers appreciate aesthetic beauty and demonstrate that in the way they keep their house and garden. Craig is impressed by their ability to make the most of their circumstances and by Millie’s frankness about her experience during the war. He relates that their house has a feeling of home which he “had not experienced in many another house where he had been welcomed among luxurious surroundings” (17-8). Soon after, Craig visits Gilbert Nason’s three storey Crescentwood home. The house contains a large lawn, wide drive, a small wing, three-car garage and sloping backyard to the river (22). To Craig the home characterizes the Nasons: “The windows in the house were all large and Craig had never seen the shades drawn, even at night. It was as if Gilbert Nason wished it to be clearly understood that he had no secrets to keep from the world” (22-23). Their house is open to Winnipeg’s British elite and the Nasons are forthright about their wealth and privilege. The leisure and pleasure Craig experiences in the Nasons’ home is very different from the austerity encountered in rural homesteads of Grove and Ostenso. Both in Nasons’ city house as well as their cottage in Minaki, Craig attends parties and formal dinners and meets a wide range of respectable Anglo-Canadians with whom he debates his political views and ideas.

Geographically and class-wise, in between the dwellings of the Dyers and the Nasons is the centrally-located apartment of Jeannette Bawden. At Jeannette’s place, Craig is first introduced to “ethnic” immigrants: the Jewish 24-year-old, Rose Barron, and her companion Ivan, a young Russian whose last name Craig cannot pronounce. In spite of Durkin’s depiction of Rose and Ivan as rather naïve, the book establishes Jeannette’s apartment as a place where

ethnic bohemians, left-wing intellectuals, and even social democrats like Craig are welcome. During his first visit, Jeannette invites Craig to her sanctuary, which contains along with comfortable chairs and modern art, a bookshelf covered by an Indian sari. The volumes on the shelf include “books by Wells, a novel by Turgenev, Tolstoi’s “Anna Karenina”, More’s “Utopia,” a book of essays by Havelock Ellis, a half a dozen modern writers whom Craig had never heard of” (164). The eclectic, leftist selection of books represents Jeannette’s contradictory and complex character and the diverse community she creates around herself. When his wife, Marion, withdraws from him, Craig and his childhood sweetheart, the artist Martha Lane, spend much time visiting Jeannette and one of the leftist agitators and leaders, Amer. As Craig explains, “the four had spent glorious evenings in Jeannette’s apartment, the two men talking over the latest developments in the strike, but more particularly in the world at large” (267-68). In comparison to rural homes, Durkin’s depiction of these diverse urban dwellings shows a common thread of social and political engagement and discussion among their occupants. Even in their modest home, Jimmy and his wife are outspoken regarding the social and political issues that affect their economic well-being. Such conversation does not necessarily lead to resolutions, but it is the first step in establishing connections and building a community with others that have the same concerns.

What allows Craig to meet and make contact with others is the mobility and congestion of the urban environment. Working in downtown Winnipeg allows Craig to fortuitously encounter both random strangers and people he knows. Durkin skillfully shows how Craig’s chance encounters, while he is driving or while he is walking, fuel his inner debates and motivate him to take action in the novel. When he meets Jeannette in the street, Craig is contemplating how his marriage and spring weather have diverted his attention from the tense political situation

locally and overseas: “It was difficult, walking down the street under the warm sun, to realize that all was not well with the world... It was thus he argued with himself as he walked westward along the avenue thronging with late afternoon shoppers” (95). Jeannette reiterates his concerns by stating, “You used to be worried about things, but you’re getting over it like all the rest of them” (96). Craig’s encounter with her prompts his social conscience. Furthermore meeting Martha Lane, when Craig is on the way to lunch at his favourite restaurant, provokes him not only to commit to visiting her and her father out at the farm but also challenges his feelings toward his wife. Craig reveals that after his lunch with Martha he felt “a twinge of apprehension at the thought of her meeting with Marion [his wife]. Martha had understood about the ‘odds-and-ends’ box” (126); Marion, on the other hand, had not. Craig’s encounter with Martha, and their continuing acquaintance, adds to his dissatisfaction with his wife’s wastefulness, materialism, and preoccupation with social standing above all else. Crossing the bridge over the Assiniboine River one evening, Craig has a chance meeting with Amer, whom he befriends later in the novel. The meeting is not only humorous but intrigues and makes Craig more receptive to future encounters with him.

One of the most comprehensive examples of walking in the city occurs when Craig wanders down Main Street with its pawn shops and second-hand stores and follows a crowd to Victoria Park, where a meeting of Winnipeg’s radicals takes place. As de Certeau explains in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Craig enlarges the realm of possibilities by taking previously untraveled paths and detours in the city. As he does so, he encounters men “of a very different sort. They had come with their wives and had crowded without ceremony into the little park to await the speeches from the platform” (250). Craig is a stranger among them, but he feels the people who surround him in Victoria Park are more “human” and “idealistic” than the

businessman at the Fort Garry Hotel. Craig identifies with their idealism, and he feels a sense of communion in their ranks. In *The Magpie*, the crowded, urban environment is a dynamic place which has potential for change and action. It is in Victoria Park that Craig hears Amer speak his mind, and, after listening to his words, Craig is enflamed to seek him out and to take action: “[h]e pressed forward....out of the way!...dug his elbows into any who pushed in upon him from all sides... pulled others from before him....reached the platform and mounted it” (255).

Craig’s mobility and walking in the city is also how he comes upon evidence of his wife’s affair with Claude Charnley, his co-worker on the Grain Exchange. Driving and walking are also the ways Craig deals with his anguish when he can no longer deny her unfaithfulness. After he escorts Marion home, Craig asks Amer to stay with him as he drives for hours through the city to arrive back in downtown Winnipeg. Instead of being comforted or distracted by the sights, Craig’s distress is only exacerbated when, at Portage and Main, he runs into Millie Dyer who has turned to alcohol after her husband’s death (306). Mobility and the urban throng with endless possibilities for contact do not provide Craig with peace. Half-mad, after his final confrontation with Marion and Claude, Craig again wanders down Main Street. There among the mob in front of the City Hall, he sees Ivan, the young Russian he met at Jeannette’s, being attacked by a mob. Craig “leap[s] forward into the thick of a struggling mass” and gets knocked down and beaten himself (321). At the end of the novel Craig loses his wife, his money, his seat on the Grain Exchange, and his community. Amer is deported and he and Jeannette Bawden leave for England. Consequently, after he is released from the hospital, Craig chooses to return to the farm and Martha Lane. However, I argue that Durkin’s depiction of Winnipeg has positive consequences. *The Magpie* portrays the prairie city as a space where political and social awareness—as well as discussion and action—are possible. While characters like the Blounts,

the Nasons, and Claude Charnley use some of the urban structures and organizations to support their political, social, and economic dominance, characters such as Jeannette Bawden, Amer, Ivan, and Rose Barron propose alternate values, communities, and ways of relating based on economic and social equality. In contrast to the rural spaces of Grove, Ostenson, and Stead, Durkin presents the prairie city as a space where diverse and mobile populations interact daily, and through that contact they affect each other's perspectives and beliefs, enlarge realms of possibilities, and build communities with others.

Urban spaces have been neglected in prairie literature for much too long and the overwhelmingly rural readings of Grove's, Ostenson's, and Stead's early canonical texts have contributed to this neglect. Even though Grove, Ostenson, and Stead set out to write novels that portray rural characters and depict their labour, they also give voice to urban characters that challenge the economy of the family farm and the sedentary and patriarchal lifestyle it offers. Durkin, on the other hand, uses the rural to critique the prairie city he depicts. However, his greatest contribution is constructing the urban prairie as a diverse, mobile, and conflicted space with a fertile social and public life and intellectually and politically active citizens. The lack of recognition for what early urban texts like Durkin's *Magpie* have to offer also continues to be a problem. Recognizing that the urban and the rural are constructed and are often used to conceal workings of imperialism and capitalism is essential if prairie writing is to continue to evolve and be relevant in twenty-first century. Change can occur if we find new models especially those that utilize previously marginalized sets of meanings proposed by women, aboriginal peoples, and urban prairie dwellers—for a different social order and other economies on the prairies.

Chapter 2

Winnipeg's Competing Mobilities: The Depiction of Homes and Dwelling Practices in the Work of Lillian Gibbons

It is inevitably easier to find, trace, and read the material residue of human-made places— buildings, streets, bridges— than it is to understand how people move, how they understand their roles, and the meanings they assign to the places they inhabit. We read and make sense of places every day as we move through them, yet we seldom stop to acknowledge the amount of reconstruction, speculation, and imagination such readings entail. Cities, and the places in them, are made, constructed, and imagined. From the 1930s to the late 1960s, Winnipeg residents let Lillian Gibbons, a newspaper columnist writing for *The Winnipeg Tribune*, into their homes to collect and write stories about the buildings they lived in. She listened as the family members shared memories of their homes, their parents, and special occasions. In return for their trust, she appealed to the inhabitants' vanity and curiosity by writing "society page" articles that described their mantles, oak staircases, and ornamental cupboards. At the same time, Gibbons was able to convey how Winnipeg's inhabitants constructed and imagined the places they occupied, and she was able to reveal their higher aspirations for self-knowledge and their need to understand their histories, their cultures, and their world.

Gibbons' writing does not aspire to literary greatness; it is full of details that overwhelm and do not necessarily enlighten the reader. However, when she is at her best, her articles combine her knowledge as a historian (she received a Master's in Canadian History from the University of Manitoba), her keen observations, and her ability to find connections and meanings in unlikely places. The Winnipeg that Gibbons wrote about has disappeared; over ninety percent of the buildings she wrote about are gone. Gibbons wrote her articles when most of these

buildings were about to be demolished, and she managed to document their histories and their various owners' memories, even as the structures fell apart and were integrated into new buildings. The social history about which Gibbons wrote was impermanent, elusive, mobile, difficult to document, and contradictory. She relied on several witnesses and their retellings of inherited stories. Unlike other journalists and historians, she left a rich archival record of Winnipeg homes and, to lesser extent, of their occupants. Gibbons drew connections between the current inhabitants and their Aboriginal and Metis pasts by documenting their material possessions, their memories of historical events, and their allusions to figures such as Louis Riel and Cuthbert Grant. Because Gibbons documented the mobility of the people and the evolution of buildings, city spaces, and neighbourhoods, she suggested that Winnipeg was a city that, in spite of its conservative institutions, continued to change dynamically, if not always for the better.

While realist prairie novels represent the family homestead as the quintessential prairie dwelling, there is a gap in prairie literature when it comes to representing urban dwellings and Gibbons helps fill it. Gibbons proposes that, notwithstanding their transience, Western Canadian homes are meaningful sites of connection for their inhabitants. In addition, my reading of Gibbons' work is a larger reading of the city of Winnipeg; thus, I provide more historical context in this chapter than I do in my other chapters. Finally, I hope that a critical discussion of Gibbons' writing may allow academics and writers to come up with new ways of talking about dwelling in Western Canadian cities. We need new approaches to better present the current reality and the future concerns of Western Canadians of all backgrounds and ethnicities.

To explore Gibbons' depictions of Winnipeggers' dwelling practices and homes, I build on de Certeau's theory in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. De Certeau discusses the agency,

ingenuity, and practical deviousness of disadvantaged people. These qualities are demonstrated by everyday practices and their uses of urban organizations and institutions. I also utilize ideas regarding mobility developed by Cresswell in his book *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. Cresswell explains that mobility not only refers to physical displacement but also includes social, political, and economic implications of movement. In his work, he describes how various meanings of mobility have emerged in Western history, and he connects the more positive understandings of mobility, as progress and freedom, with the advances in modern sciences and philosophy. Cresswell also asserts that a closer study of mobility is necessary because

[t]o be human, indeed, to be animal, is to have some kind of capacity for mobility. We experience the world as we move through it. Mobility is a capacity of all but the most severely disabled bodies...its universality is precisely what also makes it a powerful part of ideologies of one kind or another in specific times and places. (22)

Various people, authorities, and institutions have used positive and negative depictions of mobility to conceal social, economic, and political power imbalances. Utilizing the term “sedentarist metaphysics,” Cresswell discusses how certain social sciences privilege settlement and fixity and view mobile people as pathological (27). Cresswell argues against the humanist privileging of place because, in comparison, mobility is constructed as lacking commitment, authenticity, and significance. Using Cresswell’s work, I argue that sedentarist metaphysics are present in colonial ideologies toward Aboriginal, Metis, and Eastern European immigrants in Western Canada. Whether their lack of property and mobility results from fleeing political, ethnic, and religious persecution and conflict, or whether it is driven by personal choice or by traditional practices, these groups of people are often viewed as lacking connection to place,

community, and culture.

By using the examples of Raymond Williams, on the left, and T.S. Eliot, on the right, Cresswell argues that moral and social beliefs about place and mobility are consistent in spite of political and ideological differences: for both Williams and Eliot “culture is a fairly sedentary thing, linked to the continuities of place and community” (34). I do not agree with Cresswell’s reading of Williams’ culture and place as sedentary. Williams’ work, on the contrary, exposes the historical, constructed, and dynamic nature of spaces and cultures. Even so, I champion Cresswell’s proposal for a metaphysics of flow, mobility, and becoming in order to combat sedentarist tendencies in the thought and criticism of both the right and the left. In *On the Move*, Cresswell gives examples of mobile metaphysics in other disciplines and proceeds to individual case studies, but he does not provide an overlying framework. However, like Nigel Thrift, whose work he admires, Cresswell believes that readings of mobility and place should be “a positive celebration of mobile worlds” and that “[r]ather than comparing mobility to place, mobilities [should be] placed in relation to each other” (47). Like Cresswell and Thrift, I believe contrasting place and mobility sets up a similar dichotomy that the urban and rural comparisons do in early prairie novels. Instead, I choose to read mobility as an active embodiment of place and Winnipeg as a place of competing mobilities and diverse mobile citizens. By examining Lillian Gibbons and her writing, I depict the various mobilities and everyday dwelling practices that made early and mid-twentieth century Winnipeg a dynamic place.

While I have used de Certeau’s and Bakhtin’s theories of everyday practices and carnival to explore mobile practices as practices of resistance, to assume that all mobile practices only resist power is as unhelpful as reading community and culture as inherently rooted in place and property. In their introduction to *Entanglements of Power: Geographies of Domination/*

Resistance editors Joanne P. Sharp, Paul Routledge, Chris Philo and Ronan Paddison “emphasise the myriad entanglements that are integral to the workings of power, stressing that there are – wound up in these entanglements – countless processes of domination and resistance which are always implicated in, and mutually constitutive of, one another” (1). To comprehend how they work in their place and time, mobile practices need to be read as playing a part in both domination and resistance. Sharp and her co-editors stress the necessity of historical context in reading relations of power because they are “spun out across and through the material spaces of the world” and those material spaces include “assemblages of people, activities, technologies, institutions, ideas and dreams [that] all come together, circulate, convene and reconvene” (24). Understanding the social, cultural, and political context in which these mobile practices take place is important, and in her most engaging articles on Winnipeg homes, Gibbons provides precisely that context. In my reading of Gibbons’ articles, I will also argue that when it comes to dwelling, the mobile practices of Winnipeg’s residents have been underrepresented because mobility, in most cases, was viewed as threatening and deviant. Because of the privileging of fixity and place in Western history, certain mobile residences, people, and parts of Winnipeg have been viewed as dangerous, “placeless,” and lacking in culture and community. I hope to redress such negative readings of mobility in Winnipeg by looking at Gibbons’ articles. Her work depicts impermanent and mobile houses, innovative dwelling practices, and resourceful and creative residents who are intimately connected and invested in the city and the community they have created.

Before we look at her articles, it is important to briefly situate Gibbons’ work in Winnipeg’s historical and, I would argue, mobile context. In *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, Gerald Friesen names the Saulteaux or Ojibwas, the Cree and the Assiniboine as the three

indigenous groups that have predominately occupied Manitoba (23). When Europeans first made contact with Native prairie inhabitants in the seventeenth century, these groups gathered at the forks of the Red and the Assiniboine rivers to trade and to socialize. Friesen also explains that the economy of the Natives was cyclical and mobile, and those patterns came to affect the practices of the fur trade: “Native exploitation of resources customarily relied upon seasonal movement between at least two if not three habitats [prairies, parkland and forest]. The European fur trade was established upon these native cycles” (4). Western fur trading interests in the Winnipeg area were cemented with the establishment of Fort Gibraltar, by the French and Montreal-based NorthWest Company, and Fort Douglas, by the British and London-based Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC). Far from being sedentary and self-contained, these outposts and the Europeans who occupied them survived on the provisions from eastern Canada and on the mobility and hunting and trapping resources of the Aboriginal peoples with whom they traded and made strategic alliances. Friesen discusses how “[s]exual liaisons, marriages, and children were, in short, a fundamental aspect of fur trade history” (67), and how, early on, these unions had economic, domestic, and diplomatic benefits for the fur traders, the Native women, and their relations.

In 1811, agricultural settlement in the Winnipeg area began with the arrival of Scottish settlers who settled around Fort Douglas and were sponsored by Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk, a share-holder in the HBC. As Gerhard Ens explains in *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century*, Selkirk’s colony began “as a philanthropic scheme to provide a new life for thousands of dispossessed Scottish Highlanders” (9). However, the NorthWest Company’s employees “realized that an HBC colony astride their crucial provision supply route threatened their very existence... [and they] vowed to bring about

the colony's failure" (9). Such struggles between the rival Montreal and London fur-trading companies led to violence which came to involve their Native and mixed-offspring prairie allies. During a confrontation between the HBC and a group of Metis supporting the NorthWest Company led by Cuthbert Grant in 1816, twenty-one men of the Selkirk colony were killed. Because of this, Selkirk sent soldiers and made his way to Red River to secure his settlers' interests. Rosemary Malaher's introduction to Gibbons' *Stories Houses Tell* explains that, after the conflict, Selkirk entered into a treaty with Chief Peguis, "securing the title to the strips of land along the Red and Assiniboine for two miles back," and just north of Fort Douglas, he "provided land to the Anglican Church for a school, a church, and burial ground. This became St. John's" (7).

Soon after Selkirk's death, the NorthWest Company amalgamated with the Hudson's Bay Company. Ens writes that the Red River "colony became a refuge for superfluous Hudson's Bay Company servants and their Metis families who were released from the company's service after its reorganization during the 1820s" (9-10). Even so, permanence and stability were not guaranteed. A flood in 1826 destroyed Fort Gibraltar and Fort Douglas and Fort Garry was built at today's Main Street and Assiniboine Avenue. Malaher relates that the English and Scottish fur trading families, including their mixed descendants, lived on the Red River, from Point Douglas to St. Paul's and in the areas of Lower Fort Garry and St. Andrew's to the north, while the French Metis built their dwellings south on the Red and west on the Assiniboine River (7). Ens explains that both these groups "developed a mixed economy of subsistence farming combined with buffalo hunting and seasonal labour. The frequent failure of crops and the unreliable nature of the buffalo hunt made it sensible to participate in both" (26). Even after the fur trade families and the Metis settled at Red River, they continued to participate in mobile labour and everyday

practices. In the context of people's building and dwelling practices, Gerald and Jean Friesen write in "River Road":

The Red River Settlement, like the pioneer communities in New France and along the Great Lakes, was based upon river lot (or lakefront) agriculture. The pattern of landholding was determined by the central role of water transport in these communities and by the importance of the river in winter, both as highway and as source of ice for food preservation. The river lot also provided equitable distribution of wood and hay resources, both of which were abundant in the river valleys and could be allocated easily by the creation of long narrow lots stretching back from the river itself. (5)

The river lot organization enabled mobility and led to the creation of Red River's River Road: a 10-kilometre trail or parish road which connected the western bank river lots from Lower to Upper Fort Garry. Friesen and Friesen explain that the River Road "was the path along which neighbours strolled and gossiped, children played, and animals moved to work or to market" and that the "community that developed along this road between the 1830s and the 1880s is not immediately evident today" (4). The river lot and road system helped people make connections and community through everyday practices.

The Red River settlement prospered and its inhabitants (mostly Scottish, French, Metis and Aboriginal peoples) lived co-operative and mobile lives. As Malaher explains, from its earliest times there has been seasonal movement of people in the settlement, especially in the summer, when "the area adjacent to Fort Garry might be crowded with Red River carts, tents of the visiting traders, and buffalo hunters" and throughout the year when the "schools [adjacent to various churches] attracted the children of Hudson's Bay Company employees who came from across the tracts of Rupert's Land" (7). The Riel Resistance (1869-70), the construction of the

Canadian Pacific Railway, and the mass immigration of white settlers that followed would forever change how the inhabitants would dwell and move in what would soon become Winnipeg. However, the mobile dwelling practices that helped the first occupants make the most of what was at hand, and when possible to trade and import other necessities over land or water, would continue to play a significant part in how urban prairie spaces would develop. Gibbons' look at some of the early houses showcases how such mobility worked in Red River and how its inhabitants were able to make connections and live satisfying lives in the mobile settlement.

Gibbons' own history and circumstances helped her to meaningfully convey the complexity of her environment. She was born on June 24, 1906 in Winnipeg to Alice Gofe and Ernest Gibbons (*Manitoba Historical Society Website*); however, the name of her father is not actually listed on her birth certificate. Her parents separated and, as Geraldine Morriss writes in Gibbons' profile in *Extraordinary Ordinary Women*, her American father returned to the United States after the marriage ended (17). According to her obituary in the *Globe and Mail*, Gibbons was raised by her mother who was "cultured and conservative" (A18). At the University of Manitoba, Gibbons received her BA in arts in 1928 with a gold medal in history and, according to Morriss, her Masters in history in 1929 (other sources, J.M. Bumsted among them, state that Gibbons received her MA in the early 1930s). Even though, as Morriss relates, Gibbons "was a trained historian engrossed in the history of the Red River area," when she started working at *The Winnipeg Tribune* she was only allowed to write pieces for the newspaper's "society" pages (17). Denied access to the type of journalism her male colleagues wrote, Gibbons used the resources and the mobility her position with the paper afforded her to continue her research in less direct ways. Morriss writes:

Lillian knew the names of the mixed breed settlers and of the Selkirk settlers, and was

acquainted with some of the progeny... She attended the convocations of both universities in Winnipeg with the intention of finding graduates who were descendants of the original families. Each week, she checked death notices for the same reason. She visited cemeteries to connect the dead with the living. (17-8)

In her obituary in *The Globe and Mail*, Lesley Hughes recounts why Gibbons came to be seen as an eccentric in the Winnipeg community and discusses her contradictory public image. Although Gibbons dressed in flamboyant hats, shoes, and elegantly cut bright wool suits, her “appearance seemed like an invitation to connect, but it wasn’t. She rarely made eye contact, [and] could appear and disappear as quickly as a bird” (A18). I read Gibbons’ attire as a devious tactic. Because the 1930s patriarchal society restricted the type of work she could perform and restricted her access to various organizations and resources, Gibbons used colourful clothes to facilitate her physical mobility. People would recognize her by sight as the lady journalist and would not challenge her access to certain places because she was a woman. Since Gibbons’ mobility increased her exposure to others, she may have used her eccentric appearance to intimidate some and to prevent unwelcome confidences or contact. Her independence and mobility probably had negative consequences that only Gibbons herself understood. Morriss writes: “Lillian never married. She confided to a close friend that had she done so, she would have been denied a career” (18). Much of Gibbons’ writing is about making connections and community, and it is difficult to tell what kind of life she might have led had she been allowed access to the resources and opportunities of her male counterparts.

Many of Gibbons’ eccentric everyday practices could be read as negotiations of patriarchal system in order to pursue her own desires and what she deemed important in documenting history. Hughes remarks that some assumed she was impoverished, but Gibbons

left half a million dollars to her favourite charities, and “she’d travelled all over North America by Greyhound bus to shareholders’ meetings of large corporations” (A18). Gibbons’ behavior is consistent with someone who valued freedom and mobility and who was not interested in accumulating material possessions; at the same time, she understood the advantages money could provide. In fact, Morriss calls Gibbons a “practicing environmentalist” before ideas of sustainability and conservation were fashionable, and discusses Gibbons taking home donated flowers after the church service or leftovers from the functions she attended at the Fort Garry Hotel (18). Gibbons, perhaps first out of need and later because of deep personal beliefs, learned to make the most of the few resources that were available to her, and she used them to live the life she wanted. Her obituaries and brief biographies also remark on Gibbons’ preference to remain in her tiny downtown bachelor apartment for nearly sixty years in spite of her wealth and mobility. J.M. Bumsted, in *Dictionary of Manitoba Biography*, writes that “Gibbons lived in the same bed-sitter in the downtown area of Winnipeg for 58 years” (91). Hughes even mentions that she “kept her most important papers in [the apartment’s] original ice box” (A18). Gibbons’ choice makes sense knowing both her limitations and her strengths. In Winnipeg’s downtown, her access to public transportation, her research (she read the newspapers at Manitoba’s legislative library instead of purchasing them), and other resources were right at hand. Her apartment was also located near the church she attended, which offered her a sense of community.

Finally, there is the oft-cited (Hughes 1996; Bumsted 1999; and Morriss 2002) anecdote of Gibbons’ death in 1996. According to Hughes, during a cruise on the Amazon River Gibbons is known for saying to the other passengers, “If I die before we get to shore, just throw me overboard” (A18). Morriss interprets Gibbons’ comment as part of her environmentalism. She

may have seen more value in her body going to feed the Amazon wildlife rather than waste the resources in getting her body back to Winnipeg. When she did die on the trip, her body was taken to a hospital. In her will, Gibbons had requested that her body should be cremated and interred in Winnipeg. Morriss writes, “Brazil had no crematoriums. Consequently, Lillian’s remains had a long and involved journey home” (18). Gibbons’ life and death brings forth more questions than answers. Her mobile practices and her writing present the reader with evidence and connections, but they elude clear-cut readings. Nevertheless, Gibbons appeared capable of using her mobility, appearance, and various dwelling practices to pursue her needs and desires. Consequently, her writing and her devious everyday practices suggest meanings of home, history, and community more in line with Cresswell’s metaphysics of flow, mobility, and becoming, rather than the sedentarist metaphysics he contests.

In *Stories Houses Tell* (1978), a collection of some of her most popular *Tribune* articles on Winnipeg homes, Gibbons depicts the way people dwelled and moved about in the early days of Winnipeg and the way the building structures became, in part, mobile. By showing Winnipeg homes as impermanent yet materially connected to place, Gibbons envisions urban prairie spaces as both historical and real but also flexible and dynamic. Early homes in Winnipeg were built of logs and could be moved from one location to another, whole, or part-by-part. At the new site, they could take on a new role or a whole new life. One such example comes from an article dated November 23, 1935 wherein Gibbons writes about the house of John Fraser located at 160 Newton Avenue. Fraser was a son of one of the original Selkirk Settlers who arrived at the Red River settlement in 1815. His “log house was built in 1839 on what is now Bannerman Avenue. In approximately 1860 it was pulled down and carried to Kildonan log by log” (16). Once it was rebuilt, it functioned as a post office connecting Lower Fort Garry and Fort Garry in addition to

being Fraser's residence (16). One of its windows testifies to this because it was built at a different height so mail could be passed through it. T.J. Watts, who bought the house in 1905, recounted this to Gibbons. Even in 1906, when he took possession of the home, it stood "on the prairie. No streets were marked out there" (16). Fraser's relocation of his house to outskirts of town could be read as his severing connection to the community and the culture, and the home's function as a post office could be seen as enabling shiftlessness and "deviant" mobilities.

However, Gibbons also cites Fraser's grandson, drawing attention to the fact that John Fraser was a precentor and a choir leader of the old Kildonan Church and had moved his house in order to be near the church which was built in 1854 (16). Fraser's relocation isolated him physically at first, but doing so subsequently provided him meaningful employment. Furthermore, it helped him establish social and religious ties, as his house became a gathering place for, among other activities, choir practice, in the newly established Kildonan community. Finally, Gibbons describes Fraser's home as "a real Selkirk Settler house—a link with the settlement that first started the Winnipeg district on its path to a city" (16). While Gibbons appeals to ideals that value settlement and tradition, she also uses the metaphor of movement to describe Winnipeg. Like the homes she portrays, the city is active—a place where links and connections are made between people through material culture and physical objects. Although many of the people she interviews do collect "historical objects," for Gibbons the accumulation of objects is always less important than the accumulation of memories and historical knowledge embedded in those stories.

Gibbons portrays other examples of mobile, or partly mobile, dwellings which were used by diverse peoples, with different values and perspectives, to connect to Winnipeg's history. Such an example is John Sutherland's Home in East Kildonan, built around 1847 and featured in

the *Winnipeg Tribune* on August 16, 1937. The house itself was torn down in 1937, but Sutherland's granddaughter, Mrs. Gunn, remembered that the logs used to build the house were floated down river and came from "the old house of Alexander Sutherland, John's father, who was the only Selkirk Settler to live on Point Douglas" (18). John Sutherland became Manitoba's first senator, and the Sutherlands represent the Scottish settlement tradition and sedentary legacy in Manitoba. Nonetheless, it is the Sutherlands' resourcefulness and their mobile dwelling practices that helped them persevere and prosper in Red River. Moreover, the memories of their mobile home connect the family to the history of the province. Gibbons quotes Mrs. Gunn's story of a family breakfast at the house after which "John Sutherland's second son, John Hugh, riding on a mission of peace to relate that Major Boulton's men were to be freed by Riel, was killed while carrying the message" (18). Even though the house was demolished in 1937, the connection to the events of 1869 lives on through the stories about the house.

When it comes to mobile building practices and materials connecting Winnipeggers to their history, on the opposite side of the political spectrum of the Sutherlands are the Tods. Their log house on lot 39 in St. Vital, now known as 23 Tod Drive, originally belonged to Peter Tod, a Scotsman, who came to the Red River settlement in 1878. His son, Alexander, was twelve when Riel reportedly visited Winnipeg on his way to Saskatchewan in 1883, and he witnessed the meetings Riel held in his father's log house. According to his family, Alexander Tod held great esteem for the house, and his daughter recounted in 1943 that the "path down the garden he never would plow up; it was sacred ground, he said. Louis Riel had walked on it" (20). The Tod family kept the uninhabited cabin for over fifty years because of its sentimental value, and even when they did demolish it in 1960, the logs remained "in the possession of the present owner, Mr. Alex Tod, grandson of Peter Tod" (20). The connection Gibbons makes to Riel, in part,

explains why the “Tods were for a long time the only English-speaking family this side of the river” (20). A sendentarist reading would perhaps end with a demolition of these residences, reading their destruction as loss of connection to place and history.

However, the Sutherlands’ and Tods’ reuse of some of the building materials allowed them to have a physical connection and a reason to retell the history of the Riel’s resistance. Such retellings force these Winnipeggers to renegotiate their social and political connections to Winnipeg or to the Red River settlement, even if they no longer dwell there. Gibbons’ reading of Winnipeg’s mobile homes inspires a visceral understanding and connection to history and place: the type of connection that everyday people of diverse political backgrounds can immediately grasp. Including their Scottish ancestor’s bible and the glove John Hugh Sutherland was wearing when he was shot by Norbert Parisien, the Sutherlands possess more historical objects than do the Tods. However, by sharing the stories of their homes, Gibbons reveals that the Tods’ connection to Riel and Winnipeg history is to them as valid and as meaningful as that of the Sutherlands’.

Understanding the buildings, and not only the inhabitants, of early Winnipeg as mobile fits in with historical studies of early Winnipeg housing. In a 2007, report *Housing a Prairie City: Winnipeg’s Residential Built Environment 1870-1921*, Kathryn A. Young and Chris Dooley discuss what they call progressive housing, where houses “were often constructed in stages, concurrent with the availability of cash and regularity of employment. For instance, the first structure might well have been a very small building with shed roof that later became a kitchen annex” (7). While such living allowed financial flexibility, it also required imagination and ingenuity on the part of its occupants, as they had to re-use materials and reimagine a building with its additions and alterations. At the time, divisions between private and public

spaces were less distinct, as Young and Dooley write: “Early Winnipeg was too small to be differentiated into neighbourhoods, and residential and commercial land use was mixed... Many business owners lived in their places of work, either in an annex or on a second floor” (22).

One of the most infamous examples of a mobile and a multi-use building is the store John Christian Schultz built in 1864. Having played its role in the Riel conflict, this log building was demolished in 1938. At the time Gibbons wrote her article it stood at 881 Main Street, but it had been originally constructed on Water Street in 1878 and was moved on skids to Main Street and Euclid Avenue (50). In her article, Gibbons envisions Schultz dealing in buffalo hides downstairs while the rooms upstairs provided a home for him and his wife. A shoe store manager named Thomas Wolch, the last proprietor of the building, talked to Gibbons about the Schultzes’ upstairs living quarters. The wallpaper apparently had “such flowers as you can’t get now” which Gibbons, unable to enter the boarded up second floor, imagined as “galloping roses” (50). Such mixed-use environments presented early urban prairie inhabitants with contradictions and complicated meanings of home, family, and labour.

Moreover, in early Winnipeg, one not only had to adjust to mixed-use settings but also to shifting economic and political alliances and circumstances. Schultz went on to become the Lieutenant Governor of the province and his store changed names as often as it changed hands. It was named the North West Trading Company, Pomano House, Club House, and the Family Shoe Store in its different incarnations. Gibbons observed that the Schultz building “has watched Main Street change from a trail across the plains connecting the two stone forts, to a paved street, and seen the old horse trolley give way to double tracks and electric trolleys” (50). Being at the centre of the changes and the mobility, the building itself became mobile and functioned to define and redirect the routes of Winnipeggers as they traded and bought provisions for over a

hundred years. Even though the original building was demolished, a “New Store” was built on the site in 1939, and, in 1978, an even newer building called “Bargain World” replaced the previous building (50). Gibbons’ depiction of the mobility, and multiplicity of uses that the Schultz home was put to, shifts focus and emphasis from settlement to mobility and to the re-use of materials. Mobile dwelling practices helped Winnipeg inhabitants prosper and make connections and communities.

The Schultz store is not an exception; Gibbons writes about many Winnipeg residences that were moved, both in part and in whole. One the most mobile houses that Gibbons writes about is 160 Syndicate Street. It was constructed in 1884 by a Welsh glazier, Thorton Simmons, who arrived in Winnipeg during the boom of the 1880s. Due to a housing shortage, he and his family lived in Winnipeg’s Canvas city, which according to his son, George, was located at King and Henry Street near Royal Crown soap works. George Simmons told Gibbons “All my life I’ve heard the stories of those tents” (70). The Simmonses also had to deal with an unstable market and fluctuating economic circumstances, because once the Winnipeg boom broke there was little money and resources in circulation. While he worked on the glass to construct the Canadian Pacific Railway roundhouse, Simmons collected the discarded packing cases. His son recounts, “Some of the pieces of lumber were no longer than twenty-four inches and only six inches wide. But Father was a patient man. He pieced them all together and made this house” (70). Gibbons shows how Simmons used his creativity, skills, and access to discarded materials in order to compensate for not having more conventional resources. Furthermore, Simmons used his mobility to move his “packing case house” from its original location to the property he bought on Syndicate Street in the winter of 1885. George Simmons recalled that a thaw caught the family unaware during the move and that they were forced to camp for two days at Higgins and

Annabella but that cold weather and more snow allowed them to finish the move (70). With each new story the Simmonses tell Gibbons about their home and with each story she chooses to share with her audience, Gibbons demonstrates that life in an early prairie city demanded constant adaptability to unforeseen circumstances, as well as endurance and patience.

Ingenuity, mobility, and resourcefulness seemed to characterize the whole Simmons family. For example, when Thorton Simmons got sick, his wife replaced him for several weeks during the CPR roundhouse construction and “cut the glass for the men” (70). The sons also became glass-cutters and fitters. Gibbons describes examples of the fine glass-work in the family’s second home on 164 Syndicate Street, where she visited them in 1948. The family’s skill and artfulness seemed to inspire Gibbons’ own. She writes of their home:

The front door has scores of tiny pieces set in lead. The outer border is made of rectangles, all different colors. You can peek through a red piece and see red snow, a lavender piece and see houses the color of violet. Yes, you may even choose a rose-colored world. The centre is made up of rounds, diamonds, pear-shaped pieces of plain and opaque glass, studded with ‘jewels’ faceted like precious stones. (70)

Even when her descriptions become overly romantic, Gibbons’ depiction of agency and aesthetic pleasure in one’s built environment is different from those characteristically depicted in rural prairie writing. The accompanying drawing of the packing-case house is diminutive and unspectacular; however, unlike sturdier larger and more ornate buildings, the house has retained relevance because of its transience and mobility. In a follow-up interview Owen Simmons commented that his home was still livable, in comparison to Royal Alexandra “the best building on Point Douglas,” which was pulled down (70). Simmons remarked to Malaher: “‘Imagine that,’ he says, ‘and we lived in Canvas City, right there!’” (70). Because the house’s meaning

and importance lies in the stories of the mobile practices of the family members and their ability to persevere in their circumstances, the building achieves a different kind of permanence.

It is important to recognize that the Simmons family was not unusual but part of the larger fabric of Canadian prairie cities' building culture. Young and Dooley write about Winnipeg of early 1880s:

Few of the buildings that rose in this period were built with an eye to permanence – canvas roofs abounded, and wooden frame structures were designed to meet short term needs rather than long term comforts... Building materials like brick and hardwoods were not available locally, and due to the costs associated with their import, their use was limited to a few stately homes. (32)

Gibbons shows that the Simmonses, in spite of lacking permanent and sedentary building materials, such as brick and cement, managed to prosper in their Point Douglas neighbourhood. As Young and Dooley emphasize, “impermanence must be seen as a key feature of early Winnipeg. One of the characteristics of the city’s population in the early years, and one that was to prevail through much of the early development period, was its transience” (22-3). A conservationist herself, Gibbons emphasizes that scarcity of resources, the impermanence, and the mobility that forced urban prairie inhabitants not only to build houses and dwell differently but also to make connections to their surroundings in new ways. She documents this making of connections by re-telling and gathering stories about such homes. These stories allow diverse sets of meanings to come forth.

Contradictory visions of Winnipeg emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century. The city is portrayed as being overcrowded, but at the same time as being sparsely inhabited and located on the edge of wilderness. I argue that both visions can be reconciled by analyzing

Gibbons' articles and reading Winnipeg as a place of competing mobilities: the wealthy residents move south and west, out onto the open and "empty prairie," and the poor crowd into the dense tenements and tents at Point Douglas and north of the railway yards. The Simmons family and the people living in Winnipeg's tent city in the 1880s were a part of the changes that reconfigured Winnipeg's parameters, and altered the city inhabitants' mobility. The founding of Manitoba as a province and the incorporation of Winnipeg as a city in 1873 brought a flood of immigrants from Ontario and United States.

Furthermore, the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which started in 1881 and continued westward, brought thousands of workers into the city. In *Winnipeg 1912*, Jim Blanchard describes the city's incredible population growth from 150 inhabitants in 1870, "living in the neighbourhood of present-day Portage and Main in about thirty houses," to 13,000 residents in 1882 (9). Even though the 1880s boom came to an end, the population of Winnipeg continued to grow, reaching 136,000 in 1911. As Blanchard points out, the 1911 census numbers did not even include "the seasonal workers who lived in Winnipeg only in the winter and the residents of crowded tenements who were missed by the census takers" (9). The growth and mobility implied by those numbers is staggering. In part, Gibbons' articles on Winnipeg homes document how these changes manifested themselves in material ways in the mobile practices of the wealthier Winnipeggers, if not in those of the seasonal workers and immigrants. Blanchard explains in *Winnipeg 1912* that "most members of the city's elite were busily recreating the class structures and social consciousness they had left behind in the East" (9), but they could not completely displace the Metis and mixed-family communities already surrounding them, nor could they halt the expanding city. The newly arrived citizens had to incorporate existing practices and come up with their own strategies in order to cope and prosper.

Competing mobilities and their progression through early Winnipeg can be seen in Gibbons' articles about prominent residents' homes, particularly in the successive houses of James H. Ashdown. Most of the 1870s residences were located between Main Street and the river near old Fort Douglas; similarly, the first Ashdown house was built at 109 Euclid by the London-born Ashdown. According to Gibbons' article, he made his way to Winnipeg in 1868 following the established fur-trade and Metis routes by the way of St. Paul, Minnesota, "walking beside the Red River ox-cart" (54). Physically and socially mobile, by 1875 Ashdown had a successful hardware business, and by 1877 he was able to build "his family a substantial brick house in fashionable Point Douglas, a distance sufficiently removed from commerce to begin to be called 'residential'" (54). The three storey house was imposing compared to the surrounding log buildings, and unlike its neighbours, it contained an indoor bathroom, chandeliers, melodeon, a circular drive, and "a vegetable garden stretching down to the natural bush of the prairie" (54). However, the growth of the railway and other industries and the sudden influx of people made the 'residential' neighbourhood of Point Douglas mixed-use, crowded, and less desirable.

When in 1885 the CPR tracks cut off Euclid and Point Douglas from the southern part of the city, Winnipeg's better-off residents were forced to adjust to these changes and move in order to have comparable access to open space for yards and gardens. In her 1939 article on the Ashdowns' first home, Gibbons writes: "Today little houses buzz around at [109 Euclid's] elbow. Stores, woodyards, and Norquay School supply plenty of noise. The cold storage plant and the CPR blot out the view of 1878" (54). Gibbons' description testifies that mixed-use environments had become undesirable in comparison to residential neighbourhoods. The ghettoization of the North End and its association with negative immigrant mobility is further visible with Malaher's comments: "By 1905, when the *Canadian Monthly* ran a picture of [109

Euclid], the area was crowded with immigrants” (54). Gibbons’ articles, rather than providing a basis for a negative reading of mobility, show Winnipeg as a place of competing mobilities. She shows that, while the recent immigrants were entering point Douglas and settling the surrounding area in tents, tenements, and small houses, the rich were moving too—their first stop being the old Hudson Bay Reserve near Broadway.

The HBC reserve extended for roughly 450 acres south of Notre Dame Avenue to the Assiniboine River and from Fort Garry (at Main) to Colony Creek (or today’s Colony Street). Young and Dooley explain that this land was not sold to the government in 1869-70 but held back by the HBC “until the speculative boom of the early 1880’s” so the company could make higher profits from the sale (24). Not unlike the early settlers, those who settled on the fringes of the HBC reserve described their experiences to Gibbons as if they had been living on the prairie frontier. Mrs. L.C. Macintyre who owned 549 Broadway, built in 1907, told Gibbons of her arrival to Winnipeg in 1882. Macintyre painted a rustic picture of Colony Creek that ran along the edge of the reserve: “There was a bridge over it and when the water was high people sailed in little boats. Broadway was surveyed but not built” (94). T.D Robinson, the pioneer coal and wood merchant built 624 Broadway on the southwest corner of Broadway Avenue and Young Street, in 1894. His son Leslie remembers going “directly across the prairie to Horne and Thompson’s grocery store at Portage Avenue and Good Street” (96). In the same article, dated May 20, 1950, Gibbons also describes the Robinson family album and Leslie Robinson’s photograph of the first Maryland bridge, which shows “a superstructure like old Norwood bridge had and it stretches across to an empty land like Peace River” (96). However, once The Hudson’s Bay Company sold plots of land to well-off Winnipeggers, Broadway became a “truly Victorian” residential street. Malaher explains her definition of truly Victorian by writing that 1890s home-

owners “chose style features from many periods of architecture. The houses on Broadway had an unbelievable potpourri of columns, turrets, bays, baroque carving, dormers, and verandas. Each expressed the personality of its owner” (8).

At first, it would appear from Gibbons’ articles that the wealthy Winnipeggers were able to use their material wealth and power in order to express their individuality, freedom, and to isolate themselves from other mobile groups. However, a more complex picture emerges upon a closer look at the Ashdowns’ third home, 337 Broadway, a fine red brick house at the northwest corner of Hargrave Street (92). For the recollections of the house, which was completed in 1897 or 1898, Gibbons went to Harry C. Ashdown, son of James Ashdown. Ashdown remembered that the bricks for the house were from St. Louis, Missouri, and came ““every one wrapped separately in straw”” and that “as a boy, from his third floor tower bedroom, [Harry] could look down on the rattling streetcars, swaying along between the rows of baby elms. His sister, Florence, was married from this house” (92). It is telling that these are the most memorable details that Harry shares and to which Gibbons draws attention. The imported brick building materials serve to emphasize scarcity of resources in Winnipeg. The streetcars reinforce the great mobility experienced in the city because of new modes of transportation. Finally it is the meaningful family occasions that stand out to Harry Ashdown and connect him to the house rather than the term of their settlement: by 1913 the family had moved away to their fourth house. The resulting mobilities were quite different for the rich and the poor, British and other immigrants, and men and women. However, the abundance of mobility forced most Winnipeggers to adapt and make connections to places in ways different from connections made in sedentary places.

Even the Ashdowns did not hold onto material possessions for long: they learned to use

them to make connections to social, cultural, and economic institutions and then to move on. One of the reasons the Ashdowns may have moved away from their Broadway home after living there for only a decade is that they were caught in city's expanding streetcar traffic. In *Winnipeg 1912*, Blanchard writes: "Shaking the ground as they rolled over about 160 kilometers of track, 300 electric streetcars, huge steel and wood vehicles painted the Winnipeg Electric Street Railway colours of maroon and yellow, rumbled along city streets" (11). He goes on to list the fifteen different streetcar routes that run in Winnipeg in 1912, and explains that the Broadway-St. John's route, which would have passed just outside the Ashdowns' home, "had cars travelling at fifteen-minute intervals between 6:00 a.m. and 2:00 a.m." (12). Young and Dooley provide other reasons why the Ashdowns would have moved away, such as the expanding downtown and the conversion of older homes into boarding houses and apartments. They write that "many of the wealthier residents of the downtown elected not to improve their houses, which tended to be of older construction and therefore expensive to retrofit with new plumbing and electrical services, but rather to re-build" (47). After the Ashdowns vacated 337 Broadway, and before it became the property of St. John's College, the building served as "an officers' mess for the 90th Winnipeg Rifles" and, in 1917, housed music studios when the Music and Arts Co., Ltd was incorporated at the location (92).

Multi-usage and diversification were also the fate of many of the other Broadway residences, which made way for apartments and, later, for downtown parking lots. For example, the home of Lady Schultz at 271 Broadway, on the northeast corner of Broadway and Donald Street, was converted into a rooming house in 1919, and in 1939, it was sold to businessmen, who intended to demolish it and build an apartment block in its place (88). Gibbons also writes that 624 Broadway, the Robinson family home of forty years "was moved to the adjoining lot

west and the Commodore Apartments were built on the corner it had occupied. Shorn of its verandas, the house was stuccoed and made into a duplex. It was numbered 626 and 626 ½ Broadway” (96). Gibbons’ history of the Ashdown homes shows that, for many Winnipeggers, making community and connections was not just about accumulating resources and settlement but about being mobile and using available natural and, even more importantly, human resources to their utmost.

The Aboriginal presence is often underplayed or suppressed in the context of the history of Western Canadian cities as it is, in part, in Gibbons’ articles on Winnipeg homes. However, even though she does not explicitly state that her subject matter is Native mobility and dwelling practices, Gibbons includes descriptions of them in her articles. Through her inclusion of Metis homes and material culture not to mention the narratives of Metis residents about their homes, Gibbons shows that Aboriginal and Metis mobilities competed with those of white settlers and that Native and Metis cultures influenced the everyday practices of Winnipeggers. As Ring mentions in *The Urban Prairie* and Blanchard writes in *Winnipeg 1912*, early nineteenth century written and pictorial accounts of the Red River settlement or Winnipeg usually portray Native encampments at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers and near the walls of Upper Fort Garry. Blanchard also states that, by the twentieth century, First Nations people were not seen in Winnipeg because most of them “were confined to reserves and schools, living under a sort of endless house arrest” (155). Even so, Blanchard reminds us that this Native absence was a recent development in the settlement’s history, because in 1870, when Manitoba entered Confederation, in “Winnipeg and in parishes stretching away from it along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, Metis and other Aboriginal people were very much in the majority” (155). One could argue that one of the greatest crimes against the highly mobile Aboriginal and Metis people was the

restriction of their mobility. The reserve system helped to construct Aboriginal mobility as deviant and shiftless, when only fifty years earlier it was essential not only to the survival of the Aboriginal and Metis population but to the Red River settlement's European settlers as well. Blanchard explains that "[t]here were, of course, still many Metis people living in the city and general area but probably they were not anxious to advertise their heritage" (155).

In her articles on Winnipeg homes, Gibbons appeared conscious of this reluctance. As a Red River historian, Gibbons would have been aware that the Metis population in Western Canada was the result of unions between European men working in the fur trade and Aboriginal women. Gibbons would have also known that it was through the help of their Native allies that Europeans learned to trap and hunt and were provided with the necessary food and clothing, as well as trading connections in order to survive and prosper among Aboriginal people. Ens writes that, while most of the population of the Red River settlement was of mixed-descent, they did not form a culturally unified group:

The French Metis came under the influence of Roman Catholic priests from Lower Canada who encouraged them to settle in river-lot parishes to the south and west of the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. The English Metis, whose paternal ancestors were the British (largely Orkney) employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, were swayed by Anglican missionaries and settled in river-lot communities north of the forks on the Red River. (10)

In comparison to the French Metis, who saw themselves as a new Nation, Friesen writes that the offspring of the Anglo Hudson's Bay employees, "[i]f they lived with the natives and travelled in their hunting bands, they were native... [and if their] fathers participated in their upbringing, encouraged their education, and perhaps aided in securing company positions for them, they

became English” (68). In her book, *Metis: People between two Worlds*, Julia D. Harrison explains that the biannual buffalo hunts were the economic and social focus of the Red River settlement’s community and that the spring hunt was particularly aimed at producing the large quantity of pemmican for trade with the Hudson’s Bay Company (21). Friesen states that by the 1840s and 1850s, the Red River’s Metis population “became the most important processors of pemmican for the Hudson's Bay Company trade” (92). Even though the buffalo hunting drew the Red River Metis away from their homes and river lots for long periods of time and left their land undeveloped by European standards, this mobility, which would be constructed as deviant after 1870, actually allowed not only the Metis but also the rest of the Red River settlement to thrive and survive periods of poor crops and flooding. In my look at Metis mobility, I am focusing more on the French Metis and the Metis, who in their mobility, were closer to the Native side of their families. However, I would contend that a similar argument for increased mobility could be made for the English and Scottish Metis. They were often schooled overseas and, upon their return, they sought opportunities that allowed them to utilize their formal education as well as skills such as trading and trapping.

I want to briefly discuss how the French Metis’ mobility, bonds of kinship, and independence manifested itself physically, as Gibbons alludes to this social history without explicitly stating it. Harrison’s text was published in context of a Metis exhibition at the Glenbow museum in Calgary, and she attempted to establish what the daily life of the French Metis was like and what their homes might have looked like. From drawings and written records she concluded that many of the Metis two room homes were generally sparsely furnished and decorated except for religious pictures. In his study of the Red River’s Metis parishes of St Francis Xavier and St Andrews, Ens also discusses Metis dwellings. He explains that the poorer

Metis families who only spent few months of the year in the settlement lived in cruder shelters: “[b]uilt of rough poplar and spruce logs notched at the corners, these small one-room shacks usually had earthen floors, few windows, and low roofs without gables” (27). However, some Metis improved upon ‘Red River frame’ cottages, which included bark and thatched roofs and log walls, which were coated with mud and white washed with lime and water. Ens writes: “[W]ealthier Metis had by the 1840s panelled their walls with rough cast lumber and had windows facing the road. Twenty years later, many Metis had neat multi-room dwellings” (27). In constructing their homes, the Red River Metis adapted to their seasonal mobility and to the limited lumber resources on the prairies.

Using nineteenth century history by Alexander Ross, the Red River patriarch of a Scottish-Metis family, Harrison draws attention to how some Metis “sought to own a few flamboyant possessions as a way of expressing their individuality” (28). These flamboyant possessions included items such a flashy suit, a gun, a good horse or a dog team, all of which were disapproved of by some European settlers who did not understand their worth in comparison to more durable items they considered among a household’s “necessities.” A few highly priced personal and portable items made sense in the context of the mobile practices of buffalo hunters or traders who packed up their families and their valuables into trunks and Red River carts and camped for a great part of the year. The Metis were quick to integrate aspects of Aboriginal and European technology into their mobile practices as was the case with the Red River carts which, with their removable wheels and sturdy but portable parts, made mobility on a large scale possible.

With the encroaching white settlement, the Metis’ mobility made them vulnerable and was used against them by those who did not travel to make their living. Friesen explains the

consequences for the Metis post the Riel resistance and the establishment of the Manitoba Act of 1870:

Security of their land holdings had been one of the central concerns of the metis in the resistance of 1869-70 and had seemed to be answered by Manitoba assurances of security of tenure and of a grant of 1.4 million acres 'for the benefit of families of the half-breed residents,'... [However,] the implementation of these provisions was plagued by delays, speculation, and downright theft. (197)

After 1870, when some Metis left for the buffalo hunt, their lands were given away to white settlers. In other cases, government officials refused to recognize Metis rights to their land because it was insufficiently cultivated. Harrison writes that “[w]ith such chaos, it is not surprising that many Metis gave up and joined their relatives farther west, where they had less government intervention in their lives” (41). Aboriginal and Metis people were forced out of the Red River settlement through land speculation, racial biases, and the government’s racist and poorly thought-out reserve and script practices. Ens, however, claims that the Metis were already ready to leave because “[o]nce Red River ceased to provide an occupational niche in the fur trade, Red River ceased to be a homeland” (175). Ens effectively argues that “the Metis adapted quickly to these changed economic conditions, and actually guided the process and influenced the nature of change” (5). In essence, the Metis foresaw that they could no longer participate in the Red River economy in the same way as they had before and left to seek new opportunities, places, and a new economic niche, or as Ens argues to pursue their own version of mercantile capitalism. Even though I commend him for portraying the Metis “as active agents in their history and development” (5), I am not quite convinced as to the type of economy Ens argues

Metis were participating in, or that the Metis would have left the Red River settlement if they were allowed to hold onto their land for seasonal occupation and individual use.

In Gibbons' articles on Winnipeg homes, Aboriginal and Metis mobilities are present but strategically contextualized or suppressed by other narratives and other mobilities. As Blanchard suggests, some Metis or mixed-race Winnipeegers were probably hesitant to acknowledge their Native heritage. In spite of the benefits of unions with Native women at the beginning of the fur trade, as the immigration of white settlers and women increased, many white men abandoned their Native wives and offspring to marry white women. Friesen writes that as early as 1840s,

[n]ew ideas such as race, respectability, and progress were becoming current. Attitudes associated with church marriages, illegitimate children, the servant class, and the 'proper' lady were hardening into social conventions. In this changed environment, the children of liaisons between natives and Europeans found themselves at a disadvantage. (91)

Many individuals of mixed ancestry who chose to remain and attempted to prosper in Winnipeg's society, after 1869 and 1885, probably suppressed aspects of their Native identity to make their lives easier, were indoctrinated, or in their everyday practices had more in common with the white side of their family. Writing for society pages, Gibbons would have quickly learned that bringing up a family's Native roots might not always be well received. As she counted on her interviewees' goodwill and their cooperation in obtaining the information she needed, Gibbons would have had to be sensitive in how she framed her articles and made references to Aboriginal or Metis ancestry.

In her discussion of Winnipeg homes, Gibbons' references to Aboriginal mobility were often enmeshed in larger historical context of the region and contextualized by white mobility and dwelling practices. For example, in her portrait of 2832 Assiniboine Drive, Woodhaven,

Gibbons writes that a pile of river stones or boulders in the garden of Mrs. Robert Vollans' "may be the foundation of the first house that white people lived in on the central plains of North America" (42). The settlers she is talking about are Jean Baptist Lagimodiere, Quebecois fur trader, and his wife Marie Anne Gaboury; they had initially settled near the Assiniboine River in 1806, left for Fort Edmonton to live in Alberta for several years, and returned to the Red River area when the Selkirk colony was established. In order to validate claims that the stones are indeed Lagimodiere's, Gibbons not only uses a testimonial of the remains of oak posts and a Waterloo musket found at the location but also refers to more elusive Aboriginal and better documented Metis presence and mobility near the area. She cites John MacCourt, a neighbour, who tells Gibbons that Vollans' home stands where

Indians made these clearings along the Assiniboine for camping purposes. The old river road passed the threshold of this house and for many years one could see it plainly marked in spring and fall when such old padded trails show a different color in the grasses and vegetation. This old trail wound past the grist mill site on Sturgeon Creek—the mill was owned by Cuthbert Grant, leader of the Nor'westers, about 1810. (42)

MacCourt, and Gibbons through citing him, connects Lagimodiere to the river road and river lots—to the way the Metis settled on long strips of land with each family having access to the river stretching back to the road that connected them. When it comes to early Winnipeg history, white, Aboriginal, and Metis dwellers alike used the rivers and trails along the water as routes. For Gibbons, evidence of Aboriginal mobility and settlement supports early white mobility and settlement. Furthermore, Gibbons' reference to Cuthbert Grant, a Metis leader famed for his altercation with the Selkirk settlers in the incident of 1816, and an earlier mention that Lagimodiere's daughter Rene (possibly born in the home) was "the great aunt of Louis Riel"

imply Lagimodiere's historical stature and significance (42). Even if the reader is unconvinced as to the location of the first white residence in Manitoba, she or he certainly recognizes Lagimodiere's controversial company, Grant and Riel, and is intrigued by their possible relationships to each other. Gibbons' technique of giving details and information, providing some connections, but not necessarily stating their meaning allows her a certain amount of ambiguity at a time when drawing explicit links between white and Aboriginal mobility and settlement may not have been popular.

From Gibbons' vertical files on Winnipeg Homes in the Manitoba Provincial Archives, aspects of Native and Metis mobility emerge, but this time this mobility is shown in conflict with the mobility of the white settlers. Some of Gibbons' articles are not anthologized in *Stories Houses Tell*, but they still present examples worth exploring. In the article in file thirty-three, Gibbons talks about the history and development of Colony Street, which before the sale of the Hudson's Bay Reserve comprised its western boundary. Gibbons' article contains a photo of uninhabited space and the headline reads "INDIANS ONCE CAMPED HERE: On this open space where Colony Creek ran into the [Assiniboine] river Indians once camped" (Vertical File 33). In comparison to the settlement of the street by white settlers, the dwelling practices of aboriginal people are continually referred to as "camping," emphasizing their impermanence and romanticizing their bygone "natural" primitive ways. Yet the article in the vertical file number thirty-four shows a much more recent Native habitation and mobility on the street. It also depicts the impermanence of the first buildings erected by white settlers, as was the case of 261 Colony. The home was "built in the middle '90s, [as the] home of William Clark, chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company in charge of the Winnipeg district from 1892 to 1908. It stood on the outer edge of Colony Creek" (Vertical File 34). One of the last residents to live in the house

before it was demolished, a Mrs. Neill, recounts that “[i]t was a beautiful house and grounds. It was too bad it was built so close to the creek, which weakened its foundations. All the houses along there suffered for the same reason the land was not secure” (Vertical File 34). The large homes with cement or brick foundations turned out not to be as lasting as the mobile or semi-mobile tents and log homes. Furthermore, a Miss Agnes Baird, the daughter of one of the neighbours on Colony Street, revealed to Gibbons that “[t]here was a high board fence all along the back of 261, and of our house, 247, to keep the Indians out, who used to camp along the creek, and the little Bairds in. In spring we fell in the creek and in winter we learned to skate on it. It was filled in, while we lived there” (Vertical File 34). The Baird house was built in 1895, so at that point there were still Native people moving along these routes into the city. They were attempting to dwell near creeks along which they may have dwelt and returned to for generations. By the 1890s Native people were competing with the white settlers who were moving beyond the settlement north of Portage and Main and the confines of the Hudson Bay Reserve and claiming access to the same resources. In service of sedentary values and to strengthen the foundations of their homes and increase the values of their properties, white settlers built fences and filled in smaller waterways in order to deter Aboriginal mobility and dwelling practices. While Gibbons does not explicitly comment on these practices, she does bring them to her readers’ attention.

Gibbons’ receptiveness to what Aboriginal and Metis dwelling practices and mobility have to offer is primarily displayed by her intense interest in Louis Riel and his family, which she documented in a small pamphlet size booklet called *My Love Affair with Louis Riel* (1969). The book contains twenty-two of Gibbons’ articles in *The Winnipeg Tribune* spanning thirty years. They relate to Louis Riel and to the 1869-1870 resistance. Even though her first visit to

the home of Honore Riel, Louis Riel's nephew, is overshadowed by the discovery of Riel's coffin in the kitchen closet, the book captures some of the austerity of the St. Vital log house. Gibbons writes: "The clean little sitting room, with its narrow boarding ceiling, had old fashioned walnut chairs ranged expectantly around the walls; they were backed up as though waiting for something to happen in the shining central space" (2). Her description supports the notion that Metis dwellings were sparsely furnished, but, in her articles, Gibbons' is clearly more interested in the home as a receptacle connecting Riel to various members of his family. This is evident as she continually returns to write about the home.

In a 1963 article, she discusses with Honore's widow, Yvonne Riel, the possibility of the home at 330 River Road being turned into a museum. Gibbons documents the changes that have occurred in the home since Riel occupied it in 1868-70: "The three-room log house on River Road has been drastically renovated over the years since it was first built nearly 100 years ago. It has been raised on a basement and covered with siding. On a gatepost outside is a black and white enamel sign: Riel P.O." (21). Gibbons describes the home's mobility, and its history as a mixed or multi-use dwelling, serving both as a home and as a post office. She also reveals that "[s]everal Louis Riel relics had been in the house but Mrs. Riel said in an interview that she had loaned them all to the St. Boniface museum in the city hall. 'I did not sell anything,' [Yvonne Riel] said." (21). Unlike the white settlers who retain their historical possessions and show them to Gibbons, there is an ambiguity that emerges when it comes to the possessions of Louis Riel and what they represent to Yvonne Riel. She believes that these possessions should not be sold, but she does not claim the ownership of them either. Furthermore, Gibbons writes that "[a]sked if she would sell the house so it could become a museum, Mrs. Riel said: 'If I got a good price. My two sons and two daughters have their own homes. What would become of it after me?'"

(21). There is a sense that practicality and resourcefulness trump sentimentality when it comes to the home.

In another article, this one published in 1968, Gibbons discusses 330 River Road with the Metis teacher and writer Marie Therese Goulet Courchaine (1912-1970). She wrote under the pen name “Manie-Tobie.” Her family members, the Goulets, were involved in the resistance and were friends of the Riels and other French Metis families in the Red River settlement. Gibbons uses Courchaine’s stories to validate her own research about the Riel’s home. When it comes to 330 River Road, Therese Courchaine dispels doubts—as to the home being Riel’s—by her testimony of having visited the home as a child:

I stayed with Honore, owner of the house, right there on the river road. It was a log house covered over with siding, and deep in bushes and trees. Now it’s been raised up and the land cleared and people do not believe it is the same place. It was Louis’ brother Joseph’s house, after their mother died. It was Louis’s home in ‘69-70. (29-30)

Courchaine portrays a mix of ceremony and practicality in the way the Riel family dwelt in the modest log house: “I remember the reverence of using the parlor only on state occasions—the kitchen was where the family lived” (30). Courchaine reveals that this was in part because Riel’s coffin stood in the parlor cupboard. Her focus, though, is primarily on the everyday practices and familial ties that continue to connect the Metis families, rather than on the homes themselves.

For example she recounts:

‘Camille Teillet married Riel’s young niece Sarah; he was a Frenchman from Vendee, France. My parents were godparents to their son Roger, who became an MP like Louis and even a cabinet minister. There was no church in St. Vital. Every Sunday, rain or

shine, the Teilletts attended the cathedral and came home to dinner with us on Dumoulin St. They spoke many hours about Les Grands Troubles.’ (30)

While Gibbons does not explicitly acknowledge Courchaine’s Metis background, and one could argue that she perhaps overstresses the Goulets’ French ancestry, she is receptive to Metis retellings of events and stresses Metis ways of utilizing and making connections through familial, religious, and political practices.

By sharing multiple stories and making a few vital connections between them, Gibbons allows meanings to accumulate, and layer upon each other. In a repetitive way, Gibbons returns to certain information and cites speakers who introduce conflicting information, especially when it comes to specific dates. However, each new contribution has the power to add and alter meaning. Such methods are visible in her 1959 article “Kin relive historic Riel days.” The piece depicts a gathering of Metis men and women at 1044 Talbot, an Elmwood home. There, the “[d]escendants of Riel and cabinet ministers of his provisional government [discuss] Scott’s death in observing the 85th birthday of Alexandre Nault, son of Andre Nault, member of the court martial which condemned Scott to death” (8). In this case, Gibbons becomes an observer, simply passing on the information that each man recollects as part of the story of Scott’s death. For example, Nault’s revelation that Scott did not suffer for ten hours before passing away or that Riel’s banner was “white with French fleur-de-lis and Irish shamrocks entwined”(8) are only some of the many pieces.

Gibbons only interjects to point out that “Louis Riel is the 27-year-old grandnephew of the illustrious leader” and “Emil Lepine is the grandson of Ambroise Didyme Lepine, [Louis Riel’s] cabinet minister” (8). These very brief connections allude to the importance of familial bonds. The older Metis men’s retelling of their history becomes more important than their homes

or the physical remnants of that history. While Gibbons' stories are always grounded in the physical and material, her Riel articles show that the stories' meanings hinge on the various storytellers and their perceptions and recollections as well as the connections they make between events. Gibbons does participate in some colonial and sedentary ideology by conveniently relegating Indians and their mobility to the past and by never explicitly stating that the Metis descendants are part-Indian. However, in many ways she is revolutionary in her recognition of Louis Riel and the Metis descendants' stories and practices. Beyond depicting Metis material culture and dwellings, Gibbons depicts a present, engaged, and mobile Metis population that continues to influence Winnipeg's history.

Even though she wrote during a time when patriarchal and colonial ideologies and systems limited what she could say and how she could say it, Gibbons depicted Winnipeg's Aboriginal, Metis, and white settlers participating in impermanent and mobile dwelling practices. Her work demonstrates that constructing certain Winnipeg populations as deviant and disconnected because of their mobility is not valid because most of Winnipeg's early inhabitants were mobile and still capable of developing unique and diverse communities and cultures. Cresswell's theory of reading spaces as being experienced, inhabited, and imagined, through competing mobilities is especially relevant in understanding Winnipeg. Some of the mobilities depicted in Gibbons' articles on Winnipeg homes include cyclical and seasonal settlement along the rivers and creeks and near trading centres. For example, the river lots along the Assiniboine and the Red River have been used, subsequently and concurrently, by Aboriginal, Metis, and white inhabitants. Gibbons shows that, as time progressed, the Aboriginal, Metis, and white settlers' mobilities came into more direct conflict. Because of questionable real estate practices after the Riel resistance and the colonial oppression through the reserve and residential school

systems, many Aboriginal and Metis people were rendered either immobile or forced to leave the Winnipeg area. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the competing dwelling practices, interests, and mobilities of Anglo-European and other immigrants led mostly to the wealthy moving south and west beyond the boundaries of the Hudson's Bay Reserve while the poor occupied the city's centre and the north end.

The contradictory visions of Winnipeg in the early 1900s as sparse or overcrowded are both static and limiting. Although many urban prairie inhabitants did experience overcrowding and isolation, a mobile reading of Gibbons' work takes into consideration the diversity of experience, various competing mobilities, and the dynamic nature of the early prairie cities. In spite of this abundance of mobility, through her depiction of the individual Winnipeg homes, Gibbons shows that the connection Winnipeggers made to their city (social, physical, and spiritual) was complicated and multifold. Gibbons' work illustrates that historical meanings and connections can manifest physically but never lie dormant. Even though the physical buildings are gone, their meanings remain because of the varied and even contradictory narratives that are told and retold by their mobile residents and by these residents' descendants. My reading of Gibbons' work builds toward an understanding of prairie spaces as dynamic, constructed, and continually transforming. Because they make the most of limited resources, her Winnipeg inhabitants are resourceful and creative. Gibbons' writing style, with its layering that makes connections but does not provide conclusions, also lends itself to further inquiry and closer historical readings. Finally, although Gibbons does not address more recent immigration and dwelling practices, or the return of urban Aboriginal populations to Winnipeg in the 1960s, I build upon her ideas in the third and fourth chapters of my dissertation wherein I discuss Eastern-European immigrant and Aboriginal mobilities.

Chapter 3

Mobility, Everyday Practices, and Devious Literary Techniques in Immigrant, Urban, Prairie Fiction

The portrayal of urbanity and the immigrant experience in twentieth-century Western Canadian Literature go hand-in-hand. Many non-English-speaking immigrants settled in prairie cities where access to government institutions, schools, housing, jobs and the odds of meeting other immigrants who spoke their language was more likely. In order to understand the development of urban literature on the prairies one must look closely at the writing about immigrants and by the immigrants themselves. By looking at Ralph Connor's *The Foreigner* (1909), Vera Lysenko's *Yellow Boots* (1954), John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death* (1957), Adele Wiseman's *Crackpot* (1974), and George Ryga's *Night Desk* (1976), I explore how these texts portray urbanity and ethnicity.

I argue that these texts' evolution in theme, genre, and style is influenced by the everyday experiences of living in a Western Canadian city. Like de Certeau's devious everyday practices, everyday immigrant practices translate into complex renegotiations of identity and increasingly devious literary techniques in immigrant texts. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau illustrates how such deviousness works by demonstrating how colonized people "subverted [laws and rituals] not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept" (xiii). Because twentieth century immigrant writers used the popular genres (such as historical romances) and literary symbols of their Anglo-Canadian contemporaries, their subversions of these genres and symbols, as well as their uses of devious techniques (such as irony and parody) were not often obvious or clear-cut. Reading early immigrant texts for subversive elements requires extra vigilance.

However, the last two texts, Wiseman's *Crackpot* and Ryga's *Night Desk*, achieve innovation in their construction of ethnicity, and in their depictions of the prairie environment. Moreover, Wiseman and Ryga are overt in their challenges to mainstream society and colonial institutions and explicit in the alternative meanings they propose.

I am looking at prairie writing by Eastern-European immigrants in part because of my Polish-Canadian background but, more importantly, because Eastern-European writing in English provides the largest selection of immigrant writing in Western Canada over the most extensive time period. I do concede that grouping Ukrainian, Jewish-Russian, and Hungarian fiction can be problematic and may lead to generalizations that scholars of various immigrant literatures have been attempting to expose and discredit. Nonetheless, I think the benefits of a comparative study of these texts outweigh the drawbacks. These novels draw attention to the way Eastern-European immigrants use their mobility and everyday practices in order to survive, assimilate, or assert their difference in prairie cities. Furthermore, these novels demonstrate Eastern-European Canadians' contribution to the growth and development of urban prairie literature.

By looking at Connor's *The Foreigner* (1909), I hope to set the social and historical context, bring forth common thematic concerns, and establish the stylistic traditions at the time that Western Canadian urban immigrant writing emerged. Although he is not of Eastern-European descent, Reverend Charles W. Gordon, writing under the pen name of Ralph Connor, was the first prairie author who took on urban and immigrant subjects. In his novel *The Foreigner*, set in 1884, he presents a problematic— if well-meaning— glimpse into the world of Eastern European immigrants in Winnipeg's North End. The novel follows a Russian boy, Kalman Kalmar, who faces exploitation, backwardness, and abuse in his Slavic Winnipeg

community. He is sent away, and he becomes thoroughly assimilated through his work on a Saskatchewan farm and contact with Anglo-Canadian society. Although the first 187 pages of the novel are set in Winnipeg, Walter E. Swayze writes: “The book is almost unknown to Winnipeggers today, or to readers anywhere, except to those who read it as outdated sociology and attack and ridicule it as racist, imperialist, and patronizing” (42). Connor’s tone is in part to blame, as in his preface he exalts the making of Canada as if it were a genetic and social Anglo-Protestant experiment: “The blood strains of great races will mingle in the blood of a race greater than the greatest of them all” (n.pag). Likewise, a non-Anglo-Saxon may be suspicious of Connor’s ways of achieving this union of all races. He explains the necessity of “grip[ping] these people to us with living hooks of justice and charity till all lines of national cleavage disappear, and in the Entity of our Canadian national life, and in the Unity of our world-wide Empire, we fuse into a people whose strength will endure” (n.pag). The tone is more subdued in the novel itself, but Connor’s main purpose of assimilation is still apparent.

In *Leaving Shadows: Literature in English by Canada’s Ukrainians*, Lisa Grekul points out that from the very beginning of Connor’s novel, its Eastern European characters are constructed as a problem: “[T]he very fate of the nation hinges on the success or failure of Anglo-Canadians in assimilating Slavic foreigners to Anglo-Canadian society” (11). Grekul adds that Connor’s narrative is constructed on binary oppositions pitting “the civilized, progressive Anglo-Saxons versus the primitive, backward Slavic hordes” (12). She effectively argues that by killing off all the non-indoctrinated Eastern European characters at the end of his novel, Connor confirms “that the unassimilated foreigner has no future in Canada” (16). Thus, immigrant writing and writers emerged surrounded by social, historical, and political discourses, which problematized their presence through various imperial and nationalistic ideologies. Furthermore,

as immigrant writers began to participate in the literary dialogue, they were not only influenced by themes of assimilation and nationalism, but they were also affected by the popular romances and action adventures their predecessors used to explore these themes and ideas. Swayze describes Connor's novel as a historical romance in the tradition of "muscular Christianity" which celebrated religious conviction and social justice as well as "good hygiene, athleticism, and wholesome sexuality" (49). In order to understand early immigrant writing, one needs to acknowledge that some Western Canadian immigrant writers modeled their work in part on historical romances, rehashing their trappings and conventions.

Daniel Coleman's essay, "Immigration, Nation, and the Canadian Allegory of Manly Maturation," explores the colonial and nationalist ideologies working in Connor's text and proves useful in understanding the texts that follow. Coleman points out that Connor was fictionalizing the attitudes about immigrants that were popular at the beginning of the twentieth century including those expressed by J.S. Woodsworth in his book *Strangers within Our Gates* (1909). Woodsworth frames the issue of Canada's successfully assimilating its immigrants through the allegory of Canada's progression from its dependent colonial boyhood to its independent nationalist manhood, with Britain as its allegorical parent. Coleman argues that this allegory and "the language of familial relationships [was] adopted by Canadians to give imaginative shape to themselves as a national community" (85): the allegory assigned the immigrant "a recurring role in the construction of the 'English' Canadian norm" (86), and it "designat[ed] the immigrant as a child with nothing to offer Canada until he is educated into British Canadian ways" (87-8). This language of familial relationships is also picked up, used, and subverted by immigrant writers to claim their Canadianness, to assert their difference, and to construct alternative communities. Finally, Coleman connects this nationalist project to

patriarchal familial relationships. As he explains, “[w]omen can be significant supports to Connor’s male nation builders, but they remain supports only” (90). As in my first chapter, gender plays an important role; female immigrants not only face marginalization because of their ethnicity but also because of their gender. In *The Foreigner*, unlike their male counterparts, female immigrants do not seem to be even considered or courted as worthy subjects for assimilation into Anglo-Saxon society. Female immigrant writers in particular had to negotiate and manipulate the constructs and genres of popular fiction, which for the most part supported imperial, national, and patriarchal ideologies and marginalized them.

I agree with Grekul and Coleman that Connor’s text participates in the colonial, nationalist, and sexist discourses of the time. Even so, his portrayal encouraged immigrant writers to elaborate on and challenge his depictions of Eastern-Europeans within their own work. I also argue that, in the first third of *The Foreigner*, Connor portrays and recognizes the ingenuity of Winnipeg’s Eastern European men, and, more importantly, immigrant women. While Connor’s conclusions are often faulty and prejudiced—to him Eastern European immigrants’ spatial organization and living conditions prove that they are superstitious, ignorant, and immoral—he describes in detail the everyday ways in which Eastern Europeans live, move, and access the structures of the city. Connor captures the mix of mobility and crowding experienced by the immigrants who arrived in Winnipeg. He writes: “[F]rom Central and South Eastern Europe, came people strange in costume and in speech; and holding close by one another as if in terror of the perils and the loneliness of the unknown land, they segregated into colonies tight knit by ties of blood and common tongue” (13). Depicting their resourceful seasonal mobility between the urban and rural prairies, he adds:

During the summer months they are found far away in the colonies of their kinsfolk, here and there planted upon the prairie, or out in gangs where new lines of railway are in construction... But winter finds them once more crowding back into the little black shacks in the foreign quarter of the city, drawn thither by their traditionary social instincts, or driven by economic necessities. (14-5)

As the above citations illustrate, Connor does not explore how these immigrants' past experiences would have included conflict, pogroms, and persecution, all of which would have made them wary of some of their European neighbours. However, at least he alludes to the isolation that, combined with lack of material resources, would make a permanent move onto the rural prairie or farming an impractical choice for some immigrants. In other words, Connor's detailed descriptions imply that immigrant mobility is not inherently pathological or abnormal but practical and resourceful and allows the new settlers to make social and economic connections.

Furthermore, in depicting the immigrants "in the more unfashionable northern section of the little city" Connor attempts to portray Eastern European backgrounds with some complexity. He explains that Slavs

from all provinces and speaking all dialects were there to be found: Slavs from Little Russia and from Great Russia, the alert Polak, the heavy Croatian, the haughty Magyar, and occasionally the stalwart Dalmation from the Adriatic, in speech mostly Ruthenian, in religion orthodox Greek Catholic or Uniat or Roman Catholic. (14)

Natalia Aponiuk, in her essay "The Problem of Identity: The Depiction of Ukrainians in Canadian Literature," is right in pointing out that "historical accuracy was not one of his main

concerns” and that “Connor’s use of ‘Slav’ was to add a wild, exotic element to his tale” (52). Even so, Connor does make a valid attempt to allude to a complicated interweaving of the political, national, and religious allegiances of the Eastern Europeans he writes about. His emphasis on the diversity and the complex agglomeration of people allows the reader to understand why conflicts in the North End neighbourhood could possibly erupt. At this point, it is worthwhile to return to Swayze’s article wherein he quotes James H. Gray, who remembers the pre-1914 attitudes toward Eastern European immigrants in *The Boy from Winnipeg* (1970):

The official practice was to identify them with their native regions in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Thus the census tables listed Ruthenians, Moldavians, Bukovinians, Serbians, Slovaks, and Galicians. It was not until the middle of the 1920s that these designations disappeared in favour of Ukrainian, Russian, or Polish. The attitude of the Anglo-Saxons to the Europeans was epitomized by the canvassers for *Henderson’s City Directory*. When they came to a family with an unpronounceable name, or an unspellable name, they simply used the word “foreigner” which seemed to satisfy everybody. (44)

As Gray implies, it may have suited some immigrants to avoid the definition, attention, and therefore the scrutiny of British law and institutions. Some immigrants probably used Anglo-Saxon ignorance of various Eastern European histories, languages, and customs to their advantage, strategically identifying with other foreigners when it was convenient and seeking specific recognition for their ethnic background when necessary. Emphasizing a more fluid identity, along with maintaining different spellings of their last names, may have allowed some Eastern-Europeans to choose their allegiances depending on economic and social needs rather than on their particular ethnicity.

To some extent, the novel's villain, Rosenblatt, is probably the most obvious if negative example of how, with a little cunning, an immigrant could acquire wealth and power and evade and manipulate the Anglo-Saxon institutions. Although Rosenblatt is shown in court to be embezzling Paulina Koval's money and exploiting her, he is able to get away with it and continue this behavior because he avoids Anglo-Saxon authorities altogether and continues to wield power among the Slavs in the North End. Rosenblatt's ingenuity and enterprise is used for evil in the book and casts a shadow on other Eastern Europeans' industry and ways of establishing community, connections, and economies in the text.

However, Connor's detailed account of the minor character Anka Kusmuk provides a counter example to Rosenblatt. I would like to focus on some of the details in the descriptions of Anka's wedding preparations and in the wedding scene of *The Foreigner* in order to provide an alternative reading to the one offered by other critics. In her article "Including the Female Immigrant Story: A Comparative Look at Narrative Strategies," Tamara Palmer Seiler suggests that immigrant female writers, Lysenko and Wiseman included, respond to, and in particular write against, Connor's depiction of "a 'Galician' wedding as nothing more than a 'sordid, drunken dance' in a 'room packed with steaming, swaying, roaring dancers, both men and women, all reeking with sweat and garlic'" (55). For Palmer Seiler the wedding scene epitomizes Connor's stereotyping of Eastern Europeans as impetuous, violent, and uncivilized; he even describes the bride as "radiant in the semi-barbaric splendour of her Slavonic ancestry" (35). I do not deny Palmer Seiler's assertions, but I argue that, with attention to detail, Connor manages to also show Anka and her friends' resourcefulness in a way that, at least partially, balances out the stereotypes about Eastern-European immigrants he depicts.

First of all, Connor explains Anka's reasons for having a traditional Ukrainian wedding as being partly due to her understanding that her and her future husband's role in their community and their financial well-being depend on it: "as Jacob and she had it in mind to open a restaurant and hotel as soon as sufficient money was in hand; it was important that they should stand well with the community, and nothing would so insure popularity as abundant and good eating and drinking" (30). Not only has Anka been "saving with careful economy her wages at the New West Hotel for the past three years" (29) to have the wedding she wants, but, as Connor explains, she

entrust[ed] to her neighbours, who would later be her guests, the preparing of certain dishes according to their various abilities and inclinations, keeping close account in her own shrewd mind of what each one might be supposed to produce from the materials furnished, and stimulating in her assistants the laudable ambition to achieve the very best results. (31)

After distributing supplies to her neighbours and obtaining help from her Eastern European community, Anka also manages to use her connections at the New West Hotel, connections which would probably be difficult for her to make in a rural setting. To obtain more food for the wedding feast, Anka enlists help from outsiders: "Through the good offices of the butcher boy that supplied the New West Hotel, purchased with Anka's shyest smile and glance, were secured a considerable accumulation of shank bones and ham bones, pork ribs of beef, and other scraps too often despised by the Anglo-Saxon housekeeper" (31). Unlike Anglo-Saxon housekeepers who can afford better cuts of meat, Anka cheaply buys up large quantities of "scraps" that others do not want to cook in soups and stews. She uses the system to her own ends and makes the most of her limited resources in what de Certeau would call a devious turn. Because Anka is known

for her warmth and enthusiasm, the cook of the hotel also offers Anka pies and the proprietor offers a case of whiskey. While her husband-to-be, Jacob Wassyl, procures the alcohol, Anka manages the whole feast and wedding arrangements herself. She knows who to turn to for help when it is necessary and when to utilize her own planning and organizational skills. Anka appears to navigate, and when possible to bypass, the patriarchal economy and organization of the family farm, and she succeeds in spite of her lack of family connections and wealth.

Notwithstanding Connor's constant references to their thirst for alcohol and fighting, the Eastern-European men in the book also seem to partake in a more communal and non-hierarchical economy because of living in close proximity to each other. For example when it comes to the alcohol distribution at the feast,

the beer kegs were carried by the willing hands of Paulina's boarders down to the cellar, piled high against the walls, and carefully counted. There they were safe enough, for every man... who expected to be present at the feast, having contributed his dollar toward the purchase of the beer, constituted himself a guardian against the possible depredations of his neighbours. (33)

Even though Anka and Jacob are minor characters in the novel and partake in the patriarchal institution of marriage, they present fairly positive role models. They are capable and enterprising in their everyday practices and urban environment, inside and outside of their Eastern-European community.

Through the wedding feast, albeit in some problematic ways, Connor further shows Eastern-European mobility and ability to get along in large and diverse groups of immigrants. For example, when, during the wedding celebrations, Rosenblatt tries to turn away two men whom he considers his enemies with insults of "Slovak swine," Jacob intervenes. Connor writes:

“‘Slovak!’ cried Jacob with generous enthusiasm. ‘We are all Slovak. We are all Polak. We are all Galician. We are all brothers. Any man who says no, is no friend of Jacob Wassyl’” (49). In order to diffuse a possible conflict, Jacob strategically appeals to the wedding guests’ commonality as immigrants and men. Inevitably, the two-day wedding celebration gets out of hand. It is the representative of the Anglo-Saxon establishment—the Scottish-Canadian police officer, Sergeant Cameron—who asks the polyglot translator Murchuk, “What do they want to fight for anyway?” To which Murchuk replies, “Polak not like Slovak, Slovak not like Galicians. Dey drink plenty beer, tink of something in Old Country, get mad, make noise, fight some” (86). Murchuk is, perhaps flippantly, alluding to the complex and turbulent history in central and eastern Europe, where—just to use one example—the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was partitioned between Russian, Prussian and Austrian-Hungarian empires. For over a hundred years, many ethnic Poles, Ukrainians, and people of other nationalities were oppressed, their culture and language stifled, not to mention that one ethnic group was set and used against another to prevent a union against their oppressors. Connor’s book only alludes to this complicated history.

While the reader is meant to sympathise with the Anglo-Saxon sergeant and the doctor who arrive at the scene of the fighting in North End Winnipeg, one is made to wonder at Cameron’s ignorance. Being an immigrant himself, he should understand that one’s ethnic background, history, and past resentments do not simply disappear upon arriving in Canada. I suggest that Connor is not completely unsympathetic, and he allows for some ambivalence in reading the scene, during which the two Anglo-Saxon men foolhardily attempt to detain over eighty men without any sort of backup. Connor writes:

There was a quick angry growl from the crowd. They all felt themselves to be in awkward position. Once out of the room, it would be difficult for any police officer to associate them in any way with the crime. The odds were forty to one. Why not make a break for liberty? A rush was made for the struggling pair at the door. (99)

In spite of the disparaging description of the Slavic men, what is telling in this scene is that Kalman's estranged father, Michael Kalmar, outwits Cameron by pretending to be dead drunk, blends in with the other men by removing his false beard, and gets away by breaking a lamp and creating a diversion. Cameron only ends up capturing Kalmar because "before the morning dawned, he had every exit from the city by rail and by trail under surveillance, and before a week was past, by adopting the very simple policy of arresting every foreigner who attempted to leave the town, he had secured his man" (104). The amount of resources that had to be expended to capture one Eastern-European fugitive does little to convince the reader of the superiority, wit, or the resourcefulness of the Anglo-Saxon representatives of the law. By showing the Eastern-European immigrants' actions in detail, Connor begins a dialogue regarding their complex history and background and the everyday strategies they use in their urban environment to bypass, resist, or use the Anglo-Saxon colonial institutions to fulfill their desires and needs. I also contend that, by closely reading Anka's wedding preparations and the wedding feast, fighting included, Connor's novel makes an argument for the urban environment as a space where marginalized immigrants with limited material resources can use urban proximity, mobility, and their own ingenuity to survive and thrive on the Canadian prairies.

In the following section, I discuss *Yellow Boots* (1954) by Vera Lysenko. By singing and employing everyday survival strategies, Lysenko's central character, Lilli Landash, appeals to cultural diversity, utilizes Anglo-Canadian symbols, subverts cultural and artistic economies, and

creates a hybrid Ukrainian-Canadian identity. I argue that in the book the railway, the symbol of colonial expansion, is co-opted as a symbol of both Lilli's Ukrainianness and her Canadianness. By depicting Lilli's negotiations of social, political, and economic institutions of the city, Lysenko constructs Lilli as a mobile ethnic Canadian character, distinct from other prairie heroines. *Yellow Boots* also brings to the forefront questions around authenticity and meaning of ethnic art, and I believe Lysenko suggests that in spite of discrimination art can transcend difference.

Unlike Ralph Connor, Vera Lesik, writing under the pseudonym of Vera Lysenko, was of Ukrainian heritage. She was born in Winnipeg in 1910 to working-class Ukrainians. In the previously mentioned article, Aponiuk notes that, in Canada, there were writers who published works in Ukrainian during the first half of the twentieth century, but *Yellow Boots* was the first book by a Ukrainian-Canadian writer written in English (51). In *Yellow Boots*, Lilli grows up in a large, rural, Ukrainian-Canadian family in southern Manitoba. In spite of her father's brutality and her mother's dislike for her, she learns to love nature and appreciate her rich Ukrainian culture, and she develops an uncanny ability to arrange music and sing. At sixteen, Lilli leaves her community for Winnipeg when her father tries to force her into a marriage with a violent, brutish man in exchange for land. Aponiuk, however, has issues with the author's portrayal of Ukrainians: "Vera Lysenko, writing as late as 1954, 'Canadianized' the heroine of *Yellow Boots* by re-making her in the Anglo-Saxon image and judging her success in terms of her acceptance by and assimilation into the Anglo-Saxon world" (59). Even though the book was written by a Ukrainian, Aponiuk claims that, "as in *The Foreigner*, the path laid out for the Ukrainian immigrant is assimilation" (54). Commenting on the ideologies and practices of assimilation, in

her essay “(Re)reading the Female Ethnic Subject: Vera Lysenko’s *Yellow Boots*” Lisa Grekul agrees with Aponiuk:

[Lysenko] sets out to depict a heroine who ascends the social and economic hierarchies of Canadian society while preserving meaningful ties to her ethnic heritage. But what Lysenko actually achieves is a decidedly more complicated—albeit largely unconscious—portrayal of the extent to which assimilation resulted in profound linguistic and cultural loss for Ukrainian immigrants and their descendants. (114)

I agree that Lysenko suppresses some of the darker implications of Lilli’s success, but I think Lysenko’s focus on Lilli’s achievements rather than on her losses is a strategic choice. Grekul also claims that O’Donovan and MacTavish, the Anglo-Saxon men who deliver Lilli to her parents after she becomes ill, are given too much authority. Their perceptions colour the text and reflect negatively on Ukrainian Canadians, and, for Grekul, their presence indicates that Lysenko “internalized, at least to some extent, many Anglo-Canadians’ derogatory attitudes toward Ukrainian immigrants” (120). Still, I believe when she claims that to “resist Ukrainian patriarchy Lilli must accept both Anglo-Canadian cultural imperialism and Anglo-Canadian patriarchy,” Grekul oversimplifies Lysenko’s text (124). She concludes her criticism of the novel by writing: “If we are to recover *Yellow Boots* from the margins of the Canadian literary canon and incorporate it into ongoing debates and discussions about the relation between ethnic and national identity, then we need to re-examine the reasons for which Lysenko could not tell a different story” (127). I think this is one of the most important points that Grekul makes and responding to it allows me to contextualize *Yellow Boots* in some of its historical and literary history.

In “Including the Female Immigrant Story: A Comparative Look at Narrative Strategies,” Palmer Seiler presents a theoretical model, which explores the strategies female writers used to address the double vulnerability of being marginalized because of their gender and because of their ethnicities. Palmer Seiler writes that colonialism “provides the metaphor of centres and margins—in short, of hierarchies—that is central to the fictionalization of immigrant experience, both male and female” (51-2). Immigrant writers are placed in a problematic position as they “must use the very same tools of language and narrative that have constructed and fundamentally constitute the structures that oppress [them]” (52). Like de Certeau’s underprivileged people, immigrants struggle to make use of the practices and structures of the powerful to achieve their own ends. Taking her cue from feminist and post-colonial writers and critics, Palmer Seiler states that the overlapping literary strategies of subversion and pluralism are central to female immigrant writers’ attempts at decolonization and resistance in their texts (53). Palmer Seiler proposes that Lysenko uses these strategies of subversion and pluralism in *Yellow Boots*: “By having Lilli sing not only Ukrainian folk songs, but also songs produced by a variety of immigrants, including Scots, Lysenko subverts the imperial insistence on a unitary vision of Canadian culture and nationality” (56). Lilli allies herself with others of culturally diverse backgrounds and subverts Anglo-Saxon symbols, cultural institutions, and artistic economies in order to find practical and meaningful ways to survive in her world and to express both her Ukrainianness and her Canadianness. Inevitably any immigrant will experience losses when she adjusts to a new culture and environment, but Lysenko shows that Lilli is resourceful and capable of strategizing in order to maintain a relationship with her culture, to keep singing, and to thrive. Lilli accomplishes this by forming alliances with certain men, and she “deviously”

picks up the manners of her wealthy patrons in her job as a dressmaker, so she no longer has to work as a domestic servant or in a factory.

Placing Lysenko's text among the Ukrainian-Canadian writers in Canada writing in English over the twentieth century also helps the reader to understand better the themes and techniques in her novel. In her article "Becoming the Hyphen: The Evolution of English-Language Ukrainian-Canadian Literature," Lindy Ledohowski writes that

Canadian writers of Ukrainian descent, writing in English, have transformed themselves and been transformed by critics from being ethnic 'strangers' and 'foreigners,' similar to all other non-English speaking immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, to 'living in the hyphen' (Wah 1996, 53) of contemporary Ukrainian-Canadianness. (108)

Ledohowski places *Yellow Boots* at the bottom of this evolutionary spectrum and Lysenko as the first of Ukrainian-Canadian writers to use the strategy of "flattening out specificity of culture for a collective conception of it" or "combining of all ethnic and immigrant experiences into one shared phenomenon across cultures" (110). While this statement does not fully express the complexity of Lysenko's pluralist narrative strategies, I think Ledohowski importantly notes that such strategy was used by Lysenko and other Ukrainian writers such as Ryga, Haas, and Suknaski to forge allegiances among people of a certain class or region (114). Like Grekul, Ledohowski is frustrated that such a stance limits exploration of a specifically Ukrainian identity, "as formed by an awareness of literature, arts, history, politics, or geography of the ethnic or cultural homeland" (112). But she recognizes that a collective and pluralised examination of ethnicity enabled immigrant writers to explore the marginalization they were experiencing in Anglo-Canadian society (114). More importantly for immigrant and ethnic Canadian writers,

such positioning allowed them to make connections and relate to other immigrants and underprivileged groups such as Aboriginal people and to their physical environments. By forming these relationships and communities, immigrant writers developed a sense of authority to write about Canada and their experience of it.

Ledohowski implies that a shift from collective ethnic identities toward a more specific Ukrainian identity on the prairies was signaled by publication of Myrna Kostash's *All of Baba's Children* (1977). Ledohowski cites Kostash, who defines the earlier pluralist approach as “ethnic compromise” and views it as “a survival tactic employed while the environment was still hostile, suspicious, confused and mercurial,” and according to Ledohowski calls “for a revival of Ukrainianness” (120). What is at stake for Ledohowski is that the hyphen in Ukrainian-Canadian signifies a different power relationship and “a social shift that prefers ‘living in the hyphen’ over living in the margins” (125). While I understand why Grekul, Ledohowski, and Kostash reposition Ukrainian-Canadian writing in such a way, I am neither as negative about the pluralist, subversive strategies of immigrant writing, nor as positive that the Canadian political, social, and economic environment is no longer hostile toward ethnic and immigrant writers and writing. I am an immigrant writer who arrived in Canada as late as 1987, and I find Lysenko’s pluralist and subversive strategies neither outdated nor irrelevant. In this chapter, along with other strategies, I argue for their relevance in negotiating a hybrid identity, especially for newly-arrived immigrants attempting to find solidarity and community in Canada. I do not ignore the problematic nature of these strategies or their complicity in the colonialist and nationalist discourses that marginalize immigrants. However, I believe that texts, especially urban prairie ones, can accommodate both strategies of subversion and pluralism. Immigrant authors can explore unique ethnicities shaped by an awareness of literature, arts, and history of their former

homelands and the new urban prairie setting, and produce more innovative and challenging writing in Western Canada.

In *Yellow Boots*, Lysenko's subversion and pluralism, as well as attention to Ukrainian culture, transform notions of ethnicity, mobility, and urbanity in Western Canada. Lysenko co-opts the railway, the symbol of colonial expansion, and she uses Gypsy identity and the urban space to construct Lilli's Ukrainianness and Canadianness and to present her as a complex and mobile character. As Grekul points out, the book opens from the perspective of Anglo-Canadians O'Donovan, the Irish railway foreman, and MacTavish, a Scottish-Canadian teacher, and it places them on a jigger, a track motorcar, in motion as they deliver Lilli to her parents (3). Quite subversively, from the beginning of the novel Lysenko associates Lilli with the railway men, the railway, and its mobility as a transforming force: "The section-men were a race apart to the children of the Canadian prairies. Detached from the earth, they sped across the land, appearing without notice and vanishing without trace" (5-6). Just as the railway men are Canadian yet a "race apart," so is Lilli, and Lysenko develops a position of in-betweenness for her based on the model of the railway men and the community around the railway gang. This position is reaffirmed later in the book when, as a teenager, Lilli curiously watches a railroad gang and is taken back to their camp to partake in a meal, to listen to the men's storytelling, and to listen to their singing. The narrator reveals: "Railway building was one of the most dramatic chapters in the history of the Canadian West, and the speech of the Boukovinian homesteaders made constant reference to their experience on the extra gang" (186-87). Lysenko draws attention to the fact that most Boukovinian or Ukrainian men, of and before Lilli's generation, would have actually participated in either railway building or maintenance.

Lilli also reframes the railway gang as an ethnic community of mobile men who “had assembled in the wilderness from the four corners of the earth” (187) and compares their assembly to a gypsy camp (189). Although this scene taps into the stereotypical depictions of the Wild West, Lysenko emphasizes that ethnicity, cultural differences, and mobility are rewarding and fulfilling; they are not pathological, nor do they pose a challenge to the family farm. In associating Lilli’s singing with the singing and physical work of the railway men, Lysenko also elevates folk singing to a meaningful occupation and a gesture toward the rest of the world:

As the men sang on, Lilli ran out from the circle to stand a little apart, on the steel track... She felt that nothing could conquer her now. O how strong! O how full of life! O everywhere beauty, beauty! She thought as with head uplifted to the prairie sky she vowed, ‘Some day I’ll travel down this steel tract to faraway countries, some day I’ll travel all over the world, gathering songs.’ (192)

Although there is an accumulative aspect to Lilli’s ambition, if the circle of the railway men and their interactions are to be viewed as a model, Lysenko proposes different meanings and non-consumerist “economies” surrounding the railway. Rather than being just an expansionist tool for consolidation of land and resources, for Lysenko, the railway is a network where any mobile individual can make connections with others through art and culture.

Along with Lilli’s connection to the railway men in *Yellow Boots*, Lysenko strategically associates Lilli with the figure of the gypsy and the tragic character of the widow Tamara. I argue that both these associations work in the book to contextualize Lilli’s mobility as inevitable and necessary. Furthermore, these associations lend credibility to her move to the city, in spite of her ties to the natural world. When Lilli returns to the Landash farm after working away at her uncle’s place for over five years, her family does not remember her given name but calls her

gypsy. Lysenko explains that Lilli's father had called her a 'gypsy brat' when she was born because he had hoped for a son and heir (17). Lysenko adds, "On that same day, a band of gypsies had passed through the district, and Zenobia had taken it into her head that they had cast a spell on the child, or perhaps by some witchcraft had substituted their own brat for Zenobia's real child" (17). This sets up a problematically othered and hybridized identity for Lilli in the text. The term gypsy is one that several characters, including Lilli, seem uneasy about, but Lysenko continues to use it in the text. For example, even though Grandmother Euphrosyna denies that Lilli is a gypsy, gypsies being "[f]olk who have no home, but wander about the earth" and "were cursed by God," she ends up giving a scrap of scarlet silk from a gypsy dress as a gift to Lilli (26). Even though Lilli is happy to exchange the nickname gypsy for the name Lilli, given to her by her teacher Ian MacTavish, she seems content when Vanni, her first love, after seeing her in a white blouse and red skirt exclaims that she looks fresh like a gypsy (140). Similarly to the way she utilizes the railway men, Lysenko uses the figure of the gypsy to signal Lilli's mobility and ability to make connections with others in the text outside of the patriarchal organization of the family farm. Stereotypically gypsies are associated with lack of rootedness and belonging, but Lilli is family, custom, and culture-oriented like her grandmother and mother. Lysenko subverts and complicates ideas around gypsies and Ukrainian identity by staking Lilli's claim to both; she sets up Lilli's hybridity in the rural space, a hybridity that will be further developed once Lilli moves to the city.

Although at first Lilli feels uneasy and ashamed of her conflicted identity and difference, through her association and identification with Tamara, she comes to understand herself better. Tamara appears throughout the first half of the novel. She is first present at Lilli's deathbed. She is a seamstress who had married a labourer in Austria and moved with him to a homestead in

Canada. After her husband died in a railroad accident and her children died in an epidemic, she becomes a recluse, only coming to the community's weddings and funerals. Beauty, sensitivity, and passion are all associated with Tamara in the text: "A wild imagination flashed from her eyes, was revealed in every motion of her body and every tone of her voice, which was not coarse as that of peasant women" (146-47). In the book, Lilli identifies Tamara's uniqueness, so in turn Tamara can recognize a similar specialness in the young girl: "Lilli was not a common farm girl... there was pride and sensitivity in the girl" (147). When the community finally erupts with hatred towards Tamara in Lilli's parents' home and when the neighbours take off towards Tamara's farm in their wagons to confront her about imagined witchery and misdeeds towards them, Lilli "realize[s] that Tamara was one such as herself, as she might have been, born in other circumstances" (155-6). The community's treatment of Tamara forces Lilli to look critically at the people around her, to face her own powerlessness, her complicity, and her desire to choose a different life from her parents': "Up to this evening she had not questioned the old beliefs, but now a great rent appeared in them... she felt by intuition that another way of life was possible" (158). In the end, the neighbours' confrontation with Tamara, and her assumed death in the swamp, presents the community in a negative light, but it also helps Lilli to envision herself outside of her family's and neighbours' world. Lysenko signals that it is only a matter of time before Lilli leaves for the city to pursue her musical ability, and, when her father tries to marry Lilli off to a violent man in exchange for a prized piece of land, she does. In reading the earlier "rural" parts of the book, I argue that Lysenko uses Ukrainian and Canadian, and male and female symbols and models in order to construct a hybrid identity for Lilli, so she can thrive, if not in her own community, then in a community of her own making. I suggest that in *Yellow Boots* Lilli never relinquishes her ethnicity when she leaves for the city: she merely moves

towards an identity, a Ukrainian-Canadianness, which she has been negotiating for herself since she was a child.

After her move to the city, Lilli continues to struggle with her Ukrainian-Canadian identity as with her quest to become a singer. Lysenko presents Winnipeg as a community of immigrants and, to lesser extent, artists, and she shows why it is a better place for Lilli to succeed than Prairie Dawn, the southern Manitoba farming community she is from:

[F]or [Winnipeg's] population was one of the most cosmopolitan on the continent—Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, Icelanders from the great Northern lakes, Scottish Canadians, Métis, Mennonites, Hungarians, even gypsies. These people, through living together, through vital experiences shared—marriages, births, deaths, the land, harvests—dreamed common dreams, forged common bonds, built the foundations of the city. It was full of longing young people, aching with the ache of youth for life, trying to find themselves here in the city of the plains, not quite of the old world and yet not entirely accepted by the new. Lilli was one of these people. (211)

Lysenko suggests that urban proximity forces a familiarity between diverse groups of people and individuals because of the practical necessity of sharing living and working spaces. The novel proposes that Winnipeg is an in-between place, where commonality comes from the fact that most of its citizens are struggling with their ethnicity, identity, and with finding the means of achieving their dreams. Even though Lilli is made fun of by young men on Portage Avenue and taken advantage of by her employer Rebecca Green, she is not alone. In Winnipeg, there are immigrants struggling like her. For Lilli, who has always felt alone, there is a sense of kinship in this.

When she meets Mrs. Green's visitor, the unsuccessful pianist Sam, Lilli, for the first

time in her life, voices her ambition. She tells him “I know what I want to learn—music” (223). Even so, some critics point out that the acquaintances Lilli makes in the city and the musical and ethnic community she participates in *Yellow Boots* is also problematic. In her paper Grekul writes, “The ‘new’ men in her life save Lilli from her father’s brutality, but not from domination by male figures. That most of them (MacTavish, Tim, Reiner) are sexually attracted to her points rather unambiguously to their ulterior motives in helping Lilli and invalidates a feminist reading of her move to the city” (121). While I agree with Grekul that these male characters in part desire to transform and possess Lilli, I believe that reading her as simply being a pawn of these male characters invalidates her personhood and does not recognize her ingenuity, will power, and imagination. I am not arguing that gender hierarchy and sexism do not exist in the novel—they do—but Lysenko complicates any simplistic readings of the male characters in the book.

Lilli’s attractiveness to Sam, Tim, and Reiner is very much connected to Lilli’s musical ability and their own passion for music. Tim, and Reiner especially, not only offer Lilli support and community as a singer but they also provide Lilli with different ways of connecting to aspects of both her Ukrainian and Canadian identity. It makes sense that Lilli would utilize their affections to her advantage. Lilli meets Tim during their audition for the folk choir and she immediately befriends him. Although Tim’s ethnicity (and last name) is never stated in *Yellow Boots*, he quotes a Shevchenko poem which includes her real name (244), and he accompanies her to the immigrant dances (256) where they are both skillful dancers. Tim’s ethnic street smarts as well as his familiarity with ethnic and Anglo-Canadian institutions of the city become useful to Lilli. For example, he finds Lilli’s birth certificate and reveals that her real name is Oxana. However, Lilli is both able to resist his renaming of her—preferring to stick with the name Lilli—and to bypass his romantic advances and sudden discussion of marriage. Lilli tells him:

“To marry, I don’t think now, Tim. Too much to learn, too much to do. I’m growing too fast, can’t settle down” (245-46). The seventeen-year-old Lilli recognizes what the urban environment has to offer, she exercises her agency, and resists Tim’s advances.

I also object to other critics’ readings of the character of Matthew Reiner, Lilli’s choirmaster who becomes her artistic mentor and the central romantic figure for Lilli in the book. For example, Grekul views Reiner as part of the assimilating Anglo-Canadian society and describes him as “a classically trained musician from Austria, [who] directs a multicultural choir that comprises ethnic immigrant factory workers” (123). While I do agree that Reiner has a political agenda and that his mentoring of Lilli feeds into his political and artistic aspirations, his character is much more complex than Grekul’s statements suggest. First, although the book never explicitly states it, it insinuates that Matthew Reiner is an Austrian-Jewish immigrant. For instance, at the end of the novel when MacTavish and Reiner are watching the audience enter the hall for Lilli’s concert, MacTavish points out two couples, one Jewish and one Scottish, and tells Reiner, “[m]y people and yours” (312). When the reader first makes Reiner’s acquaintance in the novel, Reiner is visited by a friend, Willie Schmidt, a Jewish clothing manufacturer, who studied music at the same Austrian conservatory (229). He chides Reiner about choosing to live in poverty, and he mentions Reiner’s past love interest, Naomi, a woman with a typically Jewish name. Reiner’s background as a Jewish immigrant and the complex history of persecution and discrimination, which would have contributed to his immigration to Canada, problematizes his access to power and Grekul’s interpretation of him as an Anglo-Canadian figure. Instead, I contend that Lysenko attempts to construct Reiner as a hybrid character similar to Lilli. Reiner is a man who “knew several tongues and had a good knowledge of folk lore, because his old home town had contained people of many races” (228).

Reiner's ideas about his working class immigrant choir do not quite coincide with Anglo-Saxon assimilationist values and attitudes. With every song he teaches his choir, he tells his singers "the background of the song, something of the history of the people who sang it, and the traditional interpretation" (228). Reiner also tells Willie Schmidt, "Do you know how many groups are represented in my choir? Over a dozen. I have the benefit of the musical traditions of a dozen countries" (231). Reiner obviously sees the benefits of retaining different cultural traditions, histories, and ties to various homelands, especially as they relate to understanding and producing meaningful music. Although problematic and heavy-handed, Reiner's rhetoric voices Lysenko's pluralist ideas when it comes to identity and culture, the strategy that Ledohowski suggests was so prevalent with many Ukrainian-Canadian authors until the 1980s. The prairie city, with its abundance and diversity of people, organizations and structures, multiplies the possibilities, practices, and communities that different immigrant artists can make or participate in. As patronizing as Reiner may appear in some of his conduct toward Lilli, he is also the one person who in his quest to enable and produce a "true folk artist" pushes Lilli and the reader to confront issues surrounding ethnicity, identity, and art in *Yellow Boots*.

In fact, I believe the novel's most important contribution is that it asks the following questions: Can art transcend difference? What makes a performance of ethnicity authentic? What kind of relationship do artists have with their environment? And how does the urban space constrain or possibly free the ethnic artist? I will focus on the last two questions as they relate to Lilli's urban experience. In her essay, Palmer Seiler writes, that in Winnipeg, Lilli

discovers hollow materialism, exploited workers, ethnic prejudice, and male mentors who, though not at all like her crude, peasant father, nevertheless want to control her. Nor

is the sophisticated urbanity that is so important to her artistically and socially her primary creative inspiration. For she must look to the prairie landscape. (56-7)

Here, I assume that, by prairie landscape Palmer Seiler means rural landscape. Lilli may continue to use the rural prairie landscape as her inspiration for understanding and learning some of the folk songs Reiner teaches her; however, the book resists easy assumptions about what the prairie means to Lilli. During a lesson in which Reiner first admires Lilli as a “child of nature,” Lilli tells Reiner that she had no childhood and that what she remembers from the farm is work (251). Earlier in the book Lysenko shows us that Lilli appreciates the beauty of the rural landscape and is inspired by nature, but in this scene Lilli is obviously reacting and objecting to Reiner’s romanticizing of her and the land. Even though Lilli does complain about the drabness of the city and the urbanites’ lack of attention to their surroundings, Lysenko also shows how Lilli’s singing and musicality is inspired and affected by the city and the factory she works at:

a musical phrase drifted into her mind and commenced to torment her. It was not like anything which she had ever heard before, based on some kind of driving rhythm, rather than on melody. She could not explain it; it puzzled her and kept recurring.

Unconsciously she began to hum it, and beat her feet in time to it. The tune had a powerful hold on her imagination, growing and developing within her during the next few weeks especially during the five o’clock rush. The rhythms of the factory, too, began to obsess her—the throb of machines, the flying shuttles, the whirr of wheels. She began to imitate these sounds, weaving melodies, shrugging her shoulders, pounding her feet, whistling, stitching, humming... She recalled the sounds of workers on the extra gang. She recalled the sound of the jigger when she rode down the long trail of steel. She imitated the sounds and rhythms of the city as she had once imitated the sounds of nature.

(262-63)

In the above passage, Lysenko shows the powerful, visceral, and physical response Lilli has to her urban environment and how this translates into new ways of composing and singing—and perhaps even into new ways of being. Lysenko does well to render the complexity of artistic inspiration, whether it would be in a rural or urban space.

In addition, by referring to the railway, the novel implies that Lilli's artistic sensitivity and her own kind of Ukrainian-Canadianness translates to an urban setting. In her essay Grekul writes, "Curiously enough, *Yellow Boots* suggests that Lilli's move to the city not only does not result in the total loss of her culture (moving to the city enables Lilli to take her Ukrainian part in the city's festive multicultural hubbub), but even gives Lilli, unlike the other members of the Landash family, the potential to preserve her Ukrainian heritage" (124). Grekul questions the probability of this as well as the circumstances of Lilli's visit to her family in rural Manitoba after a seven-year absence. The portrayal of the extent to which Ukrainian customs and traditions at the Landash homestead vanish is unrealistic in the novel. However, I find it problematic that Grekul automatically assumes that Lilli's move to the city must result in the loss of her culture rather than in her adapting her customs and culture to the urban setting. Grekul is unconvinced by Lilli's success as a singer and questions whether her singing and performing are "valid means for maintaining and transmitting cultural traditions" (125). Furthermore Grekul writes that,

Given that Lilli's performances are a superficial mimicry of the rich and complex Old-World culture to which she once belonged, readers must question the underlying message of this novel: we must ask whether a Canada that accepts only remnants like folk songs and dances from non-Anglo cultures is truly multicultural. (127)

While I believe it is fair for Grekul to bring up these ideas because the book itself addresses them and struggles with them, I am surprised that she dismisses Lilli's singing as superficial and inauthentic in comparison to some idealized concept of "rich and complex Old-World culture." While Lysenko's Lilli may not find an ideal balance between her Ukrainian and Canadian identities, *Yellow Boots* does well to present the complexity of the struggle that ethnic artists, who negotiate two or more cultures, experience and the ingenuity required to create a hybrid identity that can accommodate disparate traditions and world views. While it is important to question and be wary of the commodification and fetishization of one's culture, it is also necessary to recognize what a formative text like *Yellow Boots* can contribute to debunking stereotypes and ideas that connection to place, culture, and community on Canadian prairies can only occur in rural, familial, or patriarchal settings. Although there is at times a heavy-handedness in the execution of the novel's characterization, dialogue, and plot, Lysenko's themes, techniques, and tactics are complex. Lilli's negotiations of a hybrid identity are full of subversion, complicity, and plurality. While these negotiations may, at times, appear clumsy, they are in fact, tactical and devious. Lysenko also proposes that the prairie city, in spite of being a place where art and culture are commodified, is a place where the diversity of cultural backgrounds, as well as the dense concentration of people, allows one to negotiate and perform a hybrid identity.

Unlike Connor or Lysenko, who only set parts of their novels in Winnipeg, or prairie writers such as Edward McCourt who are reluctant to name the prairie cities they write about, Marlyn sets his novel *Under the Ribs of Death* (1957), fully and explicitly in Winnipeg. For him, the prairie city plays a vital role in Sandor Hunyadi's quest to overcome childhood poverty and become accepted in Canadian society. As Vanderhaeghe states in *The Urban Prairie*, Winnipeg

gains the status of a character in Marlyn's novel. Winnipeg is also, in part, internalized by the book's protagonist Sandor who comes to view certain areas of the city as aspects of himself, which he then either denigrates or extols. Winnipeg's material markers and the practices of its inhabitants allow themes of loss of identity, consumerism, and mobility to come through, since they are intimately related to place in the novel. In spite of Vanderhaeghe's claim that *Under the Ribs of Death* is a milestone of urban prairie literature, the criticism of the novel has mostly focused on what it says regarding assimilation and Canadian citizenship. Latham Hunter (2003), Benjamin Lefebvre (2009), Daniel Coleman (1997), and Robert Thacker (1982) have all discussed these ideas in articles on Marlyn's book. Therefore, before I move onto Marlyn's construction of urban space and his depictions of the everyday practices that his underprivileged urban characters perform, I would like to summarize Marlyn's ideas about assimilation and how they connect to those of Connor and Lysenko. Marlyn, even more than Connor and Lysenko, constructs the Canadian urban prairie space as one that is vibrant and dynamic, and he portrays the everyday urban practices that allow individuals to subvert and negotiate Anglo-Saxon structures of power for their own means. However, the irony of the novel lies in the fact that its central character, Sandor, chooses to use these everyday practices to reinforce and support the power structures that oppress him.

Most critics agree that, in comparison to Connor and Lysenko, Marlyn is less optimistic about cultural assimilation and shows its disastrous consequences for immigrants. He delves into the self-hatred, greed, disillusionment, and the loss of culture, family, and community that can occur when an underprivileged immigrant buys into myths of social mobility and economic prosperity. From the beginning of the novel, the 11-year old Sandor shows that he has internalized the prejudices and negative attitudes of the majority toward his culture and

surroundings. After he is chased by the English gang and punished for fighting by his father, he tries to explain the situation and to persuade his father Joseph to change their family's last name to avoid discrimination. He tells him, "Pa, the only people who count are the English. Their fathers got all the best jobs. They're the only ones nobody ever calls foreigners. Nobody ever makes fun of their names or calls them 'bologna-eaters,' or laughs at the way they dress or talk" (24). Sandor cannot accept his father's response that everyone is an immigrant in Canada and that it is intellectual and moral growth that matters most because, for Sandor, the constant discrimination and the mistreatment he experiences proves to him that this optimism is not true.

Sandor's sense of alienation is further deepened because as Latham Hunter explains, "not only does Sandor not belong with the English, but neither does he belong with middle-class immigrants—those who have managed to achieve some degree of "English-ness" through financial status" (100). Sandor is thrown out of his childhood playmate's Mary Kostanuk's birthday party because the Kostanuks' wealth and social standing is now above Sandor's, and when the adults and children at the party treat Sandor with disrespect and disgust, he retaliates (40-45). Benjamin Lefebvre writes that *Under the Ribs of Death's* Sandor has few options and "the world of Marlyn's text stages a childhood and an imagined world of stagnation and limited resources rather than opportunity and growth" (36). These limitations are in part due to Sandor's inability to imagine and grow beyond them: he imposes them on himself because he chooses to use his will and creativity to reinforce the established power relations rather than subvert them.

Sandor is exposed to Hungarian culture, music, and community and he is acquainted with books and philosophy through his father's discussions with his neighbours, but he does not see their worth. This is in no small part because his father's intellectual ideas and charity jeopardize the family's prospects for economic security and comfort, especially when Joseph Hunyadi

allows his Hungarian boarders to stay in his home for free. Sandor does, however, experience community with the other impoverished second-generation immigrant children in the North End at the beginning of the novel:

He was sure of himself when he was with the gang, because everybody was the same there. They were Italian and French, and Hungarian, German, Swedish, Russian... [they] dressed the same; they all wanted to get away from Henry Avenue; they talked the same language even though their parents did not. (47-48)

By using irony, Marlyn comments on how poverty and similar economic circumstances can provide a feeling of camaraderie and belonging beyond cultural difference. However, this sense of community is shattered when Sandor no longer wants to partake in his friends' petty crime and is thrown out of the gang. For Lysenko's Lilli, the shared immigrant experience leads her to participate in a diverse cultural and artistic community and allows her to make inroads into the Anglo-Canadian society, but, for Sandor, being part of the immigrant gang may in the future exclude him from the Anglo-Canadian world, so he chooses not to participate and to isolate himself from the other boys.

After his part-time job doing yard-work in southern Winnipeg and his uncle Janos's marriage to a wealthy widow end with disappointment for Sandor, he decides that working for Mr. Nagy, a shrewd Hungarian businessman, not unlike Connor's Rosenblatt, is the best way of achieving his goals of wealth and Anglo-Canadian acceptance. But Nagy decides to sell the business instead of leaving it to Sandor, so Sandor, who has now changed his name to Alex Hunter, attempts to get a job in an Anglo-Canadian firm. However, during his interview, Alex finds that Mr. Atkinson, from Imperial Investments on Portage Avenue, is much more interested in his family connections and nationality than his work experience. Alex is humiliated and

realizes that discrimination against ethnic Canadians and “the invisible barrier at Portage and Main” continues to exist (136). Robert Thacker writes, “to attain even a portion of the personal success he envisions, Sandor must return to the North End, and, in a sense, prostitute himself by manipulating his Aunt to purchase Nagy’s agency for him to manage” (32-3). While Alex may need to be slightly more “devious” in the way he uses his family connections to get ahead, I do not see his maneuvering as more immoral than that of his Anglo-Canadian counterparts who use their family connections to get the positions they are after. The difference is that their “maneuvering” is institutionalized and build into the Winnipeg’ structures of power while Alex’s is not.

Subsequently, Alex marries Mary Kostanuik, makes connections with some Anglo-Canadian businessmen, and moves to a “high-class neighborhood, even if [it is] in the North End” (195). Unfortunately when the stock market crashes and he goes bankrupt, he, Mary, and their young son have to move back to a two-room apartment in the North End. The book ends with Alex in what appears a slightly less antagonistic relationship with his family and father and in tears as he views his young son. In one of the more positive readings of the ending, John Roberts writes that Sandor truly learns that to be Canadian “is to synthesize the Old World and the New” (47). No matter how one reads the ending, Sandor’s parents, brother, and even his wife provide examples of individuals who, in spite of similar discrimination and pressures to assimilate, retain their connection to their family, immigrant culture, and community. In the book, Sandor’s failure comes from his single-mindedly buying into the Anglo-Canadian notions of social mobility and wealth and in devoting his energies to support power structures and organizations of the city that oppress and exclude him and other immigrants. Fortunately, the novel does offer complexity through irony and various devious techniques and strategies. John

Roberts writes that Marlyn

uses sarcasm, parody and dramatic irony to evoke the illusions which leave Sandor confused, alienated, and supporting a false identity in a corrupt Canadian culture.

Sandor's tragedy is that he is unable to perceive the essence of his own experiences, and contrary to the evidence held out to him, persists in believing only in their appearances.

(41)

I will interweave my discussion of these techniques as I explore urban prairie spaces and everyday practices in *Under the Ribs of Death*.

Regardless of Sandor's ideologically compromised and disillusioned perspective, Marlyn uses the description of the setting and irony in *Under the Ribs of Death*, to provide an insightful and vivid glimpse of Winnipeg neighbourhoods, businesses, and individual dwellings. In so doing, he develops the prairie city as a distinct environment worthy of exploration. In the introduction to my thesis, I emphasize the railway's importance to the inception and growth of Western Canadian cities; in his novel, Marlyn dramatizes the physical, social, and economic reality of dwelling near the railway yards and tracks for the city's inhabitants. In "Writing Immigrant Winnipeg: A Literary Map of the City through the First World War," Scott Kraft states:

The North End owed its entire existence to the CPR tracks that sliced across Winnipeg just north of Higgins Street. The tracks not only created a physical boundary—actual tracks for the North End to be on the wrong side of— they also served to insure that many immigrants stayed in the vicinity. The CPR and the Weston depot nearby employed, or at least provided the promise of employment, to thousands of Winnipeg residents. As a result, there were areas to the south of the tracks, like Sandor's Henry

Avenue... that still belonged to the North End. (23)

Sometimes the railway tracks enforce a boundary for Sandor, reinforcing his limits and the stagnation in his life; at other times, they provide means of escape. In either case, the railway is ever present in the novel, and the text portrays immigrants, Sandor among them, as mobile.

Under the Ribs of Death begins with Sandor walking home in the twilight as the lights come on in his neighbourhood. Sandor describes the North End as “an endless grey expanse of mouldering ruin,” and he hears the engines “shunting box-cars to and fro” and smells “coal gas and wood rot,” which proves to him that his neighbourhood is “dirty” and “foreign” (17).

Lefebvre writes: “[F]rom Sandor’s perspective, to be foreign is literally the equivalent of being dirty” (29). Sandor has internalized the ideology and discourses surrounding dirt and immigrants that reinforce power relations in urban spaces. Immersed in the colonial and middle-class ideology of cleanliness and self-betterment, as well as in theories of Western planning where spaces are ordered according to their functions and immigrants and Aboriginal people are to be contained and assimilated, Sandor views his fellow immigrants as dirty and out of place. For example, as Sandor walks his father to work, he describes with irony the contentment of North End residents on a Friday evening:

People sat on their doorsteps, the men quietly smoking, the women sewing or knitting, talking to their neighbours, watching the children at play. A westerly breeze stirred the manure lying on the road. All day long it had been drying in the sun, flattened by wagon wheels, shredded by sparrows. Now the wind brushed over it, with soft fingers pried it apart in little flakes and carried it to the billowy clouds of smoke gushing heavenward from the freight-yard engines, blotting out the early stars; and then settled it slowly and leisurely on the houses and heads of the people below. (29)

Marlyn plays up the contradiction and irony by meticulously describing how waste and filth are inhaled by the North End inhabitants every day. Lefebvre writes that Marlyn's situational irony in the text "rather than invite readers to share Sandor's perspective of shame and filth... undercuts the suffering child's distaste" by rich and gripping descriptions (29).

While Lefebvre illustrates this technique with a different example, I focus on Marlyn's description of the Hungarian-run barbershop, billiard room, and steam bath, which Sandor visits with his father that same Friday evening. Upon entering the empty barbershop, Sandor feels a sense of wonder. He describes how "the peppermint-striped sheets hanging over the chairs gave it a festive air that was augmented by the clean, sweet odour of the lotions and the soap. And there was something gay in the glittering reflection of the coloured bottles in the mirrors" (29). As Sandor's father leads him from the barbershop through to the pool room, the boy observes "smoke spiralling lazily upward to the green enamel reflectors" and men playing pool: he hears them laugh, curse, and talk about women. There Sandor also sees a fashionable young man with greased hair who wears "a dove-grey waistcoat, across which hung a series of gold ornaments on his watch-chain," "a light-coloured shirt with armbands," and "glittering black patent-leather" shoes which "[match] perfectly the cuffs of his tight narrow trousers" (29-30). Later in the text this experience of the barbershop, pool hall, and bath is coloured for Sandor by a humiliating altercation between his father and his father's boss. Nonetheless, Marlyn captures the establishment's vitality, diversity, and energy. He shows the barbershop, pool hall, and sauna as a hybrid, multi-use place where immigrant men meet, make connections, and gain a sense of community away from the Anglo-Canadian organizations, which marginalize them.

In his description of the Hunyadi household, which houses not only the family but other occupants as well, and which lacks clearly designated and ordered spaces, Marlyn proposes

different meanings of public and private space and alternate meanings of family, community, and home. In Sandor's family home, the kitchen and the front room are the Hunyadi's living and working spaces while the upstairs of the house is taken up by borderers which include Mr. Schwalbe and Mr. Laszlo and his friends. When Sandor brings Mr. Laszlo his soup, he is filled with hate for the older immigrants. They smell foreign to him; they have their underwear hanging on a clothesline attached to the rafters; and they are "sitting in a semicircle on wickerwork trunks around Mr Laszlo's cot, in a dim smoke-shrouded tableau" with contented expressions on their faces "as though they were glad and peaceful within themselves and unhappy only outside" (20). John Roberts discusses this example in the context of irony and what he calls as "inversion of the norm" (42). Sandor accurately reads the men's contentment and peace with their makeshift circumstances; however, for him, rather than something to be admired, it is to be despised because he has internalized the ideology of Anglo-Canadian culture and its focus on appearances and possessions. Sandor complains to his mother not only about their poverty but also what he perceives as a disorder in their house, when he tells her, "For over a year I been wantin' to get a bed instead a sleepin' on those chairs. An lookit our house—not even a bedroom" (20). This disorder affects every aspect of Sandor's life:

A shaft of sunlight entered the kitchen window. It struck the pillow of Sandor Hunyadi sleeping there on his makeshift bed of chairs. Ever since the Mancheski chimney had collapsed, the sun had been wakening him. He turned, shifting cautiously: on restless nights the two middle chairs sometimes slid out from under him. (32-3)

Even in his sleep, Sandor is mobile and lacks the stability, privacy, and security others take for granted. In contrast to his own mix-use and disordered home and Mr. Nagy's office where Nagy sleeps in a cubbyhole, Sandor admires the middle class home of the Kostanuiks wherein

“[e]verything was clean and rich-looking” and the floors were “clean enough to eat on” (40).

Sandor rejects the non-nuclear meanings of family and charitable dwelling practices of his father and is enamoured with pristine, middle or upper-class spaces, which are ordered and serve their intended function.

Later in the novel, he compares the North End and its crowded, disordered, makeshift and, for Sandor, dirty surroundings, with the southern neighborhood of River Heights, where he works one summer cutting lawns. He perceives River Heights as idyllically pastoral, isolated from the noises of the railway and factories, and clearly designated as residential.

Unsurprisingly, Sandor’s first impressions of the neighbourhood is of its bright vegetation and cleanliness, in contrast to the dirt and pollution of the North End: “The green here was not as he had ever seen it on leaf or weed, but with the blue of the sky in it, and the air so clear that even the sky looked different here” (64). In River Heights, streets, boulevards, and large houses surrounded by private gardens reinforce ideas of home as a private, safe, permanent space and family as nuclear and exclusive. Moreover, the home of Mrs. Creighton, his employer, is “one of the finest and largest houses on the street, built of solid stone” (65), and this gives Sandor a feeling of pride. Describing the inside of her home, Sandor is flabbergasted by the size and the luxury of the furniture, the vases and the lamps. Some of the material possessions serve a function, but many are there to be simply admired and to be a source of pleasure. He describes paintings “so many he could scarcely see the walls. To match the sofa there were dark red curtains that stretched from the ceiling to the floor. In the far corner stood a piano, beside it a gramophone, and next to that a long table under the window, covered with glass-dogs and horses and flowers” (68). Situational irony occurs again, when Sandor views and compares Mrs. Creighton’s home to the Hamilton family home. Sandor is suspicious of its modernist and sparse

décor, describing the living room as bare. He explains that, “[t]he furniture was like the table in the hall and not even painted. And yet this house was spacious, all sunlight and air. And that cost money, he reflected. This immense room with all its windows would cost plenty to keep warm in the winter. There was money here, all right” (69). Even though Sandor prefers the “comfort, wealth and beauty” of Mrs. Creighton’s home, since he is more inclined to understand wealth as a collection of material possessions, he realizes that even seemingly empty space can be a luxury, and those who possess it move through it and behave differently. While Sandor’s depiction of River Heights may include as many misperceptions as his perception of the North End does, it illustrates how important space is in affecting people’s behaviour, mobility, and identity. Marlyn’s text portrays how prairie cities, with their high density areas as well as their more sprawling and open areas, contain extremes and contradictions, but they also provide diversity and ideas for multi-use of space which can be tapped into and utilized.

Like the colonized and underprivileged people in de Certeau’s argument use the colonizer’s institutions and structures for their means, in *Under the Ribs of Death*, Sandor, through his everyday practices, uses Anglo-Canadian society’s organizations and institutions to his advantage. For example, Sandor’s mother sends him to an Anglican church’s charity drive to pick up a winter coat and shoes that his parents cannot afford to buy. Without proper winter clothing, in Winnipeg’s extreme temperatures, Sandor has to be tactical and creative just to get to the church without freezing. He makes various stops, first at a fruit store and then in the hallway of a small apartment block, to keep warm (103-4). Once Sandor arrives at the church hall, he offers to select his own clothes: “Hidden from view, he made a systematic search through the pockets of the suits and overcoats. Once at a rummage-sale he had found a ten-cent piece in a suit pocket” (104). When he chooses the used winter coat, even though it is too big for him,

Sandor selects the one that is of good quality: “[T]he material was unbelievably thick and soft. He examined the buttonholes and the edges of the cuffs, the way he had seen his mother do at rummage-sales. He scrutinized the lining and the armpits and the collar. There was no sign of wear” (104-105). While the church lady is unable to see him, Sandor also picks up a pair of leather gloves and a scarf, which he hides in the coat’s pockets just in case the woman in charge objects to him taking them. When the church lady is concerned that the garment he has chosen is “a man’s coat,” Sandor reassures her that his mother can alter it to fit him, and, finally, he appeals to her emotions by saying “I won’t be able to go to school if I don’t get a coat” (105). Even though Sandor is embarrassed because he encounters the Hamiltons at the charity drive, he does succeed in obtaining the resources he needs, shows his tactical ability to make the most of the opportunities presented to him, and uses the wealthy citizens’ institutions to his own ends.

A similar display of Sandor’s ability to negotiate the Anglo-Saxon world around him occurs on Victoria Day which also happens to be Sandor’s birthday. First, Sandor wins the essay contest titled “Victoria Day – What It Means to Me” by writing what he believes the teachers want to hear. Second, he re-envisioning Victoria Day as his day when he “[walks] up Main Street toward Portage under the waving flags, jostling his way through the crowds, past store windows gay with red, white, and blue streamers and shields and pictures of the old Queen draped in Union Jacks” (33). When Sandor finds a young south-Winnipeg boy, crying and lost in the crowd carrying a silk flag, instead of helping him, Sandor steals his flag and empties the boy’s pockets. He is able to make his getaway in the city’s downtown because of his familiarity with urban spaces and because he takes advantage of the large crowds lining the road and watching the parade. Roberts believes this is another case of situational and symbolic irony in the text, and he writes: “Sandor waves a full-size Union Jack which he has stolen from a younger boy.

Flaunted then by a street bully, the symbol becomes tainted; it is as superficial as the culture it emblemizes” (42). Sandor’s actions, fraught with conflicting meanings as they may be, illustrate how, by using the colonizer’s symbols for their own means, the underprivileged subvert and corrupt these symbols. That same day, on the way to Mary Kostanuk’s birthday party, Sandor shows similar ingenuity as he raids a park’s flowerbed to pick some flowers for her. While he is being chased toward the rail yard by the English gang, Sandor contemplates stepping off the Salter Street Bridge and killing himself. However, he escapes the gang through his resilience and knowledge of the terrain: “He reached the freight-yards, dropped down on his hands and knees and crawled under the couplings of the first box-cars, ran diagonally across an empty space of track to a day coach, walked quietly through it, and made his way under another two box-cars” (37). Marlyn shows young Sandor’s ability to utilize everyday dwelling practices, mobility, and Anglo-Canadian symbols and organizations for his own needs and desires. Even if Sandor chooses to reinforce rather than subvert the structures of power that oppress him, Marlyn’s portrayal of the rich, multi-use, hybrid immigrant urban prairie spaces proposes alternate meanings of community, identity, home, and work in the novel.

In her novel *Crackpot* (1973), the Winnipeg-born, Jewish-Canadian novelist, playwright, and essayist Adele Wiseman presents early twentieth-century Winnipeg. With gusto and from the perspective of her main character, the Jewish immigrant-turned-prostitute, Hoda, Wiseman addresses stereotypes of immigrants and ideas about urban space. Wiseman’s novel shocks, subverts, and, at times, plays into the stereotypes Winnipeg’s Anglo-Protestant elite held about non-British immigrants. In some ways, Wiseman’s representation of Hoda, her parents, and Winnipeg’s Jewish community is similar to Connor’s closely-knit Slavic quarter in *The Foreigner*. Like the characters in Lysenko’s and Marlyn’s novels, Wiseman’s characters are

aware of the colonial and nationalist discourses surrounding them, but, unlike Lysenko's and Marlyn's characters, they are not isolated, nor are they predominately occupied with the rewards or threats of assimilation. Their struggles to survive and grow spiritually and emotionally are personal, existential, and universal. Hoda's engagement with local religious, political, and social Jewish organizations reflects her interest in larger international movements, history, and communities. Hoda utilizes her culture, language, personality, humour, mobility, and everyday practices to make connections, build community, and create her own economy that allows her to survive in the prairie city. While there is some careful and perceptive criticism of Wiseman's work, none of the critics look specifically at her contributions to urban writing in Canada.

More generally, Donna Bennett explains that compared to Wiseman's earlier novel *The Sacrifice* (1956) which is tragic, *Crackpot* is comic. In Canadian fiction, Bennett sees the comic tradition following the tragic one of Callaghan, Ross, and Grove, and she adds that, "the comic vision breaks up old archetypes and themes, for its underlying task is to convince the reader that the old ways of seeing are inadequate and must be fragmented and restructured" (71). Critics Michael Greenstein (1985), Tamara Palmer (1991, 1996), Ruth Panofsky (1993), and Francis Zichy (2001) read *Crackpot* as being influenced by Jewish culture as well as being a postmodern, de-colonizing, and feminist novel because of its use of literary tools of parody, intertextuality, and transgression; its subject matter of immigrant female ethnic experience; and its themes of unity and fragmentation, art, life, and the nature of reality. However, in the following analysis, I explore Wiseman's comic and postmodern literary techniques as they relate to urban spaces, everyday practices, and mobility.

In *Crackpot*, Wiseman's characters occupy space in unusual ways: Hoda's father Danile is blind, her mother Rahel is a hunchback, and Hoda is obese from the time she is a toddler. The

family's physical deformities lead to their rejection by Danile's wealthy uncle, Nate, who refuses to help the family after they arrive in Canada. In spite of their poverty and of Danile's inability to work, the family is able to survive precisely because of their central location, the high concentration of Jews in their North End neighbourhood, and the connections Rahel is able to establish. Hoda's mother works as a charwoman for better-off Jewish women. Once Rahel dies, and in order to evade the rich uncle who wants to put Hoda in an orphanage and her father in an old folks home, Hoda turns to these tentative Jewish and North End community networks first to find cleaning work and then to build up a client base for herself as a prostitute. Early on in her career, the uninformed Hoda becomes pregnant and gives birth at home to a child whom she is forced to leave at an orphanage. In spite of her loss of innocence and maternal anguish, Hoda continues to support herself and her father. As the plot unfolds, David, Hoda's son, returns to Hoda with other teenage boys as a customer. Faced with rejecting and destroying David's fragile self-esteem, Hoda chooses to suffer and allows him to make love to her.

While Hoda's actions toward her son and her choice of profession is controversial, her work as a prostitute allows her the freedom to move about the city, provide for herself and her father, and to resist and escape Jewish and Anglo-Protestant institutions of the orphanage, public school, and the factory. Because her customers were, first, her acquaintances and companions, Hoda is able to retain a certain independence and standing in the community. Unlike other prairie heroines, Hoda's physical labour is personal and wasteful in that her sexuality is not related to reproduction and does not serve the country or the empire, Although Hoda does feel patriotic when she comforts her customers, the soldiers who are leaving for, or returning from, World War II. In Wiseman's Winnipeg, the divisions between public and private spaces are often tenuous. Winnipeg's City Hall, Main Street, and its public places become Hoda's turf as she walks them

and utilizes them every day, and as she ends up working as a prostitute from her home. I argue that, in *Crackpot*, Adele Wiseman—through her characters’ subversive mobility, through complicating the division between private and public space, through devious literary techniques of parody, humour, and wordplay—proposes alternate meanings of urban prairie spaces, home and family, economy and community, and that she participates in, resists, and subverts Anglo-Protestant and Jewish social and political institutions in the city.

In the novel, Wiseman constructs the prairie city, and Winnipeg’s North End in particular, as a place that engenders mobility, adaptability, and creativity in everyday practical ways. As a young teenager, Hoda makes connections and some money by walking down Main Street, through the Farmer’s market, selling the straw baskets her father makes. When a policeman tells her to leave because she does not have the license to peddle, Hoda does not let the law or city institutions get the best of her. She only vows not to let him catch her next time. Similar to the chance encounters de Certeau discusses in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Hoda explains her experiences as she is walking and talking to people: “[E]ach new human being [is] an open possibility, and yesterday’s people too, though inexplicably unfriendly, [are] renewed possibilities today” (86). Hoda adds, “[s]ometimes, even when she was sure a cop had seen her, he didn’t chase her, if he happened to be a good guy, or in a good mood, or something” (86). Because the individuals are the ones who enforce systems and organizations of the city, they can choose to enforce or subvert the system. Hence, there is a chance that, with luck or with skill, one can elude these authorities.

Along with mobility and everyday practices, Hoda uses her understanding of Jewish culture and traditions and the proximity of the synagogue to attend weddings in the neighbourhood. On occasion, she is able to “slip in and find a place for herself at the banquet

table after the ceremony” (123). She explains “once you were in, nobody was likely to turn you away if you behaved all right, because it’s a sin and a shame to turn someone away from a celebration” (123). Although Hoda lacks wealth and family connections, she capitalizes on the traditions and hospitality of the Jewish community and “[plunges] into their mist, dancing and swinging elbows” (124). At these events, Hoda’s dancing allows her to feel a part of the community, to garner compliments and acceptance, and finally to pick up customers, who, enjoying her attention and the physicality of the dance, proposition her on the dance floor and meet her in the wood yard, the alley, or the boiler room to have sex with her (125). As in the case of her walking in the city, Hoda makes the most of these chances when they present themselves.

In chapter nine, Wiseman depicts one of Hoda’s regular walks to the City Hall to do her civic duty and get tested for infectious diseases and explores Hoda’s interactions with the city spaces and the people on the way there. The chapter depicts the complexity of Hoda’s walking, her various negotiations and subversions of the city’s institutions through everyday practices, reflections, and memories. Hoda explains that she walks instead of taking the streetcar because she believes that the act of passing by may lead “by sympathetic magic, to the right conclusion of her errand” altering the meanings of her actions (203). During her two-mile walk up Main Street, Hoda describes the empty shops, which have gone out of business since her last walk, pawnshops with their one-of-a-kind goods, and, in the spring, “the crude glamour of a new fly-by-night gypsy fortune-teller’s window” (204). Each sight brings up memories for Hoda and presents her with an opportunity to renegotiate her identity and her understandings of her surroundings. During the walk, Hoda’s trajectory intersects with those of old acquaintances, peddlers, and farmers setting up at the market whom she chats up, and “[s]ometimes, on an impulse, because of that sixth sense she had developed for business, she’d detour behind the

Farmer's Market... and if she was lucky she'd maybe do some business with the energetic young teamsters" (204). Even early in the morning, on the way to the clinic, Hoda takes the opportunity to find work. The act of walking and passing by also allows Hoda to take in the diversity of the urban landscape. On her way to the City Hall she walks past the big railway hotel, with rich people and opulent surroundings, and "the beer parlors, where, even at this time of the morning, the half-breeds lounged patiently, waiting for opening time to cut the glare of their days" (205). Rushing past the waiting men, Hoda gets into a brief political debate on "progress" and the mistreatment of Native people, but she also voices her fears of the men who shout "fuck fuck jig jig" (205) as she walks by. Not all of Hoda's encounters in the city are positive ones; knowing when not to stop and how to avoid possible conflict is as vital to Hoda's survival as is the possibility of making connections.

When she arrives at the City Hall, Hoda undercuts its symbolism through subversion and parody by calling it a "nice, big, ugly old building" with "hundreds of little windows set into masses of stale old genital-coloured brick" (208). Moreover, Hoda questions the city hall's authority, function, and its ability to serve all of its citizens by discussing the crippled and homeless war veterans in the vicinity, and reminds the reader that on the city hall's steps Winnipeg's mayor "read the Riot Act and [gave] the order for the militia to charge on the workers in the general strike" (207-208). But most importantly Wiseman undercuts the city's authority by depicting how the civil servants mistreat Hoda, and how she resists their petty efforts. After being laughed at and finally ushered to the cellar at the back of the building where the Public Health office is located, the clinic's staff "[keep] her waiting for hours, and [are] a lot more polite to people who [come] in after her... Sometimes they even made her come back again in the afternoon, and kept her waiting then too" (209). But she subverts their authority through

her verbosity and conversation, not only by addressing the nurses and doctors but also by entertaining the other patients in the waiting room (209). Hoda realizes that her frankness unsettles the employees and their behaviour toward her changes: “[t]he minute they heard her voice, they couldn’t get her out quickly enough. That’s when she really began to enjoy the game” (210). Using their prejudices, closed-mindedness, and prudishness against them, Hoda begins to tease the other patients and make even more inappropriate comments regarding her own work as a prostitute. Hoda’s conversation makes the public servants uncomfortable, and sometimes it creates community between her and the other patients. Her jokes allow them to laugh off and find release for the “jitters” they feel awaiting the doctor or test results in the waiting room (210).

She also corrupts official meanings of civic symbols. For example, Hoda reminds her audience in the waiting room that the city’s motto is “Commerce, Prudence, Industry,” and she claims, “[t]hat’s my motto too” (211). Utilizing the City’s Public Health office as a forum for conversation, Hoda explains how this motto applies to her own work and how her visits to the City Hall’s Public Health office prove her prudence. In one of her verbal musings, she even imagines herself as the city’s coat of arms: “Instead of those pictures they have on that shield up there, that nobody looks at anyway, you know, the sheaf of wheat and the buffalo and stuff, they should pay me to go sit up there, just like I am now, or maybe in my bareskin, on a bench, holding the bottle [with a urine or stool specimen] in my lap” (212). Hoda not only satirizes and subverts official symbols, but she uses the city’s institutions, as manifested in public spaces, to propose alternate meanings of citizenship. At the end of the novel, she adopts the city’s motto and transforms it into “Condoms, Prurience, Incestry” (300). Through her language and wordplay, Hoda redefines Winnipeg as a place that includes underprivileged and marginalized citizens who perform labour that most would consider immoral, wasteful, or unimportant.

Even more than Marlyn's characters do, Wiseman's characters in *Crackpot* use their bodies and everyday practices to blend the public and the private, to utilize the derelict, and to subvert the functional division and ordering of urban places. Wiseman depicts the home that Hoda and her parents share as a makeshift, mobile, and adaptable space for those who are resourceful and capable of utilizing its limited assets:

To Rahel and Danile the very decrepit condition of the house was a positive virtue. Rent was cheap for a place where the tree roots had grown under the verandah and were year by year heaving it more eccentrically askew. The whole verandah was like a wooden wave, in the process of a long, slow-motion undulation. (25)

Furthermore, for Hoda and the neighbourhood children, the shed on the property "made of boards and old tin plate advertisements for soft drinks" is a treasure chest of "rusty and interesting junk" which allows them to play and explore (26). Imagination and ingenuity transforms Hoda's home, and she reflects that, "a blind man's labour had enabled them to turn the inside of a shack into such a pretty home" (215). Danile's straw work not only brings aesthetic pleasure and colour into their home, but it also serves a practical purpose, as the straw mats cover the rough floor and are "tacked to the front wall, to keep out the weather where the verandah had collapsed and ripped away some of their meagre insulation" (215).

In the novel, Hoda also subverts the use of public and private places by having sex in public ones and by working as a prostitute out of her and her father's home. For example, the first time Hoda has sex with Morgan, they are lying on "enclosed stairs that led up to the front doors of the school. It was cosy and private in there under the enclosed arch" (103-4). Hoda continues to have sex there even after she stops attending school. While this is partly out of convenience, there is also a sense that Hoda is reclaiming an Anglo-Canadian space, which,

during the day and under the authority of with the prejudiced teacher Miss. Boltholmsup, is a place of oppression and ostracization for her. Hoda also has sex with her friends in a ditch between a public park and an Anglican graveyard. There, she and the boys as they have a fire and roast potatoes: “[I]n between boys she lay watching the early evening stars and smelling the smoking leaves and sucking the black burnt potato peel-leavings off her lower lip, and resting, and then she took the boys again and she couldn’t help it, she laughed and laughed” (114). Like the school, the park is a public space and the graveyard a “sacred” one. Although they lack wealth or social standing, Hoda and her North-End friends engage in private acts, claim connections and relationships to these public and proper Anglo-Canadian places, and, as such, they propose alternate meanings for them.

Moreover, Hoda subverts the functional division of public and private spaces when she turns her home into a workspace and invites boys and men to have sex with her there. Claiming that she is tutoring the boys, Hoda even introduces them to her blind father, who removes himself to his room to give them privacy while they study. This first occurs when Hoda brings her friend and client Hymie home; in her bedroom, they move the mattress to the floor to reduce the noise. As Wiseman explains, “[a]fterwards, they sat and talked in the kitchen for awhile, and Hoda gave Hymie some tea, and took a cup in to Daddy too, and Daddy called out, ‘study, study,’ encouragingly to Hymie again from his bedroom” (119). First, out of necessity, and later because of the flexibility and safety it allows her, Hoda works out of her home, blends private and public space, and combines her family life with her sexual labour. She also comes up with an ingenious way to sell some of her father’s straw bags and baskets when she offers to include them with her services, and customers who want to get on her good side buy them from her (119-20).

Hoda's labour is physical, but, unlike the work of other prairie heroines, it does not contribute to the nation or the empire through farm or factory work, or pro-creation and reproduction of patriarchal economy and society. While Hoda operates within established systems and economies, she also establishes new connections and communities with urban outsiders such as the Marxists or leftists, which include Mr. Polonick and some of her customers. As she parodies the language of civic bureaucracy, Hoda also parodies Marxist ideology when she jokes with one of her customers about her employability outside of the capitalist system asking him, "What will I do for a living, comrade?" (177). He answers her that after the revolution "when you fornicate it will be only for pleasure, with dignity, for fulfillment of the highest functions of womanhood" (177). Hoda humorously uses these discourses, as she does the city's institutions, for her own means. Hoda's resourcefulness along with her access to the diverse, mix-use urban spaces enables her to navigate her world with complexity and ingenuity. By being a good housekeeper, daughter, and a hard worker at the same time as a prostitute and an outsider, Hoda proposes alternate meanings of home, family, and labour.

Alberta-born, Ukrainian-Canadian, George Ryga is mostly known for his plays and his rural prairie fiction but he also wrote a short urban prairie novel that demands critical attention. *Night Desk* (1976) is an episodic and rambling novel about a Ukrainian-Canadian ex-wrestler and fight-promoter, Romeo Kuchmir, who tells his stories to a clerk working the night shift at Edmonton's Selkirk hotel in the late 1960s. In spite of his role as Kuchmir's scribe, this young man, referred to only as Kid, almost completely vanishes from the text. He only reappears in Kuchmir's rhetorical figures of speech at crucial moments in the novel, which draw the reader's attention to the practical and the ethical relationship between the listener and the storyteller. Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg and even Vancouver figure in Kuchmir's stories. He recounts

episodes as far back as his impoverished childhood in a small town just outside of Calgary, and he briefly speaks of his wife and son whom he left to live a mobile existence, first as a wrestler, then as a fight promoter, and later, when necessary, as a dealer of stolen government building supplies. Living in hotel rooms for six months at a time, Kuchmir's mobility allows him to make brief, intense, and meaningful connections with other wrestlers, prostitutes, workers in the service industries, and urban outsiders. Like Wiseman's Hoda, Kuchmir negotiates the city's institutions and subverts economic, social, and religious authority by working for himself, remaining mobile, promiscuous, and creative in his everyday practices. Through Kuchmir, Ryga proposes meanings of labour and home that lie outside of nationalist and colonial constructs and ideologies, which are used to oppress immigrants, the poor, and the disadvantaged. Ryga also uses fragmented, orally-inflected narration as his central devious literary technique to depict the urban prairie experience as robust, episodic, irreverent, obscene, satirical, and poignant all at once.

In *Night Desk*, Ryga portrays city spaces that complicate the private and public, day and night, legal and illegal, as well as moral and immoral dichotomies through subversive dwelling, working, and sexual practices. The hotel is such an urban place, and by making it his home, Kuchmir subverts and negotiates city institutions and organizations and establishes a community among urban misfits. Early in the novel, as he is leaving a coat and shirts for overnight cleaning, Kuchmir reveals to Kid that he has stayed at the hotel "on and off for fifteen years" (14). Dwelling at the Selkirk hotel, among other mobile, poor, and disadvantaged people, allows Kuchmir to utilize his ingenuity, improvisation, as well as his acting and speaking skills rather than rely on material resources, which he often lacks. When it comes to money, Kuchmir tells Kid that "[a]ll I gather around me are bandits... They'd pick my pockets if I broke my leg.

Which is alright, because I'd do the same" (38). Kuchmir includes the staff of the hotel among these bandits: he tells Kid that his predecessor, Sam, was an army veteran and a drunk; that Mark, the head clerk, is a lazy petty thief; that the manager, Matt, sold lame horses and tainted food to Natives on reservations and "stole another man's wife an' money to buy the hotel;" and that the bellhop is nicknamed Clapper because of his venereal disease (38-40). Among misfits, bandits, and the impoverished, the rules and stakes are different and seem to be more negotiable. For example, Kuchmir tells Kid how he once got barred from the hotel for six months because of having run up a bill of eight hundred dollars which the staff tried to collect from him: "[T]hey were threatening, hinting my luggage could be seized an' the lock changed on my door. I laughed at them, sayin' if they was to do that, I'd consider my account settled with a plastic suitcase an' twenty dollars worth of socks an' underwear" (40-41). In spite of such hostilities, the next time Kuchmir has money, he returns to the Selkirk hotel and is welcomed back. Although he complains to the Kid about the condition of his rooms, he has a special arrangement with the hotel staff, in part because of his flexibility and the business he brings in. The passage below illustrates this:

You seen for yourself the hotel rooms I get – the worst rooms in the house for Romeo Kuchmir, because when he's in place it's home to him, an' he stays for six months. Okay, so I get a twenty percent discount, but twenty percent of what... The plaster's peelin', windows haven't been washed since the war ended, waterpipes play like an organ when I turn a tap to brush my teeth. I hear the languages of half the world through the walls, floor an' ceiling. An' when I need to crap it's half-mile walk down the corridor to the men's john, which is occupied half the times I need it. (41)

Even though his rooms are run-down, it is precisely because of the hotel's derelict nature and

crooked management that Kuchmir can get away with his intimidation and bending of rules.

Ryga also depicts the hotel's lack of division between private and public spaces and displays how Kuchmir uses his acting ability, as well as his ingenuity, to make the most of unfavourable circumstances. Kuchmir reveals that several years before Kid's time, he was so poor that he owned only one suit, and in order to leave it for overnight cleaning in the lobby, he would visit the front desk in his undershorts. When two older female hotel guests came upon him half-naked chatting in the lobby with the night clerk, he began crying and told them "[a] burglar comes into my room. He takes everything I own, ladies! My shirt, my pants, my socks, my wallet, a photograph of my wife an' children, my prayerbook!"(18). The women, believing his story and ironically wanting to restore his faith in humanity, give him five dollars each. The hotel's public nature enables Kuchmir's access to strangers upon whom he can exercise his hustling skills.

On the other hand, the hotel's function as a private space or home engenders community among its workers and the guests. One night, Kuchmir tells Kid: "You sweep the lobby floor even when it's clean – why? It's not the shiny floor or the polish on the desk that brings me down to talk to you. It's the feel of men, the sound of things not said" (21). While some things do remain unsaid, everyday exchanges and practices such as passing off the laundry and witnessing clients coming and going lead to connections and confidences, such as the ones from Kuchmir regarding his visit to the ballet. Anticipating Kid's response, Kuchmir says: "Does that surprise you? I'm not a barrel of water... or a stack of hay. I'm a man! An' I want the best for myself, an' the same for you. So I dress up in my grey suit, polish my shoes an' I go to the ballet to sit among women who smell like a flower garden dyin' of frost" (11). Just as a mix of public and private space leads Kuchmir to act and project what others want to see, it also exposes some

of his more intimate acts to others. Such exposure forces Kuchmir to be vulnerable, and honest and to share what these actions mean to him. Moreover, Kuchmir does not only feel community with Kid but also with others whom he calls night people, since they do not keep regular hours and frequent similar late night urban places as the ones he does. He tells Kid: "I'm not alone. There's night people in every city — news-papermen, hustlers, bootleggers, pastry cooks, guys like you on night shift, cops, burglars, taxi drivers. Sometimes I feel like my skin's been washed by stars an' black wind... I feel good an' glad to be among the night people" (73). Like Lysenko's Lilli, by occupying and moving through the same spaces and performing similar everyday practices as other urban inhabitants, he feels a sense of community in the city.

Ryga also depicts Kuchmir's everyday practices and labour, which subverts the law and other city institutions. In doing so, he points out the corruption and the absurdities that underlie ideologies and symbols of imperialism and nationalism in Canada. To illustrate his contempt for the way other men needlessly cling to rules, law, and authority in everyday life, Kuchmir describes an old man he encountered in Winnipeg. On a bitter winter night, the man waited for the red light to change on a deserted street. The old Ukrainian told Kuchmir: "I'm not the queen of England. If I break the law, I pay a fine!" (31). By the end of the night, Kuchmir has the man convinced that some laws can be broken and authority can be subverted every day. Ironically, the old man's first act of civil disobedience, peeing into Winnipeg's parking meters, leads to his incarceration because he lacks the mobility, experience, and resourcefulness that Kuchmir possesses. In addition, when he cannot make money promoting wrestling, Kuchmir is also not afraid to break the law and supplement his income by dealing with crooked government contractors. Kuchmir explains that these men get their contracts through family connections and they pilfer the extra supplies: "Cement disappears, carpets grow wings, government bought

panelling ends up on the walls of the best homes in the west end. So I buy cement from one crook for a dollar a bag an' resell it to another for a dollar-fifty. I only deal when I'm hard up" (44). While to some degree Kuchmir is a part of their corrupt economy, his independence and outsider status allows him to acknowledge the corruption and to use the system to make the most of the opportunities that come along.

Ryga illustrates the difference between Kuchmir's behavior and that of the underhanded politicians and businessmen by recounting an incident from Kuchmir's work in fight promotion. One time, the city officials throw Kuchmir a dinner at an exclusive restaurant because he has brought a contender for the world heavyweight title to Edmonton. The guests include the city mayor, chief of police, car dealers, trade union representatives, and their wives. At the dinner, "[t]hey talk about culture for the common man, how the country is growin' up, that work, hard work, has its rewards. How enrichin' it is for the common man to have a chance to see a good fight... they're talkin' so they can make back the money they've invested" (70). Seeing through their civic propaganda and their attempts to insure their financial interests, Kuchmir plays along eats their food, flirts with their wives, thanks them, laughs, and leaves. When the wife of an advertising executive follows him out, he spends the night with her in a hotel room. In the morning, however, when she is sleeping, he "[clips] a fifty dollar bill into her hair, so she's sure to see it when she goes into the bathroom. Doin' that, I paint a line between them an' me. Doin' that leaves me free. I'm a hustler who owns nothin', an' doin' that leaves me free to burn their house down" (71). By pinning the money into the woman's hair, Kuchmir implies that he cannot be bought and that it is the woman and her wealthy friends who are prostituting themselves. Through Kuchmir's metaphor of "burning their houses down," Ryga illustrates why the mobility of landless people threatens those who believe in the value of land, wealth, and property.

Without property, possessions, or a reputation to protect, Kuchmir cannot be controlled or coerced to act in a way that will enforce established economies, class structures, ideologies, and meanings. Unlike the characters in Lysenko's or Marilyn's novels, Kuchmir welcomes the possibility of destruction and change.

In *Night Desk*, Kuchmir especially points out the hypocrisy and absurdity of immigrant, poor, and disadvantaged Canadians buying into the colonial organizations, symbols, and ideologies they do not believe or understand. He explains why he does not respect the police:

[T]he guys who become cops were refugees from the same street corners an' dried out barley fields as I was... Givin' them a uniform kept them from bustin' windows an' tellin' the world they was alive, strong, horny, an' needin' things. These cops were told they now served the queen. Not the banks, or railroads, or even people, but a queen who wouldn't know if Wetaskiwin, Alberta was in the Sudan or in the Northwest Territories! Those punks wouldn't know a queen if they caught her lifin' panty-hose at Woolworth's (82).

Kuchmir demonstrates how ideology and symbols of colonialism are disseminated and used by institutions of the law to make the poor and disadvantaged complicit in the systems that oppress them. Therefore, he uses his labour as well as his subversive mobility and everyday practices to provoke men into rethinking their actions, and he makes it harder for policemen to enforce the rules he does not agree with.

Finally, through Kuchmir's robust, fragmentary, and irreverent narration, Ryga draws the reader's attention to the struggle over language, and he implies that narrative authority, meaning, and identity are negotiable, ambiguous, and multiple in the urban prairie setting. In his introduction to a 2004 edition of Ryga's prairie novels, James Hoffman writes: "[I]n the

multiplicity of stories told in each narrative, in the onrush of their telling, there is a feeling of incompleteness, of a lack of clear beginnings and endings, [lack] of narrative and thematic coherence” (9). As in the incident with the two elderly women in the hotel lobby, Kuchmir’s non-linear, episodic, and fragmentary storytelling, makes the reader aware that sense, or meaning, is in part dependent on whether one is engaged by Kuchmir’s skill as a storyteller and whether his control of the language and his performance of it are convincing. The anecdotes the ex-wrestler tells point to the fact that Kuchmir and the other characters, rather than being involved in conflict with the land or in physical conflict with each other, are more severely tested through verbal battles as they attempt to out-talk each other. There are instances in the novel when Kuchmir’s mastery of language and performance is obvious and allows him to subvert city institutions, such as when he convinces a dull-witted policeman that he is not the man who verbally abused him and dropped a paper bag of water on him from his hotel room window (76-82). More rarely, Kuchmir is, himself, the victim of others, who verbally outwit him. For example, the cement truck driver who refuses to do any heavy lifting with outrageous claims of an injury to his anus in order to prevent Kuchmir from demanding the work he is owed. Even though Kuchmir tells him to be quiet, the man continues by saying, “two doctors worked for an hour scrapin’, cuttin’ away the damages an’ then sewin’ my blow hole back together. I was sicker’n a dog for weeks after. Had to learn to crap standin’ up” (46). The truck driver’s relentlessly obscene and absurd tale strategically puts off Kuchmir, causing him to be unwilling to dispute the man’s claims preferring to avoid speaking to him all together. Kuchmir’s speech and performance also allows him to subvert conventional and heterosexual ideas of normative sexuality as he talks his evangelical cousin Stella into a lewd but harmless sexual act (19), or shares with Kid his sexual encounters with Jiggy Munroe (111). Kuchmir uses the presence of a

diverse and marginalized urban audience and his skill as a storyteller to describe the beauty of sexual acts, which would by some be considered immoral. Kuchmir's vitality and passion also convince the reader that each episode had profound meaning for him.

Finally, *Night Desk*'s last scene illustrates how prairie writers can use transgressive, sparse, direct, and intensely local narration to usurp prairie realism and write into being new kind of dynamic prairie spaces. In this scene, Kuchmir is challenged by a female reporter, who will later become his lover, to say "something" that will prove to her "[t]hat death is some place over there but we're living, moving" (315). Kuchmir takes up her challenge. By telling a story of creation and by placing himself as the creator of a new world, he shows language's ability to transcend limits:

All I see through the lights an darkness is what I might've been, what we all might've been, a burnin' dart, fallin' through the sky. Fire an' ice. My arms stretching out collectin' dreams an' dust. Then with my hands, I make a world. When it's made, I stamp on it with my foot, an' it don't fall apart. (122)

In the above passage, mobile, subversive, and fragmented narration is able to provide an escape from the rigidity of prairie realism and the confines of strict narrative authority and coherence; it also allows a new voice and prairie identity to surface. Immigrant, migrant, urban, and sexually deviant, Kuchmir resists political, economic, and familial bonds, and he is the antithesis of the ideal prairie hero. In the context of the post-colonial prairie identity, Hoffman proclaims that Kuchmir as "[a] 'night person'... identifies positively with the marginalized other; as a "fighter" he defies the institutional authority of church and state; as a self-proclaimed actor he models the performative characteristics of an emerging hybrid culture" (19). As Ryga's portrayal of Kuchmir's verbal agility and performance suggests, prairie inhabitants have the agency and

ingenuity to pursue their desires and voice their meanings in the urban space.

As I argue in this chapter, Eastern-European immigrant novels by Lysenko, Marlyn, Wiseman, and Ryga, portray urban prairie spaces as unique worlds worthy of attention and recognition. These cities contain diverse and mobile populations, mixed-use urban ghettos as well as widely spaced-out neighbourhoods. The versions of Winnipeg and Edmonton portrayed in these books exemplify change, mobility, and contradictions, but, more importantly, they are places where, through their everyday practices, the underprivileged can subvert the institutions of those in power. From Lysenko's novel onward, immigrant writers use their cultural traditions and adapt their contemporaries' genres and literary techniques to depict their hybrid urban experiences and identities on the Canadian prairies. *Crackpot* and *Night Desk*, in particular, use fragmentation, intertextuality, wordplay, and transgression to depict cities where resourceful and devious immigrants can form communities and connections that are beneficial in negotiating both their ethnic and Canadian identities and cultures. Finally, Lysenko, Marlyn, Wiseman, and Ryga propose economies where labour on the prairies is artistic and personal and where communities and familial and personal relations are not modeled on patriarchal social order.

Chapter 4

Mobility, Community, and Everyday Practices in the Work of Marvin Francis

In his work, Marvin Francis struggled with the urban and rural dichotomy and with constructing the city, the bush, and in-between prairie settings as complex and worthwhile places for artists, and Native artists in particular. Of Cree ancestry, Marvin Henry Francis was born at the Heart Lake Nation near Grande Prairie, Alberta on December 26, 1955. His family left the reservation when he was six years old because his mother did not want Francis and his siblings to attend residential school. When he died in Winnipeg in 2005, Francis was completing a doctorate in English at University of Manitoba. But the negative experiences of culture shock, racism, and poverty he first experienced in the 1970s as a migrant Native man shaped his early poems, plays, spoken and visual art. Early on, Francis portrayed the city as financially and morally corrupt in contrast to a more nostalgic and natural rural world. However, as Francis matured and permanently settled in Winnipeg in the 1980s, his urban environment became his inspiration and, as I argue in this chapter, the creative impetus for his wordplay, humour, wit, and innovation. He came to see the prairie city as under-represented in Canadian and Native art and literature. Thereby, in his writing, visual art, and academic work, he also explored the city's positive aspects, such as cultural diversity and access to art, education, and community.

In this chapter, I look predominantly at Francis' urban writing in the Archives at the University of Manitoba, his long poem *city treaty* (2002), and the posthumously published *bush camp* (2008). Like the colonized people in de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Francis uses the system and organizations of the colonizer for his own means, and, in his multidisciplinary body of work, he depicts devious and everyday practices that subvert colonial

ideologies and capitalist economies. His devious literary techniques such as wordplay, parody, and the utilization of history and popular culture allow Francis to astutely critique his environment. Francis' work also lends itself to a textual reading of competing mobilities that Tim Cresswell proposes in *On the Move*. Because of the diversity of his characters and the abundance of mobility in his work, Francis brings out the positive and negative aspects of mobility. He depicts the possibility for connection, support, and community as well as isolation, instability, and loss of identity. Even though Francis continued to struggle and never permanently resolved the contradictions between the urban and the rural prairie, he worked toward depicting all types of labour as integral. He also viewed mobility and creativity as necessary in everyday practices of rural, urban, and in-between prairie dwellers. His texts make a case for individuals' capacities to use everyday practices, their labour, and their art to propose alternate meanings and systems that do not oppress and exploit Aboriginal, migrant, and other disadvantaged peoples. In the end, Francis shows how profoundly urban and rural spaces are connected. Understanding this connection can help Western Canadians exercise their agency and live meaningful lives, not just in prairie environments but in larger national and international contexts.

I begin with an exploration of Francis' early unpublished urban writing located in the University of Manitoba Archives. These writings introduce themes of mobility, labour, consumerism, and everyday urban practices that are further developed in *city treaty* and *bush camp*. I use archival material here and in the second chapter of my thesis to bring attention to historical and contemporary urban prairie writing that has been neglected and critically unexplored. Because of his early death, Francis' published work does not reflect the scope of his artistic endeavours nor of his vision. Consequently, archival research provides invaluable

material to help understand his literary and artistic contributions. Still, while Francis' archival material is rich and fascinating (and includes his poetry, plays, drawings, academic papers, and personal correspondence), it often contains work that did not have the benefit of extensive revision and editing. Even so, I believe such material has a place in helping to understand the author's motivations, themes, and techniques.

Furthermore, Francis was personally interested in working with archives. Following a graduate class with David Arnason that inspired his interest, Francis presented a paper titled "Archiving Aboriginal Literary Work in Canada: (archive deprived, looking for red, and archiva saliva)." In this paper, contained in University of Manitoba Archives, Francis asserts that "the first archive on this continent was pemmican," and he suggests

that all archives, just like pemmican, need a lubricant to allow the discharge of words, and that this liquid is "*archiva saliva*", a process where the contents of an archive, lies dormant, like a seed, or hibernating bear, until the saliva prepares the archival fond for the digestion of others. (Box 1 Fd 9 Page 1)

Francis' metaphor redefines the archives, which can appear dry and inaccessible, as food and nourishment that becomes palatable through the researcher's labour and benefits a wide audience. Francis uses bodily language and Aboriginal symbols and culture to reclaim the archival records, which some, including Jane M. Jacobs (113), view as being a part of the colonizing endeavour of categorizing and oppressing indigenous populations. In fact, Francis raises the problematic nature of the archives with their non-inclusion of Native voices, their privileging of written records over oral accounts, and their de-contextualization of oral stories by disregarding the Aboriginal community, material culture, and traditional modes of communication from which they originate (5-10). As part of his project for Arnason's class,

Francis interviewed Aboriginal writers Duncan Mercredi and Jordan Wheeler to add their voices to the archives. He also suggests that, when possible, the archivist should “go outside of the archive” and into Aboriginal communities to search for truth that is “spoken, and heard, rather than written and seen” (6). In spite of the problematic nature of the archives, Francis saw enormous potential in the archives’ future availability to a larger community. He writes: “The archive as conduit channels information through the researcher, to scholarly publications and discussions, to those who interact with these written and oral documents” (10). For Francis the key to how archival research would be received, understood, and used was the individual researcher; he wrote “the archival search varies for every individual, as they touch upon different fonds, with diverse intentions and perspective[s]” (11). Like de Certeau’s disadvantaged and colonized peoples, Francis saw the possibilities for Aboriginal scholars to exercise their agency and ingenuity by using the archives for their own purposes. Francis concludes his paper by writing, “The saliva, or the words of the writers, prepares the materials for consumption, and anything consumed has value” (12). To expand Francis’ metaphor, further ingestion, consumption, and conversation regarding his archival material can only nourish the body of aboriginal literature that is being written, discussed, and studied.

Francis’ early, unpublished poetry in the archives provides a roadway into the ideas of mobility, community, and everyday practices in the city. The poem “Ain’t Got No Money,” included in a letter dated July 17, 1985, explores the theme of mobility as it uses walking in the city as a metaphor for life. Lines such as, “Seven bucks left,/And a long way to go” and “no one cares in the big city” give voice to the alienation and the poverty the speaker experiences upon arriving in the city (Box 4 Black Exercise Notebook). This is precisely what Francis comments on in his article in *Canadian Dimension*, “My Urban Rez”: “I am part of the massive migration

of Aboriginal peoples to the city.... The in-your-face racism of the seventies, when I first began to live on my own, led to extreme difficulty in finding a place to rent, employment and acceptance” (39). In spite of some obvious end rhymes and a melodramatic aside, which appears almost like a stage direction near the beginning of the poem, Francis’ ability to depict the act of passing by, the bleakness, and the small joys of urban reality and experience is apparent. Later in the poem, Francis comments on how quickly one’s circumstances can change in the city:

things happen,
that shouldn’t,
but do
it’s called cash... now you see things,
in a different sort of way. (Box 4 Black Exercise Notebook)

The poem ends on a more neutral and hopeful tone with the lines “sun still shines” and “time for some walking” (Box 4 Black Exercise Notebook). In a preliminary way, Francis’ career-long exploration of walking and mobility as an everyday way of exercising one’s agency and desire begins to take shape in this poem.

Some of Francis’ early explorations of mobility and everyday practices in the city were also innovative and more playful than the above poem. In “My Urban Rez” Francis writes:

I often have had to live in ‘the hood,’ where the sounds of a blaring siren [became] normal. As a writer, perhaps this was beneficial as I weaved, my way through the pawn shops, the Main Street strip... All of these violent, down-and-out ingredients formed my first impressions of this city environment. (39)

Rodent Poetry appears to be a response to these early experiences, and this concept occupied Francis' imagination for some time. He records it as one of four possible chapbook titles and below lists individual poems "Rat Bite Fever," "The Lemming," and "M.T.N.9" (Box 5 CN Internal Correspondence Notebook). The last of these, "Mouse Trap Number Nine," was published posthumously as part of *bush camp*. Francis' use of rodents to symbolize the downtown urban dwellers, the poor, and the street people helps one understand the evolution of the themes of mobility and everyday practices in his later work. Rodents are considered to be bold, sneaky, devious, resourceful, and mobile, but they are also thought to be dirty and diseased creatures, and Francis plays with these ideas. Many of these rodent poems are unfinished, but one of Francis' poems, "big boys," plays up the "in your face" rodent bravado with

what's a poem about snakes doing in rodent poetry?

well, we're rodents man!

we do what we want

cruising downtown

deaf to all

you better listen to us

we don't hear you

sssssssss! (Box 9 Fd 6)

The snakes are aspiring to the rodents' independence, style, and attitude. The passage above emphasizes mobility as providing visibility, voice, and power. The poem "Rat Bite Fever," on the other hand, touches on the less pleasant aspects of street life such as desolation, depression, and contamination:

You can always tell

Someone bitten
By their quiet ways
The unseemly pain
A soul stretched too far
Too thin too porous
To take up the chase. (Box 7 Fd 4)

Francis is keenly aware that rodent or street life requires vigilance and physical mobility. Thus it can be so demanding it leads to emotional stagnation and despair.

However, Francis engages with these rodent ideas and characters and transforms them in his work, especially by focusing on the lemming as his rodent of choice. Francis' poem "The Lemming" appears as part of an unpublished play called *The Lemmings*; the poem and the play develop Francis' ideas of mobility, everyday practice, and performance. Most lemmings reside in northern habitats, are known for their swarming migrations, and can become aggressive. Their groups become larger if their populations are unchecked. Contrary to popular belief, which, according to Karl S. Kruszelnicki, is founded in the 1958 Walt Disney film *Wild Wilderness*, lemmings do not plunge off of cliffs into the sea in order to kill themselves, but they do attempt to swim across rivers in their mass migrations (Kruszelnicki n.pag). Perhaps this popular misconception, lauding the lemmings' persistent and destructive nature, attracted Francis to them.

The Lemmings is set in a seedy bar, a dive motel, a street corner, and on a cliff near the river in a Western Canadian city. The play follows the fortunes of a gambling bartender, a broke middle-aged man, a bag lady, a young drifter, and a poet in her thirties. The poet shares her rat poetry with the audience and, by the end of the play, throws herself off the cliff. One of the most

interesting aspects of the play is its rodent poetry. In scene three, Trish, the poet, recites the poem “The Lemming”:

he was running too
he was one of them
the joy of being one
hot furry bodies pressed against him
getting closer
closer
to the edge. (Box 8 Fd 7 pg 22-23)

The thirst to be a part of a community, even if it is one that is about to self-destruct, is evident in the poem. The play comments on the nature of mobility as being both destructive but also necessary in order to make connections.

In another scene from *The Lemmings*, two urban characters use tap water to make canned tomato soup in the bar’s bathroom sink. With such humour, Francis celebrates the resourcefulness and survival skills of his urban lemmings. Like rodents, the characters adapt and use devious everyday practices, which include sleeping in parks and public spaces. They challenge the appropriate use of places as well as meanings of cleanliness and purity. In *In Place/Out of Place*, Cresswell discusses how urban practices, such as graffiti, despoil the surface. As a result they challenge “whole sets of meanings—neighborliness, order, property” and suggest that the body of the city, which has come to represent order and harmony, is ill (40). By embracing the rodent as a symbol of the urban poor, Francis embraces the more negative aspects of mobility and the urban environment, such as dirt and disease.

As with rodent poetry, the concept of the core or the people of the core occupies Francis' early Winnipeg poetry and relates to his changing ideas about mobility and the possibility of establishing a community among impoverished urban dwellers. His archival material contains many attempts at poems about the core, or downtown Winnipeg, which never materialized into finished pieces. Francis was working toward a language to capture the urban, Native, and street people's experiences as visceral and complex. In a fragmented poem, "We the People of the Core" ("Draft One F! #&%¢#\$¢¢ing Million"), Francis summarizes the physical reality of the downtown world with the line "the core is rotten" (Box 7 Fd 5). Similarly to the way Cresswell employs the metaphor of the ill body, Francis shows that the city is a diseased apple because its core is spoiled. Francis depicts this despoiling by writing:

Living in the Heart of an Apple

Drinking Thru the Night

Fighting Fumes in my Hair

Gasoline Sniffer Running Downtown

Indians and Bikers

Dirt and More Dirt. (Box 7 Fd 5)

However, Francis is also aware that the perception of the downtown is for the most part based on the expectations of outsiders, and he draws attention to the fact that it is not actually the people who live in city centre that determine its fate: "Big Changes Downtown/Too Bad We're not Included [sic]." In a paper written in 2003 for one of his English courses "Voices From Dark Rooms: Winnipeg's New Occidental Hotel and the Spectre of Main Street," Francis explains, "Main Street is also a prime thoroughfare for most of the population of Winnipeg, and their impression of the strip, based on these quick glimpses and newspaper headlines, is that of skid

row” (Box 1 Fd 9 page 4). He further asserts that such impressions are “limiting” and steeped in “urban mythology” while the voices of downtown’s inhabitants continue to be “hidden” and ignored. Francis writes: “The sea of authoritative voices flushes these edgewalkers aside, even if they get interviews” (Box 1 Fd 9 page 5). He footnotes this comment with the following: “I personally call those who live on the edge, like mixed bloods, or street people, or daredevils, edgewalkers” (5). In his work, Francis progressed from the metaphor of a mousetrap and that of a rotten core toward the idea of margins and edges where individuals can negotiate their environment through mobility and everyday practices. As Francis’ skills and confidence grow, the lemmings on the edge of the cliff and the people of the core in his early poetry become the active treaty busters and edgewalkers in *city treaty* and Jenny and Johnny in *bush camp*.

These early core poems also explore how mobility, community, and consumerism affect the migrant, urban poor, and Native populations. In a notebook that contains several attempts at a core poem, the various versions of the poem introduce competing mobilities in Winnipeg’s downtown. In his first attempt Francis states, “all my buddies in the core are gone so I/ guess I’m going too” (Box 5 CN Internal Correspondence Notebook). This poem alludes to the sense of community the people of Main Street, especially Native people, once found in downtown Winnipeg. In the above-cited paper, Francis talks about how Main Street flourished in the 1970s due to the influx of Native people and “especially their money” which supported the shops, restaurants, hotels, and other businesses on the street (Box 1 Fd 9 pages 7-10). He cites various Aboriginal artists’ recollections and writes: “[t]he unity of the Main Street experience, and downtown in general, forms a network among some Natives that defies some of the skid row stereotypes” (Box 1 Fd 9 page 8).

In the second attempt at a core poem, Francis writes: “went walking down main checking/ the central Europe look” (Box 5 CN Internal Correspondence Notebook). Here, he alludes to the fact that central European immigrants were one of the many waves of immigrants to occupy Main Street and the North End of Winnipeg only to abandon it (Box 5 CN Internal Correspondence Notebook). He implicates these immigrants in the street’s history of mobility that is necessary and even healthy because, as he writes in his paper, “the human landscape of Main is always shifting, from recently arrived immigrants to the kid from a reserve in the north” (Box 1 Fd 9 page 10). In the third attempt at the core poem, Francis touches on the theme of consumerism and the mobility of the wealthy, referring to the fact that the gentrification of downtown Winnipeg displaces the urban poor. He writes that his speaker

went down main to check out the people
of the core
but
wearing them the street
produced
a dollar sign
too high
for me to reach
one that
wasn’t there before. (Box 5 CN Internal Correspondence Notebook)

In these rough drafts, Francis hints at the complex history of Winnipeg and the competing mobilities among its diverse populations, and he begins to critique capitalism and consumerism. Francis will later cultivate these themes in *city treaty* and *bush camp*. The copious drafts of the

core poems show Francis' early struggles as a poet to find the right language, metaphors, figures, and techniques in order to genuinely express city centre's inhabitants' hardships and their innovation and creativity in their movements and everyday practices.

Some of Francis' other poems, written before *city treaty*, show the development of the techniques of wordplay and defamiliarization, as well as his adaptation of a humorous persona. The use of popular culture, history and literature, and Native culture and traditions also became a part of Francis' unique style at the time. By drawing on diverse techniques and subject matter, he was beginning to address topics of community, mobility, art, and labour with more complexity than he did earlier in his career. In a poem called "Downtown Psych Words," Francis takes on the topic of madness, behavior, and psychology of downtown Winnipeg. He begins the poem with wordplay:

eat an apple downtown
get your ass kicked
smile too much
get your ass kicked
kick an apple
somebody eats downtown
kick a smile
get downtown-ass psychology. (Box 6 Fd 9)

The repetition, alliteration, and wordplay captures some of the unpredictability and arbitrary rules of contact in downtown Winnipeg, where a smile or a random action may leave one vulnerable to undesirable contact or even violence. The threat of violence is further developed with the imagery of "cement couch patterns/ blood Rorschach pictures" and

spraypaint text
fixes all mind
problems to the wall
in
dying color. (Box 6 Fd 9)

In these passages, Francis alludes to blood stains and graffiti to convey the darker aspects of urban life, but by defamiliarizing these aspects he allows room for ambiguity. Furthermore, with his popular culture references to the “Rorschach” test and psychologist’s “couch,” Francis is able to make connections to the more acceptable versions of madness and implicate the average reader who may otherwise feel distanced or disconnected from the mentally troubled street people.

Humour and references to Winnipeg’s urban history as well as Western Canadian stereotypes and popular culture are evident in Francis’ “Downtown Army Surplus Poem” and “Duncan Donut Cig Poem.” In the first of these poems, Francis depicts a Winnipeg landmark, the United Army Surplus store that used to stand at Portage and Colony Street. Francis uses a humorous urban militant persona, “hey man/ this shit/ useta be fifty freaking cents” (Box 9 Fd 9). Presumably, the speaker is griping to the store clerk about the price of “firecrackers/ sparklers/ & lighter fluid,” which he needs “to blow out/ that TV commercial/ with the old cowpoke” that he has had to listen to for over twenty years (Box 9 Fd 9). The absurdity of the scenario, perhaps, is not all that different from the advertisements depicting Cowboys and Indians to sell bread, cigarettes, and pain medicine. However, in Francis’ poem, the urban militant displaces the cowpoke as quintessential Western hero. Likewise, “Duncan Donut Cig Poem” combines popular culture, wordplay, and humour to question the American doughnut company’s practice

of dunking donuts. Francis begins the poem by asking “Have U really ever seen anyone, including yourself, actually dunk a donut?/Is this weird, or just plain american” (Box 6 Fd 9). The speaker continues to question the practice asking, “What if I waste my coffee? / My donut?/ There goes my furby supper” (Box 6 Fd 9). Within five to six lines, Francis locates his satire within a Canadian context, among Winnipeg’s urban poor, which adds meaning to his observations. Francis is intrigued by the everyday urban practice and interrogates what it says about those who perform it: “I watch all of the good donut customers... Not one of them/ Not even those who talk to themselves/ Dunk a donut!” (Box 6 Fd 9). I prefer the concision of the last four lines of this poem in an earlier draft. There, Francis ends the poem by saying,

I will ask a poet

A wolf poet

I’ll ask Duncan

He can dunk donuts

He knows all. (Box 3 180-sheet red, Super Book)

Francis is referring to the Aboriginal poet, Duncan Mercredi, who came to be Francis’ mentor and friend. Several of Mercredi’s poetry collections include the wolf figure, *Dreams of the wolf in the city: poems* (1992) among them. The reference to Mercredi suggests that Francis’ urban and cultural influences began to include Winnipeg’s Aboriginal art and community.

The archival material shows how Marvin Francis’ changing techniques are connected to changes in his perception of community, mobility, labour, and consumerism. Along with experiencing the negative aspects of the city, he was also able to feed his innate curiosity and capitalize on access to education, art, and culture. As a result, he took part in building a community of urban Native artists. In “My Urban Rez,” he writes: “All this reading led to

writing, at first comic books, and then playwrighting and poetry and performance art that now all blend together... Poetry readings, workshops, education and access to publishing happen for the most part in the city” (40). In the same article, Francis talks about Winnipeg’s large Native population with “a strong arts presence that literally feeds an artist... by offering inroads for beginning writers or visual artists, and has all the important networking and necessary feedback” (40). I believe that the beginning of the poem “Grass, Cement and Circles” beautifully captures some of Francis’ changing perceptions regarding his community. He writes:

when you sit in a circle
you cannot watch your back
somebody must do it for you
so you can do it for them. (Box 10 Fd 6)

He concludes this stanza and links it to the next with the following observation: “LOOKS LIKE WE NEED MORE CIRCLES” (Box 10 Fd 6).

One of the most important circles that Francis belonged to at the time was the Aboriginal Writers Collective, which emerged in March of 1999 and which published a chapbook, *Urban Kool*, in 2000. In addition to Francis, some of the writers published in *Urban Kool* were Rosanna Deerchild, Trevor Greyeyes, Dave McLeod, Doug Nepinak, Jordan Wheeler, and Duncan Mercredi. The collective extended an invitation to “[n]ew emerging/old submerging/all writers who call themselves Native” (Box 7 Fd 1). This growing sense of community was already evident in the 1997 reference letter Duncan Mercredi wrote in support of Francis to the One Yellow Rabbit Performance Theatre’s Summer Program. Mercredi explained that “[a]ttending the workshop in Calgary would not only benefit Marvin but our writing circle here in Manitoba” (Box 1 Fd 4). As Mercredi’s letter shows, the members of the Writers Collective saw each

other's development as enriching their whole community. In comparison to the bleak environment depicted in his earlier poems, this sense of common purpose and connection affected Francis' work profoundly.

Although being a part of a community became important to Francis, he still saw devious practices as being necessary to survival in the city. He writes about crawling

low down and sneaky
through the cement
around the money
below the fumes of gas
so as to feel the soft grass thoughts
from brown earth. (Box 10 Fd 6)

He finishes that stanza by saying "LOOKS LIKE WE NEED MORE GRASS" (Box 10 Fd 6). In order to avoid consumerism and greed in the city, Francis encourages individual resourcefulness, as well as vulnerability and receptiveness to one's surroundings. The poem continues: "I remember laying my face down on the ground/ letting the sun creep quietly inward." Francis completes that stanza with the tongue-in-cheek question: "LOOKS LIKE WE NEED MORE GOPHER HOLES?" (Box 10 Fd 6). Again, there is an element of the rodent deviousness in this laying down to use the urban space in an unexpected but meaningful way. In this poem Francis advocates finding places of refuge, rejuvenation, and permanence in the city.

The Urban Shaman Gallery was perhaps a kind of a gopher hole, which allowed Francis to connect to his Aboriginal culture and lie "face down to the ground" in the city. The Writing Collective and the Urban Shaman gallery strengthened Francis' connection to his indigenous background and expanded his knowledge of other Aboriginal peoples' artistic practices. One

such practice was the Winter Count; it inspired a contemporary exhibit curated by University of Manitoba's Gallery One One One from March 22 to April 19, 2002. The Blackfeet, Lakota, and other North American plains indigenous people practiced Winter Counts to document defining events of the year in pictorial calendars. In an essay on the gallery's website, Amy Karlinsky explains, "[f]ormerly produced as painted buffalo robes and later translated to ledger books with crayons and colored pencils, these mnemonic symbols and recorded oral histories were a form of public art that included community reflections and affirmations of specific events" (n.pag.). In the modern Winter Count, Native artists from across the prairies were invited to contribute art that would be digitized and displayed in Winnipeg's bus shelters. For the Volume 3 Issue 1 in 2003 of *ConunDrum* (the Urban Shaman gallery newspaper), Francis visited several of the nineteen sites and wrote, "from bus shack to bus shack, the immediate environment of each site, notably the unnatural elements like concrete and gasoline, contribute greatly to... this unique artistic adventure" (Box 1 Fd 3 page 7). In order to view Neal McLeod's *nimosômipan II*, Francis writes that "[he] had to fight off two panhandlers to view this work, and this familiar Exchange experience adds to the ambience of the piece" (Box 1 Fd 3 page 8). In this case, Francis was a witness to how other Native art, not just his own, was adaptable and innovative, and, more importantly, how it was being influenced by everyday practices and becoming influential in urban surroundings.

Francis' archival material shows that from the time he began writing, with his rodent and people of the core poetry and his plays, Francis was looking for a language and techniques to capture the urban setting and urban dwellers' everyday experiences. Even in his early work, Francis was concerned with themes of mobility, as well as consumerism, and how these themes related to poverty, labour, community, and art. While Francis' political and social consciousness

is evident even in his early poetry and drama, it is only when he utilizes wordplay, adopts a humorous persona, and comments on popular, historical, and literary references that he succeeds in achieving the innovative and nuanced work he is especially known for. Furthermore, by connecting Francis to the Aboriginal Writers' Collective and the Urban Shaman Gallery, the archival material allows the reader to understand how Francis' perceptions of community, mobility, and urban and rural spaces were influenced by his Aboriginal culture and identity and by his exposure to various Native artists and artistic practices.

I contend that reading *city treaty* as a continuation of the ideas and techniques developed in Francis' plays and earlier unpublished poetry allows for a more complex and meaningful engagement with his 2002 long poem. *city treaty* explicitly takes on the subjects of Aboriginal identity, representation, and exploitation within the historical context of the treaties signed by Aboriginal people and the Government of Canada between the 1870s and the 1920s. In my discussion, I divide the book into three sections in order to better focus and organize my analysis of Francis' main themes and techniques. These divisions are meant to guide only, as I believe that in a long poem individual poems and sections speak to each other. *city treaty* especially exemplifies Holquist's explanation of Bakhtin's dialogism: "Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of the world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole—there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (426). Throughout the long poem, Francis' wordplay and repetition of phrases and concepts in different contexts provides a wealth of meanings, as well as connections that can be read and re-read in multifarious ways.

In the first section of roughly twenty pages, Francis confronts and challenges white society's consumerism, exploitation, and misconceptions related to Aboriginal identity and

culture. He does this through wordplay, humour, literary and popular references, as well as by critically questioning the language and the conventions that produced documents like the numbered treaties, which dispossessed Aboriginal people of their land in Canada. At the beginning of *city treaty*, Francis introduces his readers to Joe TB, the bush poet and the narrator of the poem, as well as to a clown, who is both a fool and a trickster figure. These figures weave in and out of some of the poems, converse throughout, and frame the more self-contained pieces. The poem begins as a play would. Joe sets the scene:

e-
nters pulls
bag takes out toy cow-
boys plastic indian
head dress adjustment. (3)

He then introduces himself as a bush poet and attempts to convince the audience of his credentials by finding twenty words that rhyme with moose (3). The reader is confronted with old stereotypes of cowboys and Indians and Joe's tongue in cheek appeal to authenticity and authority as a rural or bush character. Thus, the reader becomes aware of how little stereotypes of Native people have changed and questions his or hers complicity in reinforcing them.

The clown character is harder to pinpoint, as Francis demonstrates when he writes "so you have to explain who is this clown/ but I won't" (7). While he may be determined not to "hem" in his clown, the figure is worthy of discussion. Francis' keen interest in Elizabethan drama, and Shakespeare in particular, seems evident in earlier poems like "furby Shakespeare," which is published in "My Urban Rez" (39). I believe the questions Francis asks about the clown figure in a seminar presentation in the Fall of 2001 are valid in helping us understand how the

clown functions in his book, even though Francis would have completed his *city treaty* manuscript by then. Francis asks, “How comic would some of Shakespeare’s characters appear if they weren’t named ‘Fool’, or ‘Clown’? [... Feste] seems to be a wise ‘Yoda-like’ figure, as opposed to a clown, and he seems to have the freedom to do what he wants” (Box 1 Fd 7). Furthermore, Francis inquires “Do clowns live in different worlds than the rest of us? ... The fool in *Lear* dares to criticise him” (Box 1 Fd 7). The figure of a fool interests Francis because of its constant mobility and shifting positions, an in-betweenness or an other worldliness that allows the clown to see and speak the truth. As Francis writes in *city treaty*, “you cannot shake a clown/ that mask sees all” (5). Darker aspects of the clown persona are also present; the clown’s masks also conceal and fall away only to reveal other masks (12, 23). Moreover, it is the clown who “finds/the way/ to finance the project” and is associated with money and in charge of the city treaty’s publicity.

A clown is also the mascot of McDonald’s, the company Francis takes on next as he continues his attack on consumerism and fast food culture. In his article, “‘How Come These Guns are so Tall’: Anti-corporate Resistance in Marvin Francis’s *City Treaty*,” Warren Cariou has his own take on the clown figure. Since he explores Francis’s long poem as an indigenous anti-globalization manifesto, Cariou views the clown as destabilized, cross-cultural figure. In the context of the poem “mcPemmican™,” he proposes the clown as Ronald McDonald, “a sacred clown of globalized capitalism, a figure of fun who illustrates — as many Aboriginal tricksters do — the follies and the negative consequences of poor choices and corrupt structures in our society” (156). In the context of “mcPemmican™,” Cariou’s interpretation is apt; however, the clown continues to change throughout the text and by the end of the poem he has little to do with capitalism. Even so, in “My Urban Rez,” Francis does use the excerpted “mcPemmican™” poem

to illustrate how, through advertising, capitalist ideology permeates everyday practices. In the article he writes: “The hearts of the cities, the malls, are all loaded with things that you cannot buy, but the monster of media demands that you do” (39). In *city treaty*’s “mcPemmican™,” Francis compares McDonalds’ packaging and branding tactics to the introduction of cheap trade goods by European colonizers with the following allusion: “you must package this in/ bright colours just like beads/ let the poor intake their money take their health” (6). Francis thereby shows how colonialism and capitalism work to implicate colonized people and consumers through their everyday practices to support the system that exploits them. Cariou agrees, writing, “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” (152). Francis exposes the way capitalist and colonial systems work in order to critique them, to show that Joe TB and the clown have the agency to subvert and use these systems for their own means, and even to propose alternative meanings and systems.

Francis plays with the vocabulary and phrasing used in the actual treaties to explore, defamiliarize, frame, and critique the practices, notions, and ideologies behind European displacement of Native people from their land. In “Treaty Lines,” Francis quotes a line from 1677 Virginia treaty, “*violent intrusions of divers English forceing the Indians/ to kill the Cattle and hogs*” and proceeds to reinterpret and play with the old English word “divers,” which means various or manifold (8). Francis interprets “*divers*” as scuba divers. He elaborates:

the english dive into land they need

Steal Country Usually Because All is ours

the bubbles explode upwards

come up for

heirs. (8)

With the allusions to scuba suits and explosions, Francis defamiliarizes and dehumanizes the actions by which the European colonizers insert themselves into and “steal” the land. Francis forces his readers to abandon any natural, familial, or paternal language used by the colonizers in treaties and to visualize their actions in a different way. In his article, Cariou proposes that Francis is referring to the drilling of oil companies and interprets the bubbles as “natural gas flares, which have caused widespread environmental and health concerns in Alberta. These bubbles could also represent greenhouse gases being released into the atmosphere, to become a troublesome legacy for our air as well as for our heirs” (150). Such a reading is consistent with the other ironic references in *city treaty* to the pollution of land and poisoning of animals, policies that continue to be detrimental to Native peoples who live of the land and its wildlife.

Furthermore, Francis’ wordplay with the original treaty excerpts allows him to satirize and parody the treaty writers’ language and their depiction of Aboriginal people. The next treaty line Francis quotes is from 1868 Fort Laramie, which discusses the fact that Aboriginal people, in this case, would not “*molest any wagon trains, mules or cattle*” (8). Such phrasing allows Francis to add, “wagon molestation connects you to one of the largest/ tribes/ the prison tribe” (8). In an absurd turn, Francis develops “wagon molestation” as an everyday practice, or one of the incongruous behaviors that Europeans attributed to Aboriginal peoples. He satirizes how whites used their misconceptions as excuses for their mistreatment of Native North Americans, which led to the destruction, desolation, and displacement of whole nations of Aboriginal peoples onto reservations after they signed the treaties. To emphasize this point, Francis takes on literature, history, and popular culture in the humorous piece “Court Transcripts/ (trans. g. reega),” which re-enacts a scene from George Ryga’s play *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*. In *city treaty*,

however, it is not Rita Joe but Joe TB and the clown who face the judge to answer the charges of “wagon-molesting.” The clown ends up explaining himself with, “they put the wagons in square circle and I just lost it, man,” to which the judge responds with “do not pass go/ do not collect five dollars per year free parking/ no wagons” (9). The judge’s use of the popular Monopoly game slogans alludes to the yearly promise of five dollars to the Indians who signed the treaties. Francis’ parody undercuts white authority and legal practices and emphasizes the underlying monetary and exploitive aims of the whites in their relations with Aboriginal people. By associating Canadian treaties and the Canadian court system with Monopoly, Francis also implies they are artificial and maneuverable and can be played, manipulated, and subverted.

Francis exposes the conventions of treaties to critique the colonial and capitalist motivations underlying the actions of the colonizers, but more importantly to flesh out the everyday hardships that Aboriginal peoples experienced after signing the treaties. In the poems “treaty names” and “booze treaty,” Francis interrogates how treaties as written documents effectively erase aboriginal identity and agency by reducing mostly oral aboriginal signees to unidentifiable strangers. Not only are their names abstracted but so too are their experiences. He also interrogates how the use of alcohol sabotaged equal participation of Aboriginal people in the contractual process. First, in “treaty names” he satirizes the fact that many treaties do not have the actual signatures of the chiefs because many were illiterate and could only make an X under the caption “HIS MARK” (11). In the poem, the clown comically mistakes HIS MARK for their actual last names. However, Francis urges, “walking through bush narrative/ read the bodies behind the totems/ the marks so important” (11). He encourages Native people to use their everyday practices and their Native knowledge to make sense of those marks and documents. Also in the lines, “*Uses Both Arms Sometimes Glad Cake Cake/ the translator hold his head*

and cries/ nobody believes me” (12), Francis playfully dramatizes the inadequacy of trying to capture the exact essence of Native names. When they are translated into English, Native names might appear humorous, to make no sense, or to sound informal or undignified, and Francis plays this up by italicizing these names in several lines of “treaty names.” The poem portrays the absurdity of Aboriginal peoples being bound by contracts that do not include their ancestors’ Native names and have little to do with Aboriginal culture and practices. Francis rightly writes:

they trap us in this
leg and neck and soul hold
trap
we live in circles
we die in this square piece of paper. (13)

With the metaphor of treaties as traps, Francis alludes to the drastic consequences of the reserve system which, following the signing of the treaties, limited the movement of Native people. The Aboriginal circles versus the squares of the whites relate to the way Native people understood and, through mobile everyday practices, made their connections and communities. Francis emphasizes that by limiting Aboriginal peoples’ mobility, white colonizers impaired their survival and way of life.

In the poem “booze treaty,” which is shaped like a bottle, Francis again links the colonial project and treaties with profit and greed and explores how alcohol was used as a tool to speed up treaty negotiations. He calls alcohol “cure all elixir” and “lubricant ooze” and writes “do not listen to the translator do not read/ words that wash off so easily just sign here/ put your totem your mark your children here” (18). Francis includes the XXX mark displayed on some alcohol bottles, as a warning of danger. These Xs resemble the X marks Aboriginal leaders made on

treaties. Francis alludes to some Aboriginal peoples' culpability as signatories to the booze treaty in exchange for "medal signs" (18). In relation to this he adds, "these following pillars agreed with the booze treaty" and names "john le scat," "david stole some," and "see drams for sale" (18). These names could be wordplay on Johnnie Walker Scotch whiskey, possibly on Stolichnaya vodka, and on the Seagram Company, which originated in 1857 in Canada. During the twentieth century, Seagram was one of the largest distillers of alcoholic beverages in the world. After these names, Francis writes "no witnesses available," but each name has an accompanying mark one in shape of a cross, a star, and a circle. These symbols possibly refer to the shapes of medals, which some chiefs received along with monetary rewards for signing the treaties on behalf of their people. In "booze treaty" Francis argues for holding alcohol companies responsible for the way alcohol contributed to the devastation of Aboriginal life and culture, but he also critiques Aboriginal peoples' role in buying into and contributing to the practices that oppressed them. Overall, I would argue that Francis' recognition of both agency and responsibility of Aboriginal people points to the possibility of their resistance against and subversion of these corrupt systems.

Even though Francis still uses wordplay and humour as well as literary, historical, and popular references, the focus of the middle section of *city treaty* shifts toward a darker self-examination and personal exploration of mobility and everyday techniques of survival in the city. These everyday practices are a part of writing and living the city treaty. This shift begins when the clown asks Joe TB, "when do we examine you" (21). Three autobiographical poems, "Red Hiway Poem," "cig poem at the fix," and "nicotine whore" thematically lead the reader into the urban environment while the clown interjects with "time for the city" (22) and "time for/ you to write/ t r e a t y" (23). While everyday urban practices are present throughout *city treaty*, in this

section they are more pervasive and can be examined thoroughly. In “Street smiles,” like in his earlier poetry, Francis is looking for a language that allows him to show both the harshness and everydayness of the city landscape and ways of surviving in it. He writes: “there are 25 street smiles you better learn when you/ sell your body” (25). Francis brings forth darker aspects of having to adapt and change in the urban environment: one of them is selling yourself, literally for some and more figuratively for others. In “Street smiles,” Francis also alludes to Ezra Pound’s quintessential urban imagist poem “In a Station of the Metro.” Francis writes: “there are street faces on every evening petal/ that shines black” and later adds

blend incandescent
rain reflects asphalt faces
because u are a
junky fraud. (25)

Francis does not remain in the world of abstract visions; instead, he pulls his reader back to the personal, the junky facing his corrupted reflection in the hard surfaces of the city. Still, by alluding to Pound, Francis uses modern imagist techniques to explore beauty and artificiality as they intercept even in the most decrepit urban landscape. Also through his allusion, Francis implies that the Canadian prairie city is as worthy of depiction as Pound’s Paris, and that Aboriginal artists are capable of using varied techniques to capture the subject with complexity.

In the poem “EDGEWALKER,” Francis uses of the word ‘edge’ in multiple ways as he explores the idea of walking and movement in the city. He stresses the importance of crossing and negotiating not only spatial (urban and rural) but also economic, racial, personal and ethical boundaries; he writes

we all walk edges uncertain

on border slippery

between dirt poor

and filthy rich...

between bush and city

street bus and the moose track

point out edges that cut off our mind

from the crack baby. (28)

Unlike de Certeau, for whom chance encounters and turns are open, celebratory, and full of possibilities, Francis' edgewalkers walk more precarious paths and encounter "invisible borders stronger than/ barb wire" (28). Francis also observes that those who pursue economic wealth and social status "fall off/ economic cliffs" and "run blind to stay on the uptown edges" (28-29). Possibly alluding to the lemming, he focuses on seedier aspects of upward mobility and those who pursue it at all costs. Francis warns against a mobility that is destructive and results in a lack of empathy and cutting oneself from a diverse community and from society at large.

Furthermore, Francis explores the constructed, relative, and multifarious nature of identity when he reveals another tactic for survival in the city in the poem "PULLING FACES." He tells the reader to "Pull off your face/ Underneath lies a Pirandello mask," and he encourages the reader to continue pulling at these masks (30). Here Francis references Luigi Pirandello, an Italian dramatist, fiction writer, and poet who revolutionized theatre and was deeply interested in the question of identity. In his biographical note on the website for the Nobel Prize, which he received for literature in 1934, Pirandello is described as believing that self only exists "in relation to others" and that "it consists of changing facets that hide an inscrutable abyss" ("Luigi Pirandello – Biographical"). In "PULLING FACES" Francis writes: "Pull your face in a little

Red red wagon That you show to the world/ One face for your friends One for trevor One for that job application/ Now that is one helluva mask” (30). Francis explores the notion of multiple and various selves and masks; identity is constructed and everyone is acting. However, actors do have agency, and Francis writes that “only Your/ selves know how many layers Pile upon skin/ brown black Drop eyes light this human Stage” (30). In the above passage, Francis suggests that self-awareness of the masks one wears and that one is acting, makes “pulling faces” an effective survival technique in the city. He continues this line of thinking with “pull faces from history” and “Pull family faces” (30). The faces one wears are affected by one’s parents, nationality, religion, and culture. Like Pirandello, Francis locates identity in one’s relationship to others. While this can have negative consequences and create pressures to be and behave a certain way, the relative and pluralist nature of identity allows one to exercise one’s ingenuity and creativity in choosing which aspects of one’s history one chooses to emphasize. In his work, Francis uses literary, historical, and popular references—or faces—to connect to a wider community of Native and other artists, writers, and readers. In turn, he interrogates his own role and responsibility within this global community.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in the poem “BNA ACTOR,” prefaced with “that most famous Elizabethan native actor” (34), Francis uses wordplay, literary allusions, as well as historical and popular references to dramatize an interrogation of himself and society through the performance of Native male identity. At the beginning of the poem, the BNA actor arrives clad in buckskin with a red skull and ‘INJUN’ book and proceeds to act out some “shaky spear” (an obvious play on Shakespeare’s name) (34). Through references to Shakespearean characters and popular literature and film, Francis presents a tragi-comical character who makes fun of himself and questions the stereotypes surrounding Native male identity. The character introduces himself

as Omlette, paraphrases Hamlet's Act III Scene I soliloquy as "to drink/or not to drink," and contemplates "whether tis noble savage to/suffer the arrows and arrows/ of outrageous VLTs" (34). Francis satirizes the drinking and gambling stereotypes of Native people. As Francis continues to rephrase Hamlet's speech, Omlette faces "the sea of casinos" rather than the "sea of troubles" and Francis subversively and playfully engages with the history of Christopher Columbus (35-6). Francis proposes an absurd scenario where the ship "santa maria gets drunk and takes chris to Aunt/ Arctica instead," and the discrimination Native American people experienced is displaced onto penguins. He writes:

think about it, man, indian pen
guins, man, red, and white noble penguins, man
drunken fucken penguins, man, the only good penguin is a
dead penguin, man. (36)

Referring to common discriminatory sayings about Aboriginal people, Francis defamiliarizes them, parodies them, and points out their absurdity.

The poem ends in a tragi-comical turn where the actor flaps his arms, leaps in the air channeling the eagle, and crashes to the ground (37). Just as negative stereotypes regarding violence and alcohol can be detrimental to Native people, Francis suggests that so too can a non-critical pursuit of stereotypical Native spirituality and culture. In "My Urban Rez," Francis writes that

Although genuine Traditional Aboriginals exist [in the city], the plastic Shaman slinks along the fringes of the actual Aboriginal culture(s), preying on those who need help the most. Any Aboriginal artist, whether they are visual, or a writer, or any of the other arts must contend with the market's expectations, especially the European market; many want

stereotypical art or nothing. Contemporary, avant-garde work does not sell as well as a painting of Aboriginal deities, or the rural, hunting, natural landscape imagery...

However, to a downtown Aboriginal writer, eagle feathers are hard to come by, and significantly, to pretend that you are Traditional is a moral crime in my mind. (39)

The quotation makes important links between themes of consumerism, Aboriginal identity, and art, and it introduces the images of shaman and eagle that Francis uses to interrogate Native identity, not only in *city treaty* but also in his other work. As an Aboriginal artist, Francis probably would have felt some pressure to abandon his non-traditional work and more avant-garde techniques in exchange for a wider audience and acceptance. In comparison to his earlier work, Francis' depictions of mobility and everyday practices in *city treaty* include a critical questioning of self and an exploration of art, authenticity, and performance. To conclude, the poems in this middle section use wordplay, dramatic monologue, as well as references to literature, history, and popular culture in order to interrogate the nature of identity. Francis shows that survival and connection with one's community—other artists, other Aboriginal people and urban culture at large—is possible in the city, although this connection is not easy.

The last part of *city treaty* returns to the treaties themselves. By interrogating treaty language, lines, conventions, and colonial trade practices, Francis offers a plan of action for those who want to take on the colonial language and institutions and make a difference. This section gains momentum with the poem "White Settlers" in which Francis writes, "Those two words/ That catalyst sound pair/ Makes red blood boil and hiss" (45). The preparation of North American land for white settlement has been used as justification for the colonial abuses of Aboriginal people. Hence, the phrase "white settlers" arouses a cathartic release of words and anger:

FUK U ALONE RANGER

Circle your wagon wheels u

Bible ass preacher residential school dictator

those relentless plows tearing our mother. (46)

After this release Joe TB exclaims, “Jesus! This will get us Grant/ (and more than one/ army)” to which the clown responds by saying “you don’t write/ treatypoems for the money/ you make waves” (49). The clown emphasizes that writing is an everyday practice of resistance and that is not related to money or actual armed conflict.

Francis picks up the water imagery and the notion of unrest in the poem “native tempest” which references Shakespeare’s play. He uses the figure of Caliban, his actions and words, to draw parallels between what happens to him in *The Tempest* and what happened to Aboriginal people when Europeans arrived in North America. In the poem, Caliban, rechristened nabilac, waits “for magicians to arrive/ they make land disappear” and shouts a line straight out *The Tempest*: “the red plague rid you for learning me your language” (49). Through the figure of Caliban, Francis illustrates the problematic relationship Aboriginal people have to the English language in part because in the treaties it was used as a tool to dispossess them of their land and undermine their culture and sovereignty. The title of the poem “Lee Eegle Eze” plays on the slang term legalese, the obtuse and difficult to understand jargon of lawyers and legal documents. He takes terms from actual treaties such as,

said party

said indian

cede transfer relinquish surrender

solemnly

yield up...

a line

drawn for the band lots said limit

strip of

land. (52)

Francis shows how legal and official language was used to frame the coercive taking of the land from Aboriginal peoples. The legal language depicted them as generalized subjects rather than as individuals and described their actions in contractual terms, as though they had equal rights to those who wrote the treaties. Such language prevents the reader from feeling empathy or understanding for the everyday reality of Native people who had to move onto reserves and to abandon the land they hunted, dwelt on, and were intimately connected to.

After the attack on legalese, in what is the longest interjection in *city treaty*, the clown gives a brief tract on Native dilemmas concerning language. He mourns lost knowledge in cases where Native languages have become extinct or are no longer practiced widely: “the words/ those lost languages hide the meaning” (54). Furthermore, the clown claims, “language comes/ from the/ land,” alluding to Jeannette Armstrong’s essay “Land Speaking” (54). I will discuss Armstrong’s paper later in the chapter in reference to *bush camp*. By making such a clear correlation between language and land, Francis drives home the devastation that resulted from the loss of land for the Aboriginal people. Finally the clown brings it to the personal level by discussing the

agony of kids

torn a way

of

your language
sudden
illegal
equals ill eagle
of hair cuts
of
standing in the
closet. (54)

He alludes to the silencing that followed the illegal abuses and punishments Native children suffered in residential schools for speaking their own language. Again, Francis uses the eagle to symbolize Aboriginal culture and identity. The eagle is ill because its “hair” or feathers have been cut off, and it is physically restrained and cut off from mobility, everyday practices, and language, which would have allowed it to retain healthy ties to its community and culture.

After delving into the complexities of Aboriginal peoples’ relationships to language, in the poem “we meta in the corral” Joe TB and the clown have a standoff about language. In this poem, Francis uses references to Aboriginal practices and symbols, popular culture, and everyday practices to show how oral stories and sneaky everyday practices can be as valid as written text in combatting the official, colonial discourse of the treaties and other colonial institutions. The “corral” in the title of the poem is not just the enclosure for cattle and horses; it also refers to the European practice of forming a circle of wagons as defense from ambush, and Aboriginal practice of hunting buffalo by driving them into circular enclosures. Francis also reinterprets this corral in modern and popular Canadian culture as the hockey rink. He describes a “native don cherrie” and Saturday’s *Hockey Night in Canada* where the gloves come off, and

“two fighters circle” in the process of becoming “toothless role models” (56-7). Francis insinuates that if the reader has the capacity to view Don Cherry as a hero and fighting in hockey as a heroic pursuit, then she should see the clown and Joe TB as heroes. In presenting the duel between these characters, Francis depicts the clown as a Native trickster figure in possession of “thousand oral stories/ falling off old tongues/ all bush dialect camp fire literary” (57). Joe, on the other hand, is an urban representative “dragg[ing] a dictionary/ through the mud/ street thesaurus” which explains how to inconspicuously enter a bar or not “walk like a victim” in the city (57). As Joe and the clown face off, they hurl words at each other, and this results in a

barrage word learned meets the clown

and

then

the risky birth of muskeg metaphor

moss verbiage north side of the canon / cannon. (58)

As the poem progresses, the clown’s oral stories, and language referring to animals and land, enter the western literary canon and transform it—“wolverine essays rend wordsworth” and “virginia is allowed to howl wolf/ a different howl/ not ginsberg” (59). The rural also makes its presence felt in Joe’s city survival techniques: “a bush of my own/ waiting for pogeey check/ my camp fire burns at both ends” (59). This chaos of hurling words, swirling in the corral, upsets and explodes the old hierarchies and power imbalances. As the oral, urban, and literary languages and stories collide, circle, and speak to each other, they make room for Joe and the clown to write the city treaty. Joe explains:

we moved the treaty site

we felt the natural

stereotypical, and racist colonial discourses and institutions, like the treaties. Moreover, when it comes to the clown and Joe's treaty map, Francis imagines it showing reverence for all the land and its features: "every/ shrub tree and plant has geographical importance" (67). As Joe and the clown stretch their treaty map over the Canadian landscape, Francis explains that the treaty map will show movements of people, the connections they make, and "allow seasonal migration human to city/ and back" (67). The map will incorporate the mobility that is a part of many Western Canadians' lives, Native people's in particular. This map will make Canadians view land not in the context of ownership but stewardship: "so you can finally figure out that this land is/ owned by your children never by you" (67).

However, while the clown and Joe pull the map across land and water, the treaty they are trying to write falls into pieces. But they do not stay dejected for long because others arrive. Through their writing practices, these others will continue the job that Joe TB and the clown have begun: "here come the leaders the mavericks who cannot shut up/ **word drummers**" (68). These word drummers are Native leaders, writers, scholars, activists, and forerunners Francis admires. Among them he includes diverse figures such as Americans Louise Erdrich, Gerald Vizenor, and John Trudell; Canadians Thomas King, Tomson Highway, and Lee Maracle; and some of his Winnipeg peers Marie Annharte Baker, Jordan Wheeler, and Duncan Mercredi (68). To get away from hierarchies and canons, amid these word drummer's tools Francis not only includes poetry, drama, and fiction but also "tall tales camp fire palimpsest legends/ ancient rumours novellas petroglyph hypertext syllabics" (69). Through their work, "the landscape now has city" and the bush has "no/straight lines" (69). Like the community of revolutionaries they are, Francis explains,

those word drummers pound away and hurtle

**words into that english landscape like brown beer
bottles tossed from the back seat on a country
road shattering the air turtle words crawl slowly from
the broken glass. (69)**

He is hopeful that Native ideas and words can be freed from the debris, will become mobile, and will make a difference.

In *city treaty*, Francis takes on the representation and exploitation of Native people in history, popular culture, and literature in order to challenge old stereotypes and tear them apart. He interrogates Native identity, identity's nature generally, and everyday practices related to performing that identity in the city. Francis proposes that with self-awareness and ingenuity Aboriginal artists can survive in the city without allowing their culture and themselves to be exploited. Additionally, he acknowledges the problematic and complex relationship Aboriginal people have to the English language. However, through wordplay, repetition, and humour he deconstructs language as a tool—a tool he then encourages Native writers, artists, scholars, and activists to use every day in order to question, challenge, and subvert colonial power dynamics and institutions. In *city treaty*, Francis argues that through mobility and everyday practices, writing included, communities can be established, and colonial and global consumerism, which exploits Aboriginal people and culture, can be challenged and critiqued. Even though it may take some time, out of that critique new systems and meanings will come to the forefront.

Before I explore the content of *bush camp*, I want to explain why I read the book's main setting as an in-between rather than a rural space. I base my choice on archival material, a paper Francis wrote for Renate Eigenbrod's Native Studies class in 2004 (Box 1 Fd 9). In a paper "Duncan's Worlds," he discusses the role of various settings on the work of his friend the poet

Duncan Mercredi. Francis looks at Mercredi's childhood in the rural Aboriginal community of Grand Rapids, and his eventual settlement in Winnipeg, but he also writes that in Mercredi's poetry "another specific environment emerges - that of the blue-collar bush camp" and reminds the reader that "[s]eparating the city and the bush are the highways and small towns" (1). Francis structures his analysis by dividing Mercredi's environments into three categories, "the bush of Grand Rapids, the city of Winnipeg, and the small town/bush/highway camp" (1). Through Mercredi's poems "back roads" and "little towns," Francis explores the small town environment, and he shows how it is the first place where Native peoples' mobility comes into conflict with white settler's sedentary practices and where Aboriginal people first experience hostility and overt racism. He also discusses the back roads or routes Native people travel as part of their labour or to reconnect with family.

In this paper, Francis does not just allude to Jeannette Armstrong's "Land Speaking" but actually quotes her to support his analysis of Mercredi's work. It is worthwhile to quote her here: "language was given to us by the land we live within... I have heard elders explain that language changed as we moved and spread over the land through time" (175). Here Armstrong, and Francis in his analysis of her work, focuses on the land, but I want to emphasize the role of movement and adaptability implied by Armstrong's words. It is the movement across the land that allows Native people to embrace, change, and adapt their languages to new environments. In *bush camp*, Francis' protagonists, Johnny and Jenny illustrate this as they move and use their everyday practices to make the most of their environments. While Francis' reading of Mercredi may not completely line up with his own work and ideas in *bush camp*, his understanding of the bush camp environment as being distinct from both the city and the bush, at the time he would

have been close to completing the manuscript, serves as a clue. In that same paper, Francis writes:

Much has been written about the rural, Native environment and its influence upon language, therefore influencing the poetry too, but very little regarding the role of the urban environment, or the small town site, and the effects that these environments play with the language. (9)

Having explored the urban space and language in *city treaty*, Francis chooses, in *bush camp*, to investigate and focus on the in-between places of small towns and especially bush camps. The language he uses is intimately connected to and affected by the place he is writing about. While his wordplay, humour, and cultural and political awareness are still central to the work, in *bush camp* Francis' use of popular, historical, and literary references is less thorough. Narrative prose poetry, establishing the plot, and realist description and characterization are more prominent although fragmentation and defamiliarization are still present, especially in the urban parts of *bush camp*.

At the end of *city treaty*, after Joe TB's face off with the clown, the oral, the bush, and muskeg become part of the arsenal of the word drummers that will "right" the city treaty (67). Therefore it is not a surprise that in *bush camp*, which Warren Cariou, in his introduction to the book, calls "the companion piece to *city treaty*" (viii), Francis carries the momentum and depicts muskeg metaphor and bush practices entering the city and the bush camp. Although at first these bush elements may isolate the book's main characters and lovers, Johnny and Jenny, eventually these bush practices help them to form deeper connections to and understandings of their new environments. Because of their outsider status, Jenny (a city, southern woman in a bush camp) and Johnny (a bush, northern, Aboriginal man in the city) offer new perspectives and perceptions

of these worlds. In the first half of the poem, Francis establishes the world of the bush camp and to lesser extent the world of the city. Like Johnny and Jenny, for the most of the poem, these worlds remain separate. There are, however, brief interludes in which we see Johnny and Jenny unemployed but momentarily happy together in the city. In the second half of *bush camp*, Francis shows how Johnny adapts his muskeg or bush ways to survive in the city and how Jenny uses the bush practices she learned from Johnny to survive in the bush camp. Through his exploration of an in-between place such as *bush camp*, which is neither urban nor rural, Francis continues to show how urban and rural Western Canadian spaces are connected, not only through labour but also through everyday practices of dressing, walking, observing, and tracking.

While it is difficult to define precisely what “to muskeg” means in the poem, Johnny’s last name/nickname is Muskeg, and it is necessary to address muskeg’s importance as a symbol for Francis. In *Muskeg and the Northern Environment in Canada*, Walter Stanek defines muskeg as a “North American term frequently employed for peatland. The word muskeg is of Indian (Algonquin) origin and applied in ordinary speech to natural and undisturbed areas covered more or less with Sphagnum mosses, tussocky sedges, and an open growth of scrubby trees” (373). In the same text, Norman Radforth writes that, in Canada, muskeg covers “an area bigger than Quebec and the Maritime provinces combined” (ix) and that “[w]hen interfered with, [muskeg] becomes altered to present fresh physiographic conditions and its materials undergo change” (3). Francis likely chooses muskeg because its name has roots in Algonquian language, it is adaptable, it has value in a uniquely northern Canadian environment, and because, unlike furs, energy from hydro development, and mining resources, muskeg has for the most part been considered worthless by colonial and capitalist powers. As a consequence of their symbiotic relationship with the land, water, and wildlife, Aboriginal people use muskeg to gather plants

and medicines and especially to hunt moose. Johnny's muskegging is related to his skills at observation and his mobility, developed while gathering and hunting, and the Aboriginal values associated with them. For Francis, muskeg becomes a powerful symbol of bush, northern Aboriginal identity, and resistance to Western and capitalist exploitation.

Like in *city treaty*, in *bush camp* there is a sense that figuring and adapting everyday practices, whether they are urban or bush, will allow individuals to engage more fully and critically with their surroundings and other people. I argue that, for Francis, the communities people make through mobility and everyday practices (labour included) — the most compelling example in the text is the relationship between Johnny and Jenny — are as valuable as connections made through shared property, land, race, or nationality. At the beginning of *bush camp*, Francis presents both the bush camp and the city as unique places with their own rules and practices which can be difficult to maneuver for outsiders but are second nature to those familiar with them. However, it is through an insider's view that the bush camp is first presented for the reader in “the unparalleled imagination of a bush camp nickname” (3). While he introduces the characters that will populate the poem, the narrator explains the process by which nicknames reinforce the rules, practices, and the organization of the bush camp. Stretch, Frenchie, Newfie, Red, Chief, and Perfessor may be stereotypical and politically incorrect labels, but these nicknames fall in line with the first rule of the bush camp (and perhaps of writing about bush camp): “keep it simple stupid” (5). This naming and categorizing ensures that “everyone will gradually fit their notches/ you know where to eat did some laundry used/ to sounds at night knew the pecking order” (5). Thus, when Jenny arrives at the bush camp, the narrative voice struggles to find a nickname for her, claiming that without a nickname she upsets “the bush camp balance” and this translates into “less work done” (6). The bottom line in the bush camp is that

work continues no matter what happens to the individuals who do the work. At the beginning of the poem, Jenny's ignorance allows her certain privileges. The men are afraid to wake her and

she sleeps through the uneasy glances at
her door no problem cuz jenny was from the south
and this was the north
and her southern dreams
fit the pillow of north. (7)

The narrator also explains that Jenny "has the gig cuz she is there wearing a northern/ t-shirt in a northern way cuz Johnny taught her how/ to muskeg" (7). Although she is an outsider, Jenny is armed with Johnny's bush camp knowledge and stories. She has, at least, learned the practice of dressing and appearing "northern."

Leaving Jenny dreaming in the bush camp, the poem transitions to the past and to the city. The speaker explores the environment from Johnny's point of view as an outsider and Jenny's as an insider, as they both look for love and connection. When Johnny arrives in the city, the reader is bombarded with popular culture, wordplay, and alliteration:

Johnny Muskeg never
met Mustang Sally
or especially Muktuk Annie
nor dare he think of Peggy Sue
but nevertheless Johnny
began to look for a wife. (8)

Referring to stereotypical female figures in popular Rhythm and Blues, Country, and Rock and Roll songs as sources for his ideas about women, Francis plays up Johnny's naiveté and lack of

experience. Furthermore, Johnny's lack of familiarity with the urban setting, everyday practices, and clothing signals his outsider status, and his ignorance results in comical but also costly and possibly dangerous interactions with city inhabitants. In the city, Johnny's mobility and resourcefulness are compromised, and he becomes somebody's "cash cow" when he gets disoriented on the escalator and someone easily "rips" him off (8). In "Advice for Northerners" Francis more playfully instructs "when you go to town/ don't brag, don't mention/ how good you are with an axe" (8), and in "Advice for Johnny" he puts it to Johnny bluntly "Gum Boots = No Wife" (9).

Once Johnny gets a pair of new boots, he begins to find his voice, which makes its way into the poem by the way of italics. For example, when Johnny visits a restaurant and sits near a table of women and orders them "Muskeg tea," one of the women tells him "Thanks for the tea, mister, weird as you are" (10). Johnny responds by saying "*Allow me north talk not visitor slang/ but muskeg soft*" (11). Later when another woman says "We're all married at this table, mister," Johnny answers "*I need your words to be pliable to/ make me fit for love*" (11). The women's city slang and brashness is in discord with what Johnny understands as a less rigid and more intuitive, muskeg-like, way of courting. Not only does Johnny have difficulty communicating with women, but he also appears overwhelmed by his surroundings, as depicted in the poem "Frog Corner at Rush Hour." Francis writes: "John and intersections have clashes/ frankenmetal rushes film," and the language and images become fragmented with "gasoline romance cement love electrical sex neon" (12). In the city, even the streetlights and the movement of traffic can be dumbfounding and disconcerting for those who do not know the rules. The city pavement is not like muskeg; it is hard and has no give. Furthermore, the gasoline smells pollute the air and neon signs of strip clubs cheapen the connection Johnny is looking for.

Jenny as an insider, on the other hand, enjoys the freedom, anonymity, and diversity of the urban environment. After she destroys her old clothes, she

feels good like spring feels

walks portage ave flow

not too fast not lost not scared

not in any hurry...

enough money to walk her way

value[s] immense[ly] clothes she picks all by herself. (11)

The everyday urban practices of walking and shopping allow Jenny to exercise her agency. Moreover, when it comes to the possibility of Jenny meeting a man, in the poem “The Last Resort,” what could possibly be a negative experience in a late night bar is defused by Jenny’s mobility, maneuverability, and familiarity with city practices and spaces. Francis explains:

open late drink darkly

no names not once no one cares no nothing

Jenny checks it out then

splits

because Jenny keeps cool. (12)

At the end of this city interjection into *bush camp*, there is an “Alley Poem” where Johnny and Jenny almost meet. In a de Certeau-like moment of crossing paths and possibilities, they are about to enter an L shaped alley, but Jenny just keeps walking and their meeting is delayed.

Returning to the bush camp, Francis brings to life the everyday practices of the workers, explores the setting of the bush camp, and comments on themes of mobility, community, labour,

and consumerism. Jenny faces the reality of the bush camp in her trailer: “metal walls a single/ bunk a desk a lamp a couple of sticky – almost/ skin zines a sardine can ashtray” but she feels at home (13). She loses this sense of comfort, however, when she meets the bull cook. After having tea with him, Jenny doctors her papers and maneuvers her way out of working with “that crazy fuck cook wannabe who slaps greasy eggs/ like a fifties greaser (without the muscle car)” (15). Through Jenny’s perspective, Francis is also able to provide the reader with a more imaginative or out-worldly view of the camp and to defamiliarize routine occurrences the seasoned workers take for granted. For example, Jenny dreams about the trains passing “not too far from the bunk at eighty clicks, from/ her head” and “thinks about the/ competing silver of the propane cars and the casual/ way the train crews experience death at a crossing” (16). Jenny’s dreams give credit to the bush camp as an environment capable of stirring the imagination.

Jenny’s thoughts also allow Francis, via the narrator, to slip out of the everyday to comment on the larger, political, and social implications and symbolism of the railway, which the bush camp gang is working on. When it comes to economics, Francis adds,

Johnny Muskeg had no time to remember

he didn’t

“get in get rich get out”

he was already there/

he was poor

and

he loves the muskeg. (17)

Here, Francis gets at the crux of Aboriginal people’s problematic relationship to the railway. The railroad offers little to people who are already there, to those who care for, and live off the land.

As Cariou effectively puts it, “[Johnny] is working on the same railroad that in effect created Canada, that brought Canadian troops to the West in 1870 and 1885, and that brought hordes of settlers who displaced Native people from their lands... the railroad is The Man, a.k.a. The System, a.k.a. colonization” (x). In *bush camp*, Francis captures the everyday practices, and the labour in particular, that colonized people perform for the system that oppresses them. However, there is subversive sentiment in *bush camp* as well. Francis writes:

... the muskeg
where contractor dreams watch the D-9
sink funding money
sink industrial a natural submarine of soft. (17)

Francis’ wet muskeg and the bush seem to have their own ways of reclaiming the bulldozing machinery and sabotaging the industrial complex which is trying to keep John A MacDonald’s national symbol afloat and running.

Jenny, because she is both part of the gang and an outsider, is a witness to the bush gang’s everyday practices and interactions with each other and the outside world as they search for connection and community. The poem “fire extinguisher fight” moves from a small town bar to a wash car (camp’s laundry facility) to the bush camp the day after the incident. It shows the complexity with which the characters navigate the various bush camp related settings. Through characterization and conflict, Francis captures the hostile atmosphere of small town bar, which the bush gang is sharing for the night with town locals. One of the men, Frenchie, is in trouble with his co-worker, Red; “Earlier that night Red gets a few shots in the face, has to eat some crow, cuz of that prairie casanova/ But even a railroad gang has to back up against the wall together” (22). The rules of the gang dictate that the men stick up for each other even though

they may not want to. In the prairie bar, Francis also introduces “in another saloon cosmos, sorta of the red planet of beer sec-/tions, from that dark corner... The Native table” (21). Not only is there a division between the bush camp crew and the local patrons, but there are further divisions in the bush gang: a group of Aboriginal workers keep to themselves at work and at play. They have to be extra careful in navigating a place “where beer and money were the only exchange district” and “the jukebox was the demilitarized zone/ white contra red” (21). Jenny, who misses Johnny and comes to hear the men’s stories, holds a privileged position as the only woman among the men. Francis effectively depicts the inter-dynamics even as the men continue to drink and move from bar to the bush camp’s wash car.

Just as de Certeau describes the complexity of walking in the city, Francis in “fire extinguisher fight” describes what could be called the practice of brawling in the bush camp. At the beginning of the fight, Red attacks the surprised Frenchie. Those experienced with bush camp fights are able to read the situation in such a way as to withdraw and avoid the conflict:

the vets jump up and grab their beer one smooth motion back
off back against the wash car wall
the inevitable foam and glass tornado gravity storm
most could see this coming. (28)

Jenny describes the introductory insults between Red and Frenchie, the spectators who take sides, and even the workers in the “transplanted native section” who smoke and observe. Once Stretch grabs and discharges the fire extinguisher, Jenny runs out of the wash car and hides

when the clamorous charge of white hats whizzes by, with
disgruntled RCMP and the local dogs start to bark, something for
the whole town to talk about tomorrow morning, grist for that

extra gang hatred mill. (30)

Francis captures and contextualizes the multilayered responses and motivations of his characters as they play their part in a not necessarily respectable but intricate practice. The fight allows the bush camp workers to exercise free will, to release tension, and to reconstitute and define their relationships to each other, their communities (the small town and the bush camp), and the authorities (the white hats and the RCMP). The aftermath is cathartic as the order in the bush camp is reconstituted: Frenchie and Red pay for the damages and the Road Master “worked them hard that next day but not too hard just/ what was expected” (32). Francis establishes the complexity of the bush camp environment and conveys its members’ adaptability and flexibility in everyday practices as well as their ability to negotiate diversity and conflict.

Other rules and practices of dwelling in the bush camp come to light in part through Jenny’s remembering of Johnny’s stories and Jenny’s own observations. She demonstrates how the bush camp gang functions as a community. Francis confirms the common mobility of the bush camp workers by calling them drifters and he includes among them a diverse group of “Natives, Portuguese fresh from Angola, drunks, wanderers,/ adventurers, transients, college hopefuls, fugitives, mostly male,/ mostly blue collar” (24). When it comes to money, Jenny reflects that “some of/ them will be broke at layoff time... And/ sleeping in the sally ann by December” (23). Even though the workers put in hard physical labour, most of the men spend the money they make as soon as they make it. Francis depicts the men’s spending practices as wasteful in the context of capitalist accumulation, but, for Francis, the value lies in the uniqueness of the men’s experiences.

Another rule on the gang is to never delay the passenger train. In spite of this, Johnny tells a story of a time the men accidentally drop an outhouse on the tracks and an oncoming train

hits it and stops. Francis writes: “the passengers press faces against the disbelief of this outrage/ in doubt one tourist throws them money like they do off the/ cruise ships” (24-25). In bush camps, when the urban clashes with the bush, order encounters disorder and absurd circumstances occur. The outhouse story also allows Francis to continue this line of thinking by writing “these shithouses had to be sturdy more than once a bear kept/ a guy trapped for hours” (25). Besides being irreverent and funny, Francis draws attention to the unique aspects of the bush camp environment. Bush camp inhabitants develop everyday practices and ways of dealing with physical and psychological challenges they would never face in a strictly rural or urban environment. However, even though the bush camp is an in-between space, it still has its own rules and code of conduct. In Johnny’s story of “the old man and the pee,” wordplay on the Hemingway title, the workers take exception to the newly-arrived city guy. The man does not “bother to piss further into the bush” in spite of the warnings from the others. Hence, the men lay him on the track and an old man, a lifer on the crew “[drives] those steel spikes into his jacket, his/ creosote designer jeans, [spikes] through his clothes into the gravel/ frozen ties, one spike by his balls for railroad punctuation” (33). Francis shows that there is even a hierarchy as to whom gets to exact the “adequate” punishment for transgressions in the camp.

In order to survive on the gang there is a need for endurance and resourcefulness. Jenny is considered a veteran after two weeks because she knows how to sift through the left-behind belongings of former crew members. Francis explains that “left behind/ books, clothing, skin zines, a half bottle of whiskey, leather boot/ laces scavenged, [were] big value in bush camp” (35). In depicting the everyday ways the men and Jenny struggle and survive in a bush camp, Francis emphasizes their resourcefulness and ability to find connection, purpose, and community in unconventional ways that are not rooted in typical accumulation of resources or making of

money. Furthermore, Francis shows that some of the men take pride in their work and he reminds the reader that it is their unglamorous labour that keeps transportation routes in Canada moving.

As the poem progresses, muskeg knowledge and oral stories enter the text and help Johnny and Jenny navigate and survive in the city and the bush camp. At the beginning of *bush camp*, Jenny has a high regard for the Johnny's stories, but her interest in the bush, muskeg, and animal tracks grows when she wanders away from camp and finds a missile. Francis tells us, "sometime way back in time, like 70s (!?), they used to test the latest/ in cruise missiles in muskeg country" (38). Jenny's behavior towards the missile provides the reader with clues of how to read its appearance in the text. Unlike the men she works with who are frightened and disturbed by the bush sounds or voices, Jenny allows herself to listen and be guided by them on the way to the missile. She recalls "unusual crow activity" which prevents her from getting lost and which she calls "the bush black plumage audio guide" (39). Later in the text, Jenny brings the missile flowers. When she does this, Jenny thinks:

when will she see Johnny again

muskeg power creeps to the edge of the tracks

entice

she follows the flats by the river and starts to see things especially

animal tracks

bush signposts scream information

to a country dog's nose

to someone who sees the story in natural tones, to the poet that

lurks in us

she can feel the snares of civilization. (48-9)

Jenny's alertness to the bush, at times, separates her from the rest of the men in the bush camp, but it also connects her to Johnny and a community of artists and thinkers and, through the missile, to the world at large.

Jenny's bush apprenticeship is a surrender and a witnessing which helps her understand herself, Johnny, the bush camp men, and the world outside. Francis writes that Jenny sleeps with the animal track drawings under the pillow, learns "to read dream alphabet crosses syllabic sounds" (51) and attends

petroglyph rock art one oh one

winter count apprentice

Inukshuk designer fonts

dictionary floats oral

a track is the storyteller (52).

A reading of Jenny as a witness explains her last scene in *bush camp*. She sits silently and observes while three crows

line up on favorite twig overlooking that silver intruder, that cruise

missile... while fur, fin, feather,

gather solemn

and begin their judgement [sic.] (74)

The muskeg and the animals "judging" the missile draw attention to the fact that humans are only a part of larger world and that perhaps they have not played their part in listening and bearing witness. When it comes to military armament, Francis seems to be saying that we must

learn from past mistakes and not rush to repeat them. In his introduction, Cariou writes: “‘bush camp’ where Johnny and Jenny work shares its name with the ‘camp’ of George W. Bush and his allies, who have been all too willing to deploy cruise missiles (sometimes called Tomahawks)” (x). He reads Francis’ allusion as a critique of Bush’s expansionist, capitalist, and military policies. While Francis’ anti-war statement in *bush camp* is not obvious—Francis’ work rarely is—his allusions to weapons of destruction do question policies related to armament.

In the city, Johnny manages to survive by working the industrial overload (40-44) and by doing the welfare shuffle (46). However, when he practices drawing animal tracks for Jenny, he starts using the bush or muskeg ways to his advantage. Francis writes, he “scores a box of sidewalk chalk and begins to draw assorted/ animal tracks on that huge slab of cement outside city hall” (52). While Johnny’s drawings are quickly washed away, he does meet a man who likes Johnny’s “urban Cree approach” and asks him to draw on the sidewalk of his cafe/store (52). To earn money from passersby, Johnny starts drawing “the skeletal aspects of animals/ like he used to in the boredom of his uncle’s snowbound trapper’s cabin” and portraits of people who want Johnny to capture their animal spirits (53). Johnny uses his drawing skills and knowledge of animals, but more importantly he uses his ability to observe and to read people. Francis explains:

Guys wanted to be wolves, eagles, maybe a wolverine

Women wanted birds

Kids love them all

Even worms. (53)

Furthermore, Johnny uses his skills to express himself and produce social commentary with his art. For example, he draws “snake tracks huge and neon/ leading right up to the local cash your

check... rip-off store” (53). Like the modern Winter Count in which Native artists’ work was displayed in bus shelters across downtown Winnipeg, Francis, via Johnny, seems to be working toward a pictorial language. Johnny’s drawings avoid linguistic trappings of the colonizer’s language and make indigenous marks on the prairie city. He also

create[s] union jax in unflattering ways

Like on a roll of toilet paper

Or emitting from a hypo

because he had to salute that flag every morning

when he was a kid in a leather strapped school for speaking his

language. (54)

And when people ask him about his art, he takes refuge in obscure bush references: “*Cuz of that muskeg tea and spruce gum and all that*” (54). When it comes to his drawing, Johnny confesses that his hand was “guided by bush memories chopping wood/ socks for gloves/ Of the joy of gasoline birch bark flame” (54). While Johnny struggles and feels nostalgia for the rural or the bush, at this point in the city, he seems able to balance the work he does for money with authentic expression of his identity and culture.

His muskeg ways are not just applicable to his labour and art. When Johnny encounters a woman in the poem “downtown trapline,” to her questions of “*What sign are you?*” he is able to respond and be himself. Johnny’s words are no longer in italics, and Francis writes, “Johnny looked her up and down: ‘bear sign’ he sez cool-like, and/ walked away smooth and sure, leaving his bush signs” (57). The bush signs could be referring to bear droppings. Similar to Johnny’s petroglyph-like drawings, droppings mark the city in a very different way. Perhaps Francis implies that bush signs are preferable to the advertisements and the slogans that mark Western

Canadian cities. Furthermore, when the woman asks Johnny “*What kind of car do U drive?*,” he tells her proudly,

A Pontiac Strato Chief. Uhhh, and an Aztec, or a Chinook/
Apache chopper, or mebbe, sometimes I ride a Bronco or a
Mustang... but the best ride, is the
cnn bareback tomahawk missile. (57)

Francis plays with Native stereotypes by referencing car brands that appropriate Indian culture to sell their products. Even though he still ends up spending the night alone, Johnny’s language is now muskeg pliable, playful, and “interesting” (39). With the reference to the tomahawk missile, Francis also connects Johnny back to Jenny and to international politics. Johnny and Jenny are both connected to and aware of their immediate environment, but they also understand how their labour is connected to larger economic and political systems, and for Francis that knowledge connects them to other people. Johnny’s efforts in the city are similar to Jenny’s listening and witnessing in the bush. The poem “lips and hips” shows that muskegging with somebody else in the city is about physical and emotional awareness. Francis writes that a lover’s lips “must be/ heard with/ the mind” (71). He adds:

meet those hips on love
street
on that plateau of moving image they may intersect
may sink together
and away and alongside another that is the way of the **muskeg**. (71)

Although Johnny and Jenny have found connection, Francis implies that the need for money, sustenance, and work drove them apart.

Because in Western Canada the colonial and global capitalist economies reinforce the idea that physical and resource accumulative labour defines prairie inhabitants' worth, artists and storytellers, like Johnny and Jenny, cannot survive on their art. However, Francis depicts Jenny's practices, such as watching, listening, and witnessing in the bush camp, and Johnny's drawing and muskegging in the city as a model for physical and intellectual engagement with one's environment. Their practices are less economic and more relational; they find and make communities with each other by, first and foremost, being aware of their environment. At the end of *bush camp*, just as Jenny is wondering about Johnny, Johnny reveals that he is willing to abandon art for Jenny because he sees "that art don't count for much" when you are alone (70). Even meaningful work, like art, can become "ugly" and worthless without the connection, community, and love Johnny shared with Jenny (70). Perhaps Francis' less than optimistic ending voices the idea that it will take some time before individuals like Johnny and Jenny can prosper and be recognized for what they have to offer. Nevertheless, the poem moves toward Johnny and Jenny reuniting and the possibility that through their mobility, everyday practices, and bush-like engagement with the world they will build worthwhile lives for themselves with alternate meanings and systems.

In *bush camp*, Francis proposes that urban, bush camp, and rural spaces are all interconnected and worthy of depiction. To convey this Francis portrays the rarely depicted setting of the bush camp, and he shows it to be a unique in-between place with its own rules, economy, community, and everyday practices. At the same time, like the city, the bush camp is a place where mobility and everyday practices connect people and allow them to build

communities and to establish alternate meanings, which resist colonial and capitalist ideologies and systems. In *bush camp*, Jenny and Johnny's stories and bush practices transform their work and their environments, the city among them. Francis effectively argues that what makes labour and connection to places worthwhile are ties to the community—a community that includes other people but also the land, the animals, and the vegetation.

In this chapter, I show how the themes of community, everyday practices, and subversion of colonial and capitalist systems develop alongside Francis' techniques of fragmentation, defamiliarization, wordplay, satire, and popular references and allusions. In Francis' work the Western Canadian city is consistently a place of struggle for mobile citizens and artists. However, from its depiction in archival material to its depiction in *bush camp*, the city transforms from a bleak almost apocalyptic setting to a place where individuals can exercise agency and creativity and use urban and bush practices to form diverse communities and to make meaningful connections. Francis also acknowledges small towns, bush camps, and other in-between prairie spaces as unique and compelling environments, which include an Aboriginal presence. Moreover, he makes a case for “muskeg” or Native everyday practices as being valid, relevant, and meaningful in all environments. Francis' body of work, with its inclusion of distinct yet connected prairie spaces, cultures, genres, literatures, and peoples portrays a dialogic world full of heteroglossia. These many languages and voices, Native voices included, speak to, reverberate, and challenge each other. Francis' prairie world is a dynamic place which is intimately connected to the world at large. It is home to diverse individuals who have the mobility, agency, and creativity to change and utilize their histories, and to propose new meanings and new systems.

Conclusion

My interest in cities grew when I started reading postcolonial literature. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* vividly portray Mumbai's and Kolkata's slums, neighbourhoods, and railway stations. These texts are full of contradictions: they show the new and the old, poverty and wealth, in a mix of decrepitude and luxury. Because of my interest in colonial cities, I read the urban criticism of Anthony D. King, Ananya Roy, and Nezar AlSayyad. These critics describe how everyday people, among them India's lower caste populations, negotiate colonial cities. After I returned to Poland, where I was born, and after I finished a Masters Degree at the University of New Brunswick, I returned to Edmonton and wanted to better understand how the cities closer to home work and how people like me negotiate prairie cities. After all, I have too often walked the three-hour, missed-the-last-train-and-bus-from-University-of-Alberta route to my parents' home on the northeast outskirts of Edmonton. I negotiated the rotten core, the city airport at the outer limits of Edmonton's old Hudson's Bay Reserve, the train tracks dividing the city, and even the quiet suburbs. I hated and loved all of it. I knew that in both my academic and creative work I wanted to show the beauty, bleakness, diversity, contradictions, and humour of prairie cities. I also wanted others to read my writing about prairie cities.

Consequently, in this dissertation I explore prairie cities as uniquely mobile worlds worthy of study and attention, and I read urban prairie texts as demonstrating possibilities for change. I show the agency, ingenuity, and resourcefulness of prairie inhabitants in making their environments dynamic, vibrant, and politically engaged through their everyday practices. Furthermore, I argue that these urban prairie texts propose ways of making connections in prairie

environments that are not related to physical labour of farming and resource extraction, which often puts humans in conflict with their natural surroundings. Through mobile and everyday practices that take place in prairie cities, disadvantaged and colonized individuals subvert and resist institutions and the economic and political structures that attempt to control and oppress them. Their agency and ingenuity in establishing alternate meanings—of home, labour, and community—and their negotiations of their hybrid identities, are worthy examples for the prairie inhabitants who value a more symbiotic and less destructive relationship with their natural world.

Western Canadian spaces were initially constructed and read as rural in order to establish a tradition that set prairie writing apart from other Canadian writing. However, over time such rural readings became detrimental as critics focused on realist texts set in rural locations to the exclusion of popular and urban writing. Even in texts where writers used urban characters to develop and complicate their rural ones, critics continued to focus on mostly rural themes. With the othering and suppression of the urban environment, it became more difficult for writers to depict urban prairie settings and subjects and to receive the same recognition as their rural contemporaries. This led to the marginalization of urban writing, which in many cases was also writing by ethnic immigrants and their descendants. This marginalization also obscured the diversity and interconnected nature of rural, urban, and in-between prairie places. My dissertation works to remedy the absence of urban prairie texts in the criticism of Western Canadian Literature.

Because of the lack of urban criticism in a prairie context, I have constructed my own theoretical framework. I have used the cultural theory of Williams to explain how urban and rural spaces are constructed to serve various political ideologies as well as powerful social and economic interests. I have shown how such constructions are problematic, especially when they

depict urban spaces as corrupt, artificial and immoral, in comparison to rural spaces. In my exploration of the work of Grove, Ostenso, and Stead, I have demonstrated that contrasting the value-laden urban and rural spaces conceals the larger issues that these texts expose. For example, the novels of Grove, Ostenso, and Stead illustrate that the economy, spatial organizations, and social relations associated with capitalism and colonialism lead to the exploitation of natural and human resources and to the inhabitants' isolation and alienation from their environment. I also look at Durkin's *The Magpie* and show that, as early as 1923, there were Canadian literary urban prairie texts that explored the prairie city in detail. *The Magpie* depicts how these same capitalist and colonial systems were contributing to class segregation, poverty, and disillusionment, in the prairie city. However, what Durkin's text also shows is the possibility for change and the emergence of alternate meanings of community and labour because of the dynamic, diverse, and politically engaged environment of the prairie city. Even though the text's protagonists retreat to a farm at the end of the novel, *The Magpie* brings to the forefront everyday urban practices and the way they play a part in supporting or resisting political and economic systems.

In the rest of my thesis, I have utilized de Certeau's theory of everyday practices to examine how the underprivileged and colonized prairie inhabitants subvert and utilize the systems and organizations of those in power. These individuals develop an increased deviousness that is not easily apparent to others. However, this resourcefulness allows them to take advantage of incidental and multifarious opportunities that come their way as they work, live, and move about in everyday life. In the course of my argument, I have explored urban writing by women, ethnic immigrants, and Aboriginal people and brought to the forefront their agency and their ingenuity in constructing alternate meanings of home, mobility, labour, and

community. My analysis of Gibbons' journalism in chapter 2 shows how she depicts Winnipeg homes as mobile and impermanent yet historically connected to the urban prairie environment. In the 1930s and the 1940s, Gibbons recognized the contributions of the Metis and Aboriginal people to making Winnipeg a distinct, mobile, and diverse space. I have employed Cresswell's theories of mobility and space to propose that re-reading other historical and non-literary texts within a mobile rather than sedentary framework can lead to reimagining of prairie spaces. Historically-specific and mobile readings emphasize that prairie cities are places of competing mobilities and meanings, and networks of dominances and resistances. In chapter 3, I have read the devious everyday practices and writing techniques in the work of Lysenko, Marlyn, Wiseman, and Ryga. I have demonstrated that these Eastern-European-Canadians incorporate their own culture as well as the popular genres of their contemporaries into their writing. They use subversive, pluralist, and devious techniques to depict their hybrid identities and their unique experiences of the prairie city. Their co-optation of symbols like the railway or figures like the gypsy has altered these symbols' meanings in the context of Western Canadian spaces.

Similarly, in chapter 4, I have shown how deviousness works in Francis' writing. Such deviousness manifests itself in the use of double meanings, alliterations, puns, wordplay, parody, historical and cultural references, and intertextuality. These techniques subvert global capitalism and colonial systems. Bakhtin's theory of language's dialogism and heteroglossia has helped me to illuminate the destabilizing forces in language. Through devious writing techniques, Native writers exploit these forces to depict their own experiences and convey their own meanings. By taking on urban and in-between prairie spaces and Aboriginal topics, Francis opens the door for the inclusion of diverse voices, perspectives, and meanings into prairie literature and criticism. My work, with its emphasis on the agency of women, ethnic, and Aboriginal writers, shows that

urban prairie writing is engaged, dynamic and politically relevant. I have utilized the theory of Jacobs to show that Canadian urban prairie writing can be read alongside urban writing from Australian, Indian, and Caribbean colonial cities. In Winnipeg and in other prairie cities, like in Jacobs' Perth and Brisbane, colonized subjects subvert the city's organizations and use their agency and resourcefulness to negotiate complex, hybrid, and authentic identities for themselves.

As I move forward from my thesis, I would like to engage in more interdisciplinary work. As Ring's essay in *The Urban Prairie* shows, understanding the factors that influence visual art on the prairies can help to fill the gaps in literary history. Mobile rather than sedentary readings of architecture, sculpture, and film—in addition to literature—could provide broader comparative possibilities. I plan to utilize more city planning theory in order to suggest practical ways in which the mobility prevalent in Western Canadian cities could be utilized by city planners in their work. There is much more work to be done in this area, examining other urban practices such as loitering, graffiti writing, panhandling, and illegal transportation practices that defy urban institutions and order. Resources spent on eradicating these practices could be spent on other municipal programs. The urban Occupy and Idle No More movements are other worthwhile topics of study. How protestors occupy, introduce culturally meaningful practices and traditions, and alter public spaces is relevant to understanding how individuals utilize cities.

I had initially hoped that my work would include literature written in and about the other large prairie cities, Saskatoon, Regina, and Calgary—and that it would include more than just one text from Edmonton—but most of the urban prairie writing I found was set in Winnipeg. This may be in part because Winnipeg is the oldest prairie city and has had no provincial rival to divide and decentralize its artistic and publishing resources and activity. However, Winnipeg's history as the gateway city to the West and as a place of phenomenal growth and urbanization in

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries makes it a strong model for my theoretical framework. I believe my argument regarding mobility and everyday practices applies to texts about other prairie cities, but I also acknowledge that they are unique and complex places that differ from Winnipeg. Calgary, for example, with its proximity to the mountains and with its foundations in ranching and oil extraction, is not any less mobile, but it is a very different city in comparison to its prairie sisters, to use Melnyk's terminology (141). I hope to do a comparative reading of literatures emerging from all Western Canadian prairie cities.

I also recognize that aside from Francis, my thesis does not deal at length with poetry. There are poets such as Alice Major, in Edmonton, and Catherine Hunter, in Winnipeg, who have predominately written about the prairie city, and I hope to explore their work in the future. Due to limitations on the length of my thesis, I have also not engaged with the work of non-white ethnic and immigrant Canadians. These authors include Esi Edugyan, Suzette Mayr, Uma Parameswaran, Hiromi Goto, Fred Wah, Roy Miki, and Sally Ito. My attempts to present the historic development of urban prairie writing and to reclaim older and neglected urban texts have made it difficult to give the recent non-European immigrant writing the nuanced consideration it deserves. However, I believe the framework I propose, with its emphasis on mobility, diversity, and everyday practices, could provide a way for critics to engage with non-European immigrant writing. Because his work is predominantly focused on rural places, I have not written about Robert Kroetsch. For much of the late twentieth century, Kroetsch carried the creative and critical torch of Canadian prairie writing, and his work has been very influential on my reading and understanding of prairie spaces. In the future, I hope to look at his novels *The Studhorse Man* and *Gone Indian* and compare both texts' brief depictions of Edmonton to that of Ryga's in *Night Desk*. I hope my dissertation is the first of many critical studies that will explore this

much-neglected topic. My work is a call for other critics and writers to rally and work toward creating a community where urban writing is at the forefront of prairie criticism and discussion. All the authors I discuss seek community and seek to engage with and alter their worlds; my work shows that they have done so.

Finally, in this dissertation, I have shown that the consequences of understanding the prairies as mostly rural, as lacking diversity, and as being stuck in the past are dire. Such a vision contributes to the continued unequal economic, political, and social power relations in Canada. To understand the prairies only as a source of natural resources and physical labour—the “get in, get rich, and get out” mentality Francis critiques in *bush camp*—promotes overuse and reliance on natural resources which can result in environmental devastation. Such policies are not in the interest of those who have survived on the prairies for hundreds of years—the Aboriginal people of Western Canada as well as the old and new settlers who plan to live and make their home and communities on the prairies. Furthermore, since urban prairie environments are not written or considered worthy of depiction, urban Western Canadians do not have models for meaningful engagement with their world. The type of economy that emphasizes physical labour, resource accumulation, and material wealth also devalues the artistic and other types of labour that take place in prairie cities. Because their mobility, ingenuity, and resourcefulness in everyday practices go unrewarded, many become alienated and disconnected from their environment.

However, I argue that my urban readings bring to light past examples of agency and ingenuity and provide models for other ways of relating to and interacting with land that is not antagonistic and not reliant on exploitation of natural resources, colonial structures of power, or capitalist consumption. My thesis also illustrates how individuals use the city’s diverse social organizations, and their creative labour, to make connections and communities in prairie settings.

I believe the urban texts in my dissertation demonstrate the capacity for, and possibility of, change. As critics of prairie literature we need to make room for the reception of diverse new voices on the prairies and continue to bring attention to forgotten texts. Through the recognition of these writers' works as well as the mobile, resourceful, and devious practices of prairie inhabitants, new meanings of home, labour, and community emerge that challenge capitalist and colonial systems and economies.

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