

Unsettling *North of Summer*:  
Anxieties of Ownership in the Politics  
and Poetics of the Canadian North

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**Abstract:** Canadian writers continue to struggle with their ambivalent settler-colonial inheritances, especially as they relate to Canada's North. By troubling invaluable but thus far incomplete considerations of Canada's settler-colonial history, this essay examines why Canada's relations with its Arctic territories remain unsettled: settler-invader practices of land possession hinge on agricultural-cum-epistemological limits that find resistance in the Canadian North's environmental conditions. Drawing predominantly from Al Purdy's 1967 collection *North of Summer: Poems from Baffin Island* and secondly from CBC Radio's 2011 feature "Northwords," this essay demonstrates some of the ways that incomplete practices for colonial land claims, those that could only fail in the face of Arctic environments' natural resistances, have fostered anxieties of (dis)possession that linger throughout poetic representations and political policies concerning Canada's northern territories. Behind these anxieties are as yet unanswerable questions that shape Canada's relationship with the North and with its colonial history: it goes without saying that certain landscapes trouble colonizing practice, so can a landscape, through its physical conditions, also be said to resist an ideology? If so, what are settler-colonialism's ontic limits? Can we imagine an end to settler-colonial modes of relating to landscape in Canadian literature? This essay contends that resistances to settler-colonialism are not solely conceptual—for example, the failure of colonial language to represent colonized landscapes, the focus of so much critique at the crossroads of postcolonial and ecocritical thought—or even anthropocentric, though the North's Inuit and Indigenous communities ably demonstrate that colonization

is never an uncontested project. In addition to these indisputable embodiments of resistance, there are also physical limits to colonizing ideology, limits rooted in environmental conditions that, without any human agency or intent, deny colonial understandings of nature and the natural. Here, literary works help demonstrate how environmental resistances foster a disconnect between Canada's southern and northern experiences of colonization.

**Keywords:** Al Purdy, Canadian Arctic, settler colonialism, *North of Summer*, colonial history, poetry



This is posturing. This is the true north strong and free, and they're fooling themselves if they think dropping a flag on the ocean floor is going to change anything. There is no question over Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic. We've made that very clear. We've established—a long time ago—that these are Canadian waters and this is Canadian property. You can't go around the world these days dropping a flag somewhere. This isn't the 14th or 15th century.

Peter MacKay, former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
responding to the Russian *Arktika 2007* expedition<sup>1</sup>

In 1953 Louis St. Laurent's Liberal government relocated at least seven Inuit families from Inukjuak in northern Québec to Grise Fiord on Ellesmere Island and Resolute Bay on Cornwallis Island. This is one of the most extreme examples of a trend that occurred in the Canadian Arctic throughout the mid-twentieth-century: "Prior to the 1950s the Canadian government had, for the most part, left the Inuit alone, but the next three decades were different. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs relocated an estimated 1,000 of Canada's Inuit. . . . Such forced relocations could be quite extreme" (Taylor and Bell 100). The families moved from Inukjuak suffered severe privations in the high Arctic which was neither geographically nor ecologically similar to their native territory in Québec.<sup>2</sup> The forced relocations stand as evidence of Canada's dysfunctional relationship with its North and evince

a significant ideological substructure that continues to shape the governance and literary representations of Arctic territories and peoples by Canadians situated outside the North. Human geographers John Taylor and Martin Bell explain that “[t]he rationale behind this forced migration appeared political—Canada was concerned about a potential weakening of its claim to Arctic sovereignty during the Cold War between the United States and Russia, and it was felt that Canada needed permanent residents in the High Arctic to strengthen its claim over the territory” (100). Epistemological systems rooted in settler-colonial concepts of land and its ownership reinforced the St. Laurent government’s beliefs that populating Canada’s North, even so sparsely, would assert the nation’s Arctic sovereignty. The Inuit families involved were sufficiently Canadian to affirm national interests, yet their citizenship was not sufficiently regarded to preclude their forced relocation.

The limits Arctic landscapes placed on Canada’s colonization have sowed lingering tensions in the nation’s relationship with its North, tensions that surface in Canadian literature and governance alike. These anxieties concern the constellation of land, possession, and belonging, what Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin term “entitlement” within settler-colonial contexts: “Entitlement is much more, or sometimes much less, than the imaginative and/or emotional possession of a place based on a perception of belonging. But then again, it isn’t just about property and the laws that govern ownership either. Rather, entitlement is both of these things and usually encompasses the tensions between them” (82–83). Canada’s northern anxieties arise from the nation’s *sui generis* settler experience of colonization and what I understand as the agricultural-cum-epistemological limits of settler practices for colonial (dis)possession. As this essay’s epigraph and Canada’s current Conservative government’s “use it or lose it” (Stephen Harper qtd. in “Arctic” par. 5) approach to Arctic sovereignty suggest, these anxieties continue to circulate in public discourse and shape political policy. The challenges posed by northern environments to settler entitlements likewise striate the North’s dense and diverse literary tradition: ambivalence over how exactly northern territories can be possessed outside of settler modes of imperialism emerge early in Arctic expedition narratives, find an exemplar

in Al Purdy's strategically nation-building collection *North of Summer: Poems from Baffin Island* (1967), and persist in the 2011 "Northwords" feature on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Radio's *The Next Chapter*. As these texts cultivate literature from northern environments, they enact a cultural equivalent to the Locke-ian acts of agrarian husbandry that justified settlers' possession of land in southern Canada. Unexpectedly, however, the possessive claims imposed through the cultivation of poetry and prose in northern landscapes prove largely unsuccessful; they are occasionally acknowledged by their authors, the uneasy inheritors of Canada's settler-colonial myths and national narratives, as exerting failed claims. Possessive acts of representation, which retread worn tropes of first discovery, mapping, and the feminization of colonized land, find themselves rebuffed by resistant Arctic landscapes.

Canada's relationship with the North, prescribed in the rhetoric of its writers and politicians, remains rife with anxieties of possession that arise from enduring settler-colonial legacies of land ownership. Most postcolonial theorizations of land and environment, as Tiffin and Huggan acknowledge in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, understand acts of colonialism in fundamentally anthropocentric terms, but this special issue of *ARIEL* calls attention to how combining ecocritical and postcolonial approaches illuminates the constitutive relationship between environmental and social realities in settler colonies. Deserts, mountain ranges, mosquito infested swamplands, shorelines, and polar "wastes" present unique examples of settler colonialism's environmental limits and pose a challenge to theorizations that overlook natural resistances to colonizing practice, those not born of human agency or subjectivity. Because of these natural resistances, the Canadian North complicates essential—but thus far incomplete—understandings of Canada's colonization as a settler-colonial affair.

Much of the scholarship at the confluence of postcolonial and ecocritical thought examines how colonization irreversibly shaped the cultures as well as environments it encountered, but few models address whether resistances can also be enacted by physical landscapes that place physical boundaries on the practices central to colonial ideology. If landscapes can themselves limit ideology, how can we as literary and

cultural theorists understand cultural responses resulting from such environmental opposition? Canada's North resisted colonization via cultivation. By evoking postcolonial critique's emphasis on resistance, an ecocritical approach can productively question what it means to resist in the absence of anthropocentric understandings of agency or intent. The settler category of colonial experience usefully describes processes of colonization in southern Canada and parts of other "Second World" colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. It seems inappropriate, however, to categorize the geographical whole of Canada as a settler colony, as the designation fails to account for the colonization of Canada's North, where European settlers never settled. This unacknowledged environment-based rupture between Canada's southern and northern experiences of colonization calls postcolonial approaches' largely anthropocentric understandings of colonial relations into question by demonstrating how certain landscapes, by limiting colonial practices of land possession, intrinsically resist colonizing epistemologies. This resistance shapes how such landscapes are later incorporated into the national narratives of former (settler) colonies.

It is only recently—within the already short history of postcolonial studies—and reluctantly that settler societies, with their own "imperialist patterns of domination, both epistemological and economic" (Brydon 171), have been taken up as appropriate subjects for postcolonial analysis. In the face of dismissals from within the postcolonial field, Stephen Slemon's "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World" argues that settler societies are not only suitable but essential subjects of postcolonial critique. Slemon defines the postcolonial approach as a "critical field [that] is concerned with identifying a social force, colonialism, and . . . attempt[s] to understand the resistances to that force, *wherever* they lie" (230; emphasis in original). His essay delimits colonialism and anti-colonial resistances in terms of communal and social power relations. The ambiguity of his phrasing, "*wherever* they lie," however, allows for critical consideration of both environmental and human resistances.

The North complicates postcolonial theory's understandings of Canada's colonization as a strictly settler-invader affair. Canada's North

was not settled as part of the age of European imperialism and has not been conceived of as a colony of occupation or plantation.<sup>3</sup> Given Canada's cultural inheritance as a settler colony, the nation is left constantly negotiating and re-asserting possessive relations with its northern territories, a relationship not fully realized during the nation's colonial moment. Environmental conditions in the North prevent the possessive agricultural acts that defined settler colonization elsewhere in Canada and throughout empire. This essay offers a brief history of settler-colonialism's northern—and more broadly environmental—limits, demonstrates how a settler-invader ethos emerges in the governance and literary representations of Canada's North, especially in Purdy's *North of Summer*, and concludes by considering the future consequences faced by a landscape whose seemingly inherent resistance now wavers in the face of global climate change and the renewed attentions of transnational capital.

By what chance of history has Canada come to possess its North? In "Tokens of Being There: Land Deeds and Demarcations," D. M. R. Bentley notes that "few Canadians of non-Native descent pause to ponder the first principles under which their ancestors acquired that portion of the earth's surface now called Canada" (48), a gloss of colonial history instrumental to the indigenization of the settler-invasion and its descendants. Fewer still, it seems safe to conclude, question Canada's northern claims. Canada's Arctic sovereignty is increasingly understood as the nation's greatest foreign policy priority, and growing global resource demands as well as the greater accessibility of polar regions inform contemporary unease over the matter.<sup>4</sup> The source of these concerns, though, has deeper roots: Canada's "ownership" of its northern territories remains ideologically tenuous, predicated, as it is, on settler-invader epistemologies of land and its possession.

This account helps explain why the nation's relations with the Arctic are exceptional relative to Canada's other undisputedly colonized landscapes, which arguably do not engender the same ideological threat to national cohesion. Settler-invader practices for colonial (dis)possession are rooted in the agricultural-cum-epistemological limits of settler-colonialism. Bentley observes "three principles of land ownership" that are

recognized and validated in the poetry of Canada's exploration and settlement: "(1) the right of first discovery; (2) the right of first possession; and (3) the right of annexation through labour" (47). These validated means for possession are at significant odds with the history of Canada's Arctic claims. Most northern expeditions were undertaken by agents of European states and sponsored by European financiers, monarchs, and governments. The Dominion of Canada reluctantly purchased what was termed the Northwest Territories and Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company via England for £300,000 in 1880.<sup>5</sup> Claims to first discovery and first possession strategically obscure prior indigenous presences in settler colonies, yet similar arguments acknowledging the insufficiency of claims to first discovery and first possession apply to the majority of Canada's colonial territory. Canada's claims to ownership of the North through a history of first discovery and first possession prove fragile yet should be just as stable as their southern expressions.

Significantly, Bentley's tenuous trinity of colonial possession, already destabilized by an existing indigenous presence in the Arctic, was never completed through the annexation of northern lands via labour, at least not the agrarian acts of husbandry on which European and consequently colonial practices of land ownership were predicated. This ontology of land possession, described in John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), asserts that ownership falls to the person who "hath mixed his labour with [it], . . . and joined to it something that is his own," improving that land from "the common state that nature hath placed it in" (134). Locke's anthropocentric understanding of how individuals come to own land as property permeated European property law and migrated in the governance and social expectations of the British colonies, a process described in John C. Weaver's *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650–1900*. Expectations that land would be claimed through labour and endlessly improved were embedded in Western thought and catalytic to the physical settlement of the British settler colonies. "[T]his potent idea of improvement," Weaver writes, "maintained that entitlements to land had to be justified by improvements" (27). Agriculturally "improving" acts were central to processes of settler colonization and became entrenched within national

mythologies of land possession while simultaneously excluding Canada's First Nations, whose land use, even when it involved cultivation or husbandry, was perceived as insufficiently improving to justify land claims.

Expectations that property was rightfully acquired through its development and improvement were integral to Canada's Dominion Land Act of 1872, a document key to the nation's settlement. It encouraged immigration by offering one hundred and sixty acres of land for an insignificant processing fee of ten dollars and three years worth of "improvements" to that land. Ownership was assured, the act stipulated, when forty acres of the allotment were cultivated and one permanent structure built. Importantly, these homesteading caveats of landownership, embedded in the nation-building mythology of Canada's settlement, prove problematic for larger national attempts to assert ownership of landscapes whose climates, ecologies, and biophysical expressions limit or completely prevent such improvements.

David Hume elaborates on Locke's principles for land possession in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), which reasserts that "[w]here a man bestows labor and industry upon any object which before belonged to nobody, as in cutting down and shaping a tree, in cultivating a field, etc., the alteration which he produces causes a relation between him and the object, and naturally engages us to annex it to him by the new relationship of property" (125, note 26). In southern Canada, First Nations were excluded from the "relevant consensual communities" of landownership as settler-invaders forced indigenous populations off land through its cultivation (Bentley 48). Appropriation through cultivation was unworkable, however, in northern landscapes where cultivation itself proved impossible.<sup>6</sup> Locke's and Hume's arcadian understanding of land possession, which form the ideological basis for land claims in Canada through the Dominion Lands Act, relies on temperate environments and fails to anticipate the kind of natural resistance to cultivation that northern conditions exert. This is not a resistance that hinges on the inability of colonial languages to effectively represent the colonized landscape, resistance one step removed from the realm of the physical and situated in symbolic catachreses; this is an environmental barrier that eschews not only the pastoral form but pas-

toral practice itself. And unlike other colonized landscapes that must be constantly cleared, irrigated, fertilized, patrolled, and subdued into fulfilling colonial demands, no amount of control or manipulation made Arctic lands agriculturally productive, a marker of “improvement” on which colonial epistemologies hinge.

A critical gap surrounds these natural resistances, and arcadian understandings of passive natural environments linger in postcolonial and ecocritical scholarship. Perhaps this oversight is the result of a critical emphasis keen to underscore the devastatingly pervasive impact of colonialism across both the environmental and cultural breadths of colonized territory; however, to overlook successful natural resistances only underestimates the very real limits certain environments impose on anthropocentric colonial thought and further perpetuates arcadian perceptions of colonized lands. Even Huggan and Tiffin discuss the arrival of colonizing forces, whether human, animal, or vegetable, as inexorable: “Settlers arrived with crops, flocks and herds, and cleared land, exterminating local ecosystems” (7). Arctic landscape’s significant disruption of colonial systems of possession permeates the representations and governance of the Canadian North, where the security afforded by Hume’s “relationship of property” was never actualized; polar and sub-polar environments limited the spread of both invasive ideas and invasive life forms. Unsettled, unsettling, Canada’s possession of the North remains a lingering national project that requires constant maintenance.

The insecurities that arise from Canada’s settler-invader experience of colonization have shaped decades of political (in)action and interference in the nation’s North and likewise pervade literary representations of the region. This troubled relationship has inspired its own trope within the Canadian literary tradition whereby the southern, cosmopolitan writer travels north in order to create works of poetry, prose, or non-fiction which are brought back and sold—usually with significant commercial success—to southern, cosmopolitan audiences. This tradition of harvesting northern landscapes for artistic inspiration can trace its unintentional beginnings to *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage of Captaine Thomas James* (1633), in which, as I. S. MacLaren summarizes, “[s]trangeness and danger in many guises are chiefly what James substitutes for his

failure to find the northwest passage, or, for that matter, any new geographical discoveries” (“Zealous Sayles” 271). Yet James’ account, the first full narrative of an Arctic expedition and one that balances empirical scientific observation with a keen literary aesthetic, stemmed critique of an otherwise unsuccessful expedition. Two hundred years later, Sir John Barrow, second secretary to the British Admiralty from 1804–45 and one of James’ most damning critics, applied James’ technique to the Admiralty’s own failed attempts to find a Northwest Passage. The result was a succession of literary expedition narratives salvaged from mishandled and even deadly expeditions (MacLaren, “Zealous Sayles” 254–55). From its earliest expressions, this literary tradition asserted ownership over contested colonial territories that could not be possessed through agricultural means. Even when no new land or seaways were discovered, these otherwise “barren” landscapes proved ripe for literary harvests, translating to sales and repeat publications in the European metropole; markets for expedition narratives fueled support for further expeditions. When making something of the land’s physical resources proved exasperating, the sale of expedition narratives became a kind of improving gesture whereby narrative commodities were plumbed from Arctic “wastes.”

Countless writers have since gone north, be it physically or metaphorically, to find subjects for their work. Purdy’s *North of Summer* is one of the more successful and influential poetic examples of this trend. Purdy received a Canada Council Grant for his travels that allowed him to write for six weeks during the summer of 1965. He flew from Montreal to Frobisher Bay on Baffin Island, then north again to Pangnirtung. From there, Purdy was hosted by an Inuit hunter, Jonesee, as well as Jonesee’s family and friends; he travelled with them by boat to the Kikastan Islands in Cumberland Sound. None of his hosts for this leg of his travels spoke any English, an unanticipated and troubling experience examined in “Metrics” and “What Can’t Be Said,” and the absence of English as a common language fundamentally upset Purdy’s understanding of the North as distinctly Canadian space. Still, his choice to write about the North in a collection published the year of Canada’s centennial was nothing if not strategic (MacLaren, “Arctic AI” 121): the col-

lection and Purdy's travels were taken up by the Canadian media at the time as a national, public event. "Trees at the Arctic Circle" and "When I Sat Down to Play the Piano" have since garnered significant individual critical attention. Read collectively, however, the work contains a settler-colonial topos of land and ownership rooted in the fundamentally ambivalent entanglements of the settler-invader subject position. Just as the Group of Seven's wilderness landscapes are understood to show a settler's—as opposed to a colonizing explorer's—esthetic (Mackey 44), Purdy's *North of Summer* presents a settler's frustrated relationship with resistant northern environments.<sup>7</sup>

This frustration is key to approaching Purdy and similar descendents of settler-colonialism traditions from postcolonial and ecocritical perspectives. Unlike Arundhati Roy or Ken Saro-Wiwa, whose writing and activism consciously appeals to ecocritical and postcolonial concerns, Purdy appears largely unaware of his own colonial entanglements or how a settler-colonial cultural inheritance overdetermines his encounters with nature generally and the Arctic specifically. These entanglements vex Purdy and his collection but ultimately connect both back to the settler-colonial tradition. The settler or Second World subject, to borrow Alan Lawson's phrasing, is suspended between two First Worlds, two sources of authority and authenticity: "[T]he originating world of Europe, the imperium, as a source of the Second World's principal cultural authority; and that of the other First World, that of the First Nations, whose authority the settlers not only effaced and replaced but also desired" (158). The Second World (Euro-Canadian) subject may desire to re-imagine land and landscape in ways that differentiate his/her unique cultural perspective from the hegemonic representations of the European metropole, yet it is important to keep in mind that anti-colonial resistance emanating from the settler-invader subject position is inflected by the settler's dual identity as a colonized colonizer: "In speaking back against the imperium, in the interests of its own identity politics, the settler site of enunciation will always tend to reappropriate the position of all those others with and against whom it has mediated that imperial power" (Lawson 158). The result is a crisis for both *representation* and *resistance* in Second World literary

production: “The Second-World writer, the Second-World text, that is, has always been complicit in colonialism’s territorial appropriation of land, and voice, and agency, and this has been their inescapable condition even at those moments when they have promulgated their most strident and spectacular figures of post-colonial resistance” (Slemon 237).<sup>8</sup> Purdy struggles with the artistic integrity of colonizing valuations that misrepresent and commodify Arctic environments and their inhabitants; he also capitalizes on the nationalization of the Canadian North at the time of Canada’s centennial and simultaneously questions its colonization and reproduces a colonizing poetics from his settler site of enunciation.

MacLaren concludes his “Tracing One Discontinuous Line Through the Poetry of the Northwest Passage” with an important observation and unanswered question: “[T]he North in literature exhibits the sort of discontinuous representation that one finds of Canada generally in its literature. . . . Purdy [is] renowned for [his] love of Canadian history, yet is it too much to expect Purdy or anyone else to have read all he could before thinking that he has embarked on something entirely new?” (39). MacLaren’s charge that “[c]ultural memory will not flourish under such circumstances” (“Tracing” 39) makes the cost of these historical oversights clear. But Purdy’s lapse in literary research and his willingness to ignore or obscure the North’s existing literary tradition—both European and indigenous—can be understood as the product of a more deeply embedded cultural memory: that of the settler invasion.

*North of Summer* begins not in the Arctic, but with Purdy’s “Prelude Poem” and the North’s (somewhat ironic) invasion of southern Canada:

On the country road these spring days  
odd things happen  
brown men in mukluks climb  
the snake fences  
with Norris Whitney’s sheep  
near Ameliasburg  
and I’m afraid to mention it  
at the village store (17)

This prelude is geographically disjointed from the rest of the collection and roots *North of Summer* in settler epistemologies of land. The North's trespasses into southern Canada and disregard for established concepts of land and ownership—Purdy's imagined "brown men in mukluks," their intrusion onto agrarian property, and indifference to fences—offer a paradoxical introduction to a collection about Purdy's own intrusive travels into Canada's tenuous North.

Tropes of settler-colonialism surface in and around the collection. In a letter to Margaret Laurence, Purdy underscores the supposed uniqueness of his *North of Summer* travels: "I like indulgently to think that I did something re the north that hadn't been done (other than by Robert Service who is so different from me), treat the north as a real place with real, tho different people" (qtd. in Solecki 132). Likewise, his conspicuously titled autobiography, *Reaching For the Beaufort Sea* (1993), describes Purdy's poetry-inspired travels to Frobisher Bay and other northern locations as singular: "No other poet I knew of had ever gone to the Arctic (except Robert Service, and he didn't count), it was virgin territory for me, untouched except for the mundane prose of explorers and scientists" (190). As Purdy frames his own collection, a parallel emerges between settler-colonialism's appropriation of land and his approach to the North as the subject of his poetry. By acknowledging those who came before him—explorers, scientists, Service—Purdy risks undercutting his claim to have found a vestal subject in the North; his response is to discount their contributions as neither sufficiently poetic nor profound to count as a literary tradition.<sup>9</sup> His tactics reproduce settler colonialism's appropriation of land in claiming first discovery and first possession for his works and dismissing other undeniable presences as inadequately transformative to exude a possessive literary claim. Representation and practice collude in settler-colonialism's approach to the natural world, and as Anna Johnson and Alan Lawson argue:

[f]or the settler [as for the explorer], the land had to be empty. Empty land can be settled, but occupied land can only be invaded. So the land must be emptied so that it can be filled with both words and herds. Some evacuations are more obviously

in the domain of narrative and metaphor. The “Frontier,” the “North,” and (in Australia) the “Center” are still popularly and even academically referred to as empty spaces. (364)

To duly acknowledge or venerate not just indigenous cultures but other Western poets and writers who went north before him would discredit Purdy’s own possessive claims to its poetic representation. But by emptying the North of its existing literary tradition, he invokes the “right to first discovery” and “right of first possession” for his own poetry. Purdy completes Bentley’s possessive trinity by claiming that his are the first legitimately literary works to have made something of the land, thus asserting his “right to annexation through labour” (47).

Purdy effectively indigenizes himself as *the* Northern poet. In his autobiography, he repeats that “You want to find a subject that no one has touched” (*Reaching* 190). In an interview concerning his travels north with Peter O’Brien for *Essays on Canadian Writing*, Purdy recounts that he “had a feeling that ‘My God, I’ve hit the mother lode’ and I was so lucky to be there” (“Interview” 154). His particularly pecuniary wording evacuates the North of its existing literary tradition by exposing Purdy’s recognition that the poetic subject’s (perceived) uniqueness plays into its popular valuation. Given that Purdy’s travels and the poems that arise from them attempt to cultivate poetry from the North, his search is not for land or resources but for what F. R. Scott describes in “Laurentian Shield” as the “inarticulate . . . arctic” (li. 4),<sup>10</sup> a benign commoditisation of Arctic space on to which personal or national narratives can be projected. Yet Purdy also struggles with the artistic ethics of such representational acts. While in Pangnirtung he wrote to Charles Bukowski that “[t]he trouble with the whole biz tho, is here I am writin poems I’m not really involved in. . . . I come up here to get material like a goddam phony reporter. . . . it’s the wrong way around. The material should come to me naturally, not me to the material” (Purdy qtd. in Solecki 112). Purdy’s discomfort, his sense that gathering material is in some way appropriative within a poetics based on personal experience, is evocative of Huggan and Tiffin’s crisis of entitlement in settler societies and exposes fundamental tensions about the idea of North, simulta-

neously central to configurations of Canadian identity while far beyond the realm of the Canadian poet's experience.

Purdy's emphasis on the Arctic as virginal subject and his feminization of it in his letters, interviews, and throughout *North of Summer* betrays a too-familiar colonizing positionality that rankles the contemporary eye. Still, there is a settler intonation to these feminizing references that warrants attention. Anne McClintock famously argues that within colonizing discourse, "[t]he myth of the virgin land is also the myth of the empty land, involving both a gender and a racial dispossession. Within patriarchal narratives, to be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason" (30). But while Purdy's North may be feminine and virginal, his poem "Aspects" presents her as perpetually menstrual:

Sometimes in summer  
when it rains  
mud and garbage  
the shore awash with  
blood and stones  
slippery from rancid blubber  
I think of the whole Arctic  
as a used sanitary pad  
thrown away

by a goddess (*North of Summer* li. 1–10)

While this metaphoric image could be dismissed as demonstrating what W. J. Keith identifies as Purdy's wiseass "joshing Al" persona (97), it is a strikingly apt illustration of southern settler Canada's frustrated relations with the North: a land that is tantalizingly virginal but apparently naturally resistant to insemination through cultivation, either agricultural or poetic.

Mapping proves another frustrated theme throughout *North of Summer*. "The prevalence of the map topos in Canadian and Australian literatures," Huggan observes in *Territorial Disputes*, "clearly owes much to the close relationship in both countries between historical devel-

opment and geographical discovery” (xv). *The Dictionary of Human Geography* similarly notes that maps and mapping technologies are “implicated in the production of particular constellations of power” (“Space” 767–68). Purdy, as a Canadian with settler-invader concepts of land and nation, evokes the power of the map in his work. Northern landscapes repeatedly subvert this power. A subscript for each poem in *North of Summer* notes the particular location that inspired its composition (e.g. Frobisher Bay, Pangnirtung, Kikastan Islands).<sup>11</sup> George Bowering argues that *North of Summer* is “truly a book rather than a gathering of occasional poems” (89), and its poetic plotting supports Bowering’s suggestion: the collection is organized chronologically, based on Purdy’s travel through these locations. But while the collection’s chronological and temporal order reproduces colonial mapping and provides a plot that effectively charts his journey in and out of the Arctic, Purdy’s own faith in maps and the constellations of power they ascribe changes drastically between “The North West Passage,” one of the collection’s first poems in which Canada’s North is comfortably and possessively assimilated as part of a national whole, and “South,” written during his time at the Kikastan encampment, in which the Arctic takes on a regional, though unmapped, cohesiveness removed from national frames.

“The North West Passage” opens with the dénouement “is found” (Purdy, li. 1), a proem that uses maps to de-mystify the North as assimilated within national territories. Waiting in an airport lounge, Purdy observes a map of the Arctic and recounts Frobisher’s struggles to delineate passage through its seaways, a passage Purdy casually surveys “for lack of anything better to do” (li. 3). The poem’s first thirty-one lines and self-satisfied tone revel in the absolute knowledge of land represented by the map and Purdy’s comfortable situation within discovered, mapped, and national space.<sup>12</sup> “One of the fantasies almost invariably at play in landscape painting,” Paul Hjartarson notes of settler-colonial representations of Canadian environments, “involves positionality; landscape artists typically position the viewer on higher ground and create the illusion of command and control. The mastery typically extends from visual space to the field of knowledge as a whole” (213). The map in

“The North West Passage” offers a similar illusion of control, as does “The Turning Point,” in which Purdy occupies an elevated optic position relative to land. As Purdy flies north, he reflects: “The full shape of the Arctic moves / under us and flows / into quiet islands and swinging coastlines / blue seas reflecting our tiny aeroplane” (“Turning” li. 20–23). Such aerial surveys of the Arctic evoke “the map’s considerable authority as a geopolitical claim” (Huggan 9), and these initial poems function under still-undisturbed illusions of Canada’s ownership of and identification with the North. As “The Turning Point” notes, Purdy’s elevated perspective “makes the place behave” (li. 26).

The imagined control over Arctic environments when viewed on maps or from airplane windows is, of course, capricious. “Maps,” Huggan expands, “are the unstable products of social, historical and political circumstance” (4). Their gaps, limitations, and omissions, as with any form of representation, threaten their cohesive—and possessive—narratives as colonizing texts. Arbitrary, possession-threatening aspects of his elevated station trouble Purdy’s comfortable positioning relative to mapped space. “The North West Passage” turns from self-assurance to northern mysteries, such as the unknown location of Franklin’s *Erebus* and *Terror* (Purdy li. 32), for which there are “no place-names” (li. 34), and the incongruous nature of colonial naming: “Ellef and Amund / heroic Norwegian brewers whose names / cling alcoholically to islands up there” (li. 43–45).<sup>13</sup> Despite momentary enlightenment, the poem ends bathetically as it began, and Purdy dismisses unresolved cartographic mysteries and arbitrariness. He repeats “The North West Passage is found” (li. 67), evidence of MacLaren’s charge that “Purdy can be, at worst, a notional poet” (“Tracing” 26). “The Turning Point” is more significantly troubled when Purdy’s attempt to impose ocular order on Arctic space is scuttled; “human instruments [go] haywire” (*North* li. 31) as his plane passes through a cloudbank and he loses visual coherence with the land. After the clouds, Purdy writes, “we find another world” (li. 33). The visual disruption severs the Arctic’s connection with the rest of Canada.

Although his plotting imposes a chronological and temporal order on the volume, the process of writing *North of Summer* cost Purdy his

bearings: “Despite looking at the map,” Purdy writes in *Reaching*, “I was disoriented, had very little idea where I was or what distances were involved” (191). Mapped yet inconceivable geographies and a lack of common language combine to dislodge his established understandings of the North as a Canadian space. Far from his omphalos of Ameliasburg, the setting for his “Prelude Poem” and the rural, agricultural landscape that informs his settler-invader consciousness, Purdy begins to question the North’s coherence within Canada. Indeed, by the time the volume reaches “South,” Purdy mocks the very idea of the Mercator map and its organization of the world, literally pissing (*North* li.112–27) on now-hilarious ideas of geographical hierarchy and the constructed nature of North and South:

for the world IS et cetera  
in relation to the Arctic with  
tidal coastlines gathered  
together down there from  
                  my illusion  
                          of uP<sup>n</sup>eS<sup>s</sup>  
which has no east or west or anything  
to do with roads lakes oceans deserts  
et cetera  
                  the world is simply  
                          South                   (li. 13–23)

This gradually shifting perspective suggests a struggle with settler-colonial histories of entitlement and ownership. As Purdy recognizes his own arbitrary constructions of North and South he also becomes disillusioned with his belief in a distinctly *Canadian* North, which accounts for his dismissal of the North-as-nationalist-myth in the text’s postscript: “Oh sure, the north is our last great frontier etc., which you can read about in other books than mine. Billions in minerals waiting for a guy with a Geiger counter and geology degree etc. A national purpose for Canada—developing the north, that is. I think this last is probably true, and would mean a great deal to the country—but it remains outside my scope and intent” (83). While this dismissal seems

partially disingenuous—especially his critique of those who go north for financial gains, as he does by writing poetry “for coin of the realm” (Purdy qtd. in Solecki 111)—Purdy appears largely unaware of the role his poetry plays in nationalizing the North, and the role the North plays in nationalizing his poetry.

Here we begin to see how landscapes resistant to colonization have become integral to Canada as a settler-colonial nation. Bowering’s assertion that Purdy is the world’s “most Canadian poet” (1) or Sam Solecki’s conclusion that he is *The Last Canadian Poet* exemplify how Purdy is consistently celebrated for his Canadian-ness, a designation achieved in no small part by his writing about “the central Canadian fact, the north” (Helwig qtd. in MacLaren, “Arctic AI” 121), but it seems MacLaren’s argument that Purdy’s voice is predominantly a humanist and personal one that “his critics more often than his poems have rendered national” (“Arctic AI” 127) offers the most insightful analysis of how cultural and environmental factors collude to nationalize Purdy and his poems. *The Empire Writes Back* notes that “even when a substantial body of texts has been written in the settler colony, the task of compiling a national literary history has usually been an important element in the establishment of an independent cultural identity” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 132); in Canadian literature this has led to “stressed thematic concerns” such as wilderness, survival, and North (132), all contact zones between colonizing epistemologies and environmental resistance.

The North and its peoples—particularly those who have maintained traditional lifestyles and languages—do fall largely outside Canada’s “imagined community,” Benedict Anderson’s well-used term that describes the phenomenon of perceived cohesiveness within nations, while remaining at the nation’s symbolic core.<sup>14</sup> Canada’s self-identification with northern symbols<sup>15</sup> must be recognized as emanating from a southern, settler subject position, especially since, as Sherrill Grace observes:

North is a fiction created by southern Canadians who, for the most part, have never gone farther north than Algonquin Provincial Park or the West Edmonton Mall. In fact, most Canadians, and certainly most government agencies, have

always treated the real northern parts of the country—be they the provincial norths, the Yukon and the North-West Territories, or the Arctic—with benign neglect punctuated by bursts of economic exploitation, resource development, or political interference. (“Representing North” 2)

Marked by disjointedness and a distinct lack of cohesion, the idea of the North continues to bear significant representational loads for the Canadian nation and is often “evoked at critical moments of *national* interest and nationalist concern” (Grace, *Idea of North* 68; emphasis in original). Such symbolic evocations result in extraordinary political acts that, like the Inuit relocations from Inukjuak or those performed by Joey Smallwood’s provincial government of Newfoundland in the late 1950s, are born of settler-colonial concepts of land ownership. Similarly motivated historical examples are numerous. In 1967 the Department of National Defence launched “Project Franklin” as part of the year’s centennial celebrations “with the aim of locating Sir John Franklin’s grave and records of the missing expedition. . . . The project was unsuccessful” (“Franklin Expedition and Arctic Exploration Collection”).<sup>16</sup> Justified as part of Canada’s centennial, the military operation suggests that Victorian England’s anxieties over Franklin’s lost expedition transferred to the Canadian nation with the dominion’s purchase of the northern territories.<sup>17</sup> In 1992, Parks Canada designated Franklin’s lost ships as national historic sites despite the fact that they had not yet been discovered; the ships remain unfound, and are possibly outside Canadian waters, if they still exist at all.<sup>18</sup> Their designation as historic sites, Parks Canada states, is “a result of their association with Franklin’s last expedition; namely its role . . . *in the development of Canada as a nation*” (“HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*” par. 1; emphasis added). Parks Canada’s claim, while perhaps uncritically overstating the significance of the lost expedition to Canada’s development, limns the important role *searches* for the ships have played in establishing a national affect and asserting Canadian Arctic sovereignty.

While the idea of North as a representational marker plays a vital role in consolidating “Canadian” feelings, it is an abstraction that requires

constant maintenance and has little to do with the environmental or social realities of life in the North. What the Group of Seven achieved in the 1920s by representing the Canadian Shield as Canada's past and future and thus indigenizing Canadian settlers, Al Purdy—and arguably Glen Gould, Farley Mowat, and Stan Rogers—similarly accomplish by producing texts that nationalize the North at the time of Canada's centennial and thereafter.

Settler-invader modes of relating to land and space inform Purdy's struggle to satisfyingly represent the North in *North of Summer*. Issues of representation have come to define settler-invader literature: "unease with the 'gulf' between imported language and local world became in time a radical questioning of the relationship between language and the world, an investigation into the means of knowing rather than into what is, or what can be, known" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 134). I read "world" here in its most literal and ecological sense. "When I Sat Down to Play the Piano" exemplifies the settler-invader's resistant, colonized ethos, seen in Purdy's mocking use of elevated poetic language and glut of classical allusions juxtaposed against the scatological realities of life in the North. As Solecki notes, Purdy's "sans dignity / sans intellect / sans Wm. Barrett / and damn near sans anus" [Purdy, "Piano" li. 44–7] parodies *As You Like It's* "Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" (Shakespeare II. vii. 166) (Solecki 235n). In caricaturing Shakespeare, Purdy writes back to a figurative father of the English literary tradition and as such critiques the tradition's inability to adequately represent Northern realities. Likewise, the term "dog," as "When I Sat Down" demonstrates, comes with connotative and epistemological baggage of both colonial and southern Canadian varieties that render it inapplicable to the huskies Purdy fights off while attempting "the most natural of natural functions" (li. 10).

As with the evolving character of maps in *North of Summer*, Purdy's discomfort with the intrusions of southern Canadian culture in the North, especially its materialism, mounts throughout the collection. This is most palpable after he returns from the Kikastan encampments to communities further south; he is perturbed by the sedentary lifestyle exemplified by villages like Pangnirtung and the material tethers of the

trade economy that attend non-nomadic life, which he felt presented a grim prospect relative to his experiences of “traditional” life on the land.<sup>19</sup> “H.B.C. Post,” a poem that concludes with the postmaster’s devaluation of the Inuit hunter’s kills and skills, exemplifies how an intranational trade economy has become a non-negotiable component of life in the North. In “The Sculptors,” Purdy riffs through carvings rejected “because they said [they weren’t] / good enough for sale to / T. Eaton and Co. Ltd.” (li. 3–6). He excoriates the commodification of an idealized but unrepresentative Inuit culture for southern consumption; the maimed carvings are, to his eye, made in the Inuit culture’s damaged self-image. Even as he participates in a tradition that nationalizes an imagined North rather than its social realities, Purdy grows critical of Canadian intrusions into Arctic space. *North of Summer* leaves its reader with the sense that Purdy and Canadian culture are, to borrow Johnson and Lawson’s phrasing, “uneasily occupying” (370) Arctic spaces and that Arctic spaces likewise uneasily occupy a Canada born of settler-colonial concepts of ownership and possession.

While Purdy saw his travels north as singular, they provide a template for Canadian writers in search of a nationalized—and nationalizing—subject. In the summer of 2011, CBC Radio’s literary program *The Next Chapter* reproduced Purdy’s travels in miniature for an hour-long feature titled “Northwords.” Five emerging authors—Joseph Boyden, Rabindranath Maharaj, Alissa York, Noah Richler, and Sarah Leavitt—were taken to Torngat Mountains National Park in Northern Labrador and given one week to “channel [the space] into a piece of writing” (“Northwords”).<sup>20</sup> The program rearticulates settler-colonialism’s struggles to own the North while offering some potentially interesting disruptions to this cultural inheritance. Perhaps the most valuable aspect of the program in terms of its consideration in this essay is its selected authors: with a few notable exceptions, the North as written by cosmopolitan writers for cosmopolitan audiences remains a literary niche dominated by white male authors.<sup>21</sup> The inclusion of Boyden, York, Leavitt, and Maharaj goes against these gendered and racialized traditions. Interestingly, however, their four pieces, like Purdy’s “Prelude Poem,” use the idea of North to access personal reminiscences of

Southern Canada—as well as Trinidad, in Maharaj’s case—and limited reinterpretations of the Arctic. Overall, however, the feature and its brief final pieces perpetuate national anxieties regarding Canada’s ownership and possession of Northern landscapes in what are increasingly referred to within critical discourse as transnational times.

While Purdy grows keenly aware of the social problems faced by the North’s indigenous populations throughout *North of Summer*, “Northwords” foregrounds these issues from its beginnings. Richler’s piece, titled “Torngat Mountains, A New Waiver,” is especially concerned with Canada’s imperial relations with the Arctic. He notes the culturally devastating impact of government intrusions into Inuit communities, including the Inuit relocations undertaken by the Smallwood government in 1959 at Hebron, which the authors visit as part of their trip. During the radio feature, Richler calls for Hebron—already a national historic site—to be protected within a national park:

Ottawa should be doing whatever it can to preserve places like this. This is part of our archival record. We don’t have books or texts that recall the ordinary person’s experience in so much of the country. What we have are these sorts of clues, and we should be putting whatever resources we can find into the preservation and restoration of heritage sites like this. It doesn’t matter how many people visit them; it is hugely important to our sense of history and sense of self.

Richler envisions acknowledgement as an inoculation: recognition and condemnation of Canada’s colonial past and its resulting injustices overshadow the continued processes that attempt to assimilate the North within a Canadian whole, seen in Richler’s misleadingly inclusive “we” and “our” with which many First Nations and Inuit may not identify. His argument also disregards an interview that Shelagh Rogers, the program’s host, conducts at Hebron with Inuit elder Sophie Keelan; Keelan was eleven at the time of the relocations and is able to fully recount her story in her own words. In reducing Hebron to an archive, a reminder of Canada’s historically dysfunctional relationship with the North, Richler overlooks the relationship’s contemporary expressions exemplified by his

own CBC-sponsored presence in the village, its reduction to a national artefact, and his failure to notice the stories—those contained in “books and texts” or not—that do exist. A critical disconnect exists between the calling out of particular colonial histories and the contemporary reproduction of colonizing valuations of land and peoples. Richler, and the program more generally, are caught in the vicious circle of settler-colonial resistance described by Slemon (237); they drown out the indigenous voices on whose behalf they speak.

By focusing on environmental resistances, this essay overlooks Inuit responses to colonizing epistemology. It remains vitally important to underscore, however, that Inuit resistances are not limited to a historical past, and prove ever present in the face of contemporary southern, settler-colonial intrusions into the North. This includes resistance to contemporary scientific and narratological intrusions, a point emphasized in the works of Inuk director Zacharias Kunuk. His epic *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001) offers a stunning return to pre-colonial narrative and narrative form while his documentary *Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change* (2010) underscores emergent conflicts between climate change research and Inuit knowledge systems, wherein non-Western ways of knowing are continuously disregarded by scientific researchers, risking the endangerment of the Arctic’s indigenous communities.<sup>22</sup> But even the texts at hand provide evidence of the complex and persistent nature of Inuit resistance: Jonesee and his community’s refusal—or inability—to speak English challenges Purdy’s easy assumptions of successful cultural colonialism just as Keelan’s ability to tell her own stories to a national radio audience likewise prevents the narration of northern histories by exclusively southern tongues. Both Keelan’s speech and Jonesee’s refusal to speak trouble settler-colonial narratives of nation and belonging; they assert that colonized Inuit communities retain their cultural inheritances even when these inheritances fracture cohesive national narratives that otherwise threaten to overwrite Inuit knowledge’s living presence.

The preservative tone that permeates “Northwords” offers an environmental twist on too-familiar tropes of the disappearing native—and now disappearing native land—whereby the Arctic and its peoples are

presented as vanishing in the face of global climate change. The writers' own travels appear beyond the scope of consideration, as do discussions of northern communities as agents of their own transculturations. Though the communal nature of the trip may seem to preclude possessive claims such as Purdy's which take the North as a vestal subject for literary consideration, the feature's final pieces largely ignore the North's existent literary tradition, and the authors could similarly face MacLaren's charge of believing themselves to have embarked on something completely new. Just as Purdy railed against the "mundane prose" of scientists and explorers, both Richler's and Boyden's pieces excoriate the waivers, bear safety videos, and historical plaques they encounter on their trip. In addressing a bureaucratic straw man rather than the North's larger literary tradition, Torngat is imagined as an original subject for literary works, an antecedent to possessive claims of first discovery and annexation through (artistic) labor.

In mounting this critique my intention is not to dismiss the feature's attempts to foreground the North's colonial history but rather to emphasize how the settler-invader subject position's entanglements continue to shape representations of Northern environments and peoples. The "Northwords" program attempts to honour histories of relocation and cultural suppression that have profoundly altered northern communities but remain largely unknown in southern Canada. At the same time, the "Northwords" authors arrive with connotative and ideational baggage that capitalizes on the North as a space from which national narratives can be cultivated and presented to a southern audience, an assimilation of Arctic space within a national whole. The Arctic encountered in this program is, if not inarticulate, somewhat drowned out: a fleeting, vacation-like air punctuates the authors' travels and pieces; safety waivers, electrified bear fences, armed bear guards, and the Torngat base camp's facilities garner the majority of the program's airtime. The authors' individual pieces, referred to as "the price of admission," reflect these limits.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, "Northwords" enacts its own claims that reduce northern landscapes and their peoples to ghosts in the national attic whose memory—if not their reality—must be honoured for the moral betterment of southern Canada.

Held together by the vague tethers of history and symbolism, disjunctions between Canada's North and South result at least in part because the means by which the settler-invasion claimed land in Southern Canada did not function in Northern Canada. Colonial traditions of possession through agricultural appropriation have northern limits, and anxieties surrounding ownership of the North persist. These anxieties of possession will intensify as national claims fall under scrutiny in an increasingly neoliberal age. The Arctic remains one of the planet's most contested territories, and questions of possession press at both poles. At present, Australia claims forty-two percent of Antarctica's landmass (Collis 39); disputes between Canada and the other Arctic littoral states persist with ongoing territorial disagreements between Canada, Denmark, the US, and Russia. Emerging arguments that the poles are truly post-national spaces that belong to the whole world compound these tensions. Chinese Rear Admiral Yin Zhuo appeared to make such an argument on the Chinese State News Service in March 2010. His seemingly novel challenge to colonial histories of entitlement, though, proves a regressive reassertion of national interests: Zhuo claimed that because China had one-fifth of the world's population it had a one-fifth stake in all Arctic exploration (and presumably exploitation).

There has been a global failure to realize Rudy Wiebe's call to recognize a "true north, not passage to anywhere" (114); the North continues to be perceived as a passage to wealth, resources, and unifying national narratives. Global warming and compulsive resource extraction render the "frozen wastes" newly desirable, arguably even more so than they were during Europe's hunt for the Northwest Passage. Now, as with the Klondike gold rush, national and global investors alike are turning to circumpolar regions not as routes to profitable elsewhere but for their inherent resource wealth. Renewed interests may offer a likewise renewed basis for critical explanations of the colonization of Canada's North, where settlers never settled. Hugh Egerton's observation, offered in 1904, is instructive: "The distinction between a colony which is primarily a settlement of men, of cultivators (from *colere*, to cultivate), and a plantation, which is primarily a settlement of capital, is fundamental" (5). The primarily economic interest taken by Canada and global inves-

tors alike suggests that perhaps the historical and contemporary North should be considered a plantation colony (though this requires a significant reimagining of the term's agricultural and tropic connotations) whose frozen (capital) assets are increasingly accessible.

Global warming is opening circumpolar regions to a surge of neo-colonialism and exploitation that natural climates have thus far minimized. Victorian England's hunt for the Northwest Passage has been realized in our generation: ironically, it was not colonial persistence, British naval fortitude, or other myths of colonial entitlement that brought about the passage's commercial navigation, but climate change initially born of the Industrial Revolution. The Northwest Passage was navigable for the first time without an icebreaker in 2007, an event that intensified debates concerning whether the passage should be classified as internal waters or an international strait. The opening of the Northwest Passage, a dark historical irony, poses this essay with a closing question: if environments do resist colonizing epistemologies, how should postcolonial and ecocritical scholarship interpret changes to environmental resistance over time? This question only grows in importance as climate change fundamentally transforms the physical world in which we live and brings issues of environmental agency into conjunction with anti-colonial politics as we enter the anthropocene.

Generalizations in both postcolonial and ecocritical approaches that address Canada as a singular unit fail to acknowledge how its experiences of colonization in the South fundamentally differ from those in the North due to environmental factors, creating a largely unacknowledged rupture in the colonial histories of Canada's already disparate halves. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said asserts:

[T]his universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs" is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be completely arbitrary. . . . often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very un-rigorous idea of what is "out there" beyond one's own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one's own. (54)

Said's argument that the process of Othering occurs along arbitrary geographic lines is asserted throughout colonial and postcolonial literatures, but it is also certainly complicated by the Canadian Arctic which is simultaneously "out there" and part of "one's own territory." Just as geographic lines of exclusion are arbitrary, so too, the Canadian Arctic persistently demonstrates, are geographic lines of inclusion.

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### Notes

- 1 The *Arktika 2007* research expedition performed the first crewed descent to the ocean floor at the magnetic North Pole. MacKay's comments, quoted by *The Telegraph* in an article titled "North Pole: A Hotbed of Competing Claims," concern a Russian flag made of titanium that was deposited by the expedition on the North Pole's seafloor. The symbolism is unmistakable, though the territory remains contested. Both Canada and Russia are currently conducting research in order to claim the Pole by extending existing continental shelf claims under the United Nation's Law of the Sea.
- 2 A retrospective appraisal of this forced relocation recognizes the government's racist beliefs (all Inuit are essentially the same) and geographically ignorant assumptions (North is North regardless of significant longitudinal and latitudinal differences). John Duncan, then-Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development alluded to these oversights in a long-awaited government apology for the relocations delivered on 16 August 2010:  
[F]amilies were separated from their home communities and extended families by more than a thousand kilometers. They were not provided with adequate shelter and supplies. They were not properly informed of how far away and how different from Inukjuak their new homes would

be, and they were not aware that they would be separated into two communities once they arrived in the High Arctic. Moreover, the Government failed to act on its promise to return anyone that did not wish to stay in the High Arctic to their old homes. (Par. 8)

For more on the relocation's impact on the individuals and communities of Grise Ford and Resolute Bay, calls for an official apology, and commemorative projects, see the fall 2009 edition of *Naniiliqpita*.

3 Johnson and Lawson discuss these two broad categories of colonization in their "Settler Colonies" chapter in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (60). My challenge here calls to mind the difficulties of delineating the critical mass that must be reached for a space to be considered a colony of occupation. While scattered Hudson's Bay outposts, RCMP detachments, and DEW Line towers could arguably be viewed as "occupying" Arctic space, such establishments stand in contrast to the three cities with populations over a million persons within the Arctic Circle that were maintained by the USSR. Canada's population above the sixty-sixth parallel is, according to data from the 2006 census, roughly 101,400 persons.

4 For more on Canadian's understandings of Arctic sovereignty as a top foreign policy concern, see The Munk School of Global Affairs' 2011 report "Rethinking the Top of the World: Arctic Security Public Opinion Survey."

5 *The Atlas of Canada* notes that interest in "Rupert's Land" and the Northwest Territories, which constitute what are today Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, the northern parts of Quebec and Ontario, and all of the continental territory north of these lands, arose after confederation and in response to American interests in the North:

When the Americans bought Alaska in 1867, Canadians worried that all the West might be lost to the United States. Serious negotiations between Canada and the Hudson's Bay Company to buy its vast lands began in December 1867. The Rupert's Land Act of 1868 authorized the British Crown to take over the lands of the Hudson's Bay Company, and then transfer them to the Dominion of Canada. According to the Act, Canada bought Rupert's Land for 300 000 pounds, while the Hudson's Bay Company kept its trading posts and 45 000 acres around them and the right to claim one-twentieth of all the fertile land. Canada did not become the owner of Rupert's Land until 1870, and the lands were not transferred until 1871. The British Crown transferred ownership of the Northwest Territories to Canada at the same time as Rupert's Land. ("Territorial Evolutions 1870" par. 4)

This transfer did not include the Arctic islands, which were succeeded to Canada from England in 1880 when "an Imperial Order in Council transferred to Canada all of the British territories and possessions left in North America" ("Territorial Evolutions 1880" par. 1). The suggestion that this purchase was

- reluctant comes from Francis et al.'s *Journeys: A History of Canada*, which states that "[i]nitially Canada had no interest in the Arctic archipelago, seeing it as only a frozen waste land. But in July 1880, the British government transferred title of its Arctic 'possessions' to Canada. They did so without bothering to consult with the First Nations peoples in the region, believing such consultation was unnecessary" (277). The nature of Canada's lack of interest and sudden change of heart are not discussed, but the lack of consultation with indigenous populations demonstrates what Bentley describes as the First Nation's exclusion from the "relevant consensual communities" (48).
- 6 This is not to suggest that the presence of Europeans in the North did not have a profound impact on northern First Nations and Inuit, but rather to emphasize how environmental conditions prescribed different relationships between settler farmers and industrialists with the land in southern Canada relative to that which existed between explorers, trappers, and missionaries and the land in northern Canada.
- 7 *North of Summer* is prefaced by eight paintings by A.Y. Jackson, all undertaken on Baffin Island in 1965. For a discussion of Purdy's less than eager, indeed regretted, inclusion of the paintings as frontispieces to the collection, see MacLaren's "Arctic AI" (2008).
- 8 Slemon's hyphenation of the term "Second-World" is somewhat inconsistent throughout his essay "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World" (case in point). I have maintained his original hyphenation throughout, but have chosen to follow Lawson, the originator of the term, in not hyphenating "Second World."
- 9 Purdy considers Service "a jingler" ("Interview" 154) and insists that prose of science and exploration is profoundly different from poetry: "I went there because no one had gone there, nobody had ever written about it. Only prose writers, but prose writers don't see the same things I see. They don't see the colours, they don't have the feelings that I have. They sit down every day and tap at the typewriter. I don't do it that way. I do it whenever I do it . . . in my head. . . ." ("Interview" 154; ellipsis in original). These essentializing categories of discrimination and difference between poet and jingler, poetry and prose, resonate with the supposedly innate differences settlers perceived between themselves and Canada's First Nations. Purdy both indigenizes writers who came before him and simultaneously challenges their authenticity. I am also interested in his critique of the typewriter and his statement that he does not "do it that way," which is undercut in his poem "Metrics": "I set up a portable typewriter / on a cardboard box in the tent / for an 'order of things'" (li. 57–60).
- 10 Notably, the *North of Summer* collection is dedicated to Scott.
- 11 I say "inspired its composition" and not "where it was written" because I have little evidence to suggest Purdy wrote the collection in the same order in which it currently appears. There is also no reason not to suggest that certain poems

- were written upon his return to southern Canada, although that remains uncertain. The salient point is that the collection is ordered in a chronologically linear fashion that reproduces Purdy's travels.
- 12 Stan Rogers' "Northwest Passage" enjoys the same privileged position of the map-reader who can "trace one warm line through a land so wild and savage" (chorus li. 3) in the (relative) comfort of his car. Though Rogers' cross-country travel is elevated to epic heights in his chantey, palimpsestically ghosting the Northwest Passage over southern Canada has made it no more accessible: he recreates the journey "overland" (v. 2 li. 1) via the prairies. Rogers' possession of the land and its associated glory is at best vicarious and at worst delusional (a delusion affectionately taken up by a Canadian nation that claims the song as an "unofficial . . . anthem," as Prime Minister Harper did during a 2006 address concerning Canada's Arctic sovereignty titled "Call of the North") ("The Call of the North"). This is a strange designation for a chantey that uncritically celebrates Franklin and the Canadian North's other, largely failed and certainly imperializing, European explorers. If Rogers' "Northwest Passage" is understood as an unofficial anthem, then it is one that expresses a distinctly white, male, settler-invader brew of Canadian nationalism.
  - 13 The arbitrary nature of place names pesters Purdy throughout *North of Summer*, especially in "Arctic River." He rails against what he sees as C. F. Hall's inappropriate naming of the river for his daughter, Sylvia Grinnell, irksome not only because the name is unrepresentative of what he considers the river's relevant history ("Dear Sylvia Grinnell / (older than you) / whose loves are also mouldering / in Boston or somewhere / (older than Boston)" (li. 24–8)), but also because it expresses Hall's unabashed American nationalism, as exposed in the epigraph to "Arctic River": "From the river I have taken a draught on eating by its banks American cheese and American bread. The American flag floats flauntingly over it as the music of its waters seems to be 'Yankee Doodle.' I see not why this river should not have an American name" (Hall qtd. in Purdy, *North* 22).
  - 14 The divorce between northern and southern Canada is most evident to Purdy in the lack of English spoken in Inuit encampments, and the English language is significantly tied to the disjoint between Canada's North and South throughout *North of Summer*.
  - 15 These identifications can be seen most recently (and explicitly) in the opening ceremony of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics. The ceremony's elaborate cultural section titled *The Landscape of a Dream* offered a song-and-dance overview of the Canadian regions and opened in the Arctic with "Hymn to the North." The section featured mystical peoples arriving via ice bridges, a laser northern lights show, and an enormous polar bear puppet. The transition from the North to Southern Canada occurred through an image of disconnection: Inuit-dancers and puppets were cleared off the stage by the breakup of an ice floe, projected on the stadium's floor, that made way for British Columbia's rain-

- forests. Another disconnect between Canada's Northern imaginary and reality emerges in the ceremony's staging: these were the first Winter Olympic opening ceremonies held indoors; most national teams entered the ceremonies wearing outdoor uniforms, but team Bermuda entered in shorts and dress jackets, which dispelled the illusion of an outdoor opening ceremonies despite the faux snow that fell throughout.
- 16 This statement appears in the Glenbow Museum Archive's description of catalog item M-1800, a thirty-page final report for "Project Franklin."
  - 17 Expeditions in search of Franklin's lost ships are now an almost yearly event and news staple, with each attempt's progress hyper-documented in the national media. Such was the case in the event of Parks Canada's 2012 sea and ground expeditions around King William Island, which the CBC covered daily.
  - 18 Though no hydrographer, Wiebe imagines in *Playing Dead* that Franklin's ships are circumnavigating the North Pole, carried along by the ice floes and currents: "[P]erhaps they have left the Canadian arctic long ago and the ice has discovered for them the farthest Northwest Passage of all, the circular passage between Novaya Zemlya and Franz Joseph land" (17). One cannot help but wonder what the implications would be for these Canadian national historic sites if they were discovered outside the Canadian Arctic and what territorial claims Canada could exert on their account.
  - 19 Even Purdy's concept of what constitutes "traditional," however, is challenged in "Eskimo Hunter (New Style)," in which he catalogues the southern, non-indigenous technologies and tools used by Jonesee and his fellow hunters while himself struggling with the "reassuringly old fashioned" realities of subsistence hunting (li. 32).
  - 20 The feature and the final pieces are available on *The Next Chapter's* website. The feature was also filmed and later screened as a documentary in October 2012, with the tagline "The land has a story for everyone."
  - 21 Exceptions include Vyvyan's journals from her 1926 expedition through northern Alberta, the Yukon, and North West Territories published as *The Ladies, the Gwich'in, and the Rat* in 1994; van Herk's *Places Far From Ellesmere: A Geographical*; and Hay's *Late Nights on Air*. Levitt, a graphic novelist, also has the potential to disrupt the prose and poetic genres most often used in arctic narratives and may find an interesting counterpoint in Ipellie's ink drawings from *Arctic Dreams and Nightmares*, though such parallels are not drawn in the "North-words" program.
  - 22 Martin's *Stories in a New Skin: Approaches to Inuit Literature* (2012) is a strong resource for considering the resistances embodied in these films and the Inuit concept of *Qaujimaqatugangit*, traditional knowledge held for a very long time and passed on through oral traditions.
  - 23 Perhaps unintentionally appropriate wording, given that packages to visit Torn-gat base camp start at \$1,700 for three nights and range up to \$6,500 for a

seven-night stay. Third-party trips cost as much as \$25,000 per person for an eight night expedition, exemplifying how even as technologies and global warming render the Canadian North more physically accessible for resource development, it remains beyond the average Canadian's material means.

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## Anxieties of Ownership of the Canadian North

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