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Founding  
True  
North:

Arctic Landscape  
In the Texts  
Of the First Franklin Expedition

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*How long are we going to imagine that there was first of all a part of nature  
existing for itself and a landscape existing for itself, and that then, with the help of  
“poetic experiences”  
this landscape became coloured with myth?*

Martin Heidegger, “Remembrance of the Poet.”

# Abstract

This thesis focuses on the notes, journals, and final published *Narrative* of Sir John Franklin's troubled First Arctic Land Expedition (1819-1822). Working from a Heideggerian perspective, this study critiques new historicist approaches to the expedition and suggests new ways of interpreting the various expedition texts. In particular, this study concentrates on the issues of textuality and language which are highlighted by the explorers' meticulous records of the expedition's failure. Ultimately, it is proposed that this failure was due more to the wilfulness of the English explorers than it was to the virulent Eurocentrism of the era. The study then moves on to broader issues of land and landscape, working from both the expedition texts and various contemporary Arctic texts. The study concludes by emphasizing the essential connection between language and land in the landscape of a historical people.

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Thanks to Professor Radloff for the wood-paths, and to Professor Moss for the open tundra. My debt to both goes beyond these pages.

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# Introduction

If we were to put aside, for a moment, the fact that Lieutenant John Franklin's first expedition, the First Arctic Land Expedition (1819-1822), cost 11 men their lives, we could make an interesting argument. We could argue that the efforts of Franklin and his men to record the proceedings of the expedition, and subsequent efforts, spread over the last 175 years, to analyse these proceedings, far outweigh the physical efforts of Franklin and his men to travel overland to the Arctic Ocean. Franklin, for example, began his first expedition journal before the expedition had even left England, and his fellow officers, Midshipmen Back and Hood, and Doctor John Richardson, began writing their journals shortly after Franklin began writing his. Franklin's journals, notes, and his published account of events, entitled *Narrative of a Journèy to the Shores of The Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22*,<sup>1</sup> are, to say the least, voluminous, and Franklin's output was equalled or bettered by the officers under his command. Moreover, the texts of Franklin and his men are but the tip of the iceberg: their meticulous records have long since been dwarfed by analyses of the expedition, put forth by fellow explorers, historians, critics, and artists.<sup>2</sup> The sheer mass of all these combined texts illuminates what is perhaps the greatest irony of the expedition: despite countless attempts to disclose *the* "true" account of Franklin's first voyage of discovery, the reality of that voyage remains beyond reach. Indeed, the more analyses one reads, the easier it becomes to step back from the expedition itself and engage in a meta-textual inquiry that is only marginally connected to the actual events of the expedition (insofar as we can determine them). This propensity to abstraction comes into constant conflict with our desire—grounded in the implacable, irrevocable remains of 11 men—to really *know* what happened on this expedition. The investigation which follows is both framed by, and

founded on, this very conflict: it adds words to words, to this constant debate, in yet another attempt to get to the “flesh,” to the embodied experience, that was the First Franklin Expedition.

And certainly, we could argue that because any analysis of the expedition is undertaken in the comforts of a library, or in the familiar confines of one’s own home, such analysis is merely a literary exercise, an interesting and amusing exploration of long-dead possibilities. But as our examination of Franklin’s first expedition proceeds, two things should become clear: first, that language exacts its own measure on physical bodies; and second, that the possibilities uncovered in our inquiry are inextricably linked to the progress of our own lives. In this respect, we are often tempted to say that language and body are somehow synonymous; the opposite, in fact, is true. As we proceed it should become clear that not only is there an unbridgeable gap between language and those entities which it dis-covers, it is this very distance which grants language the immense power that it holds. Language itself is *not* body; it “simply” discloses autonomous bodies (entities). But with an awareness of language’s disclosive power, we can re-turn to that which language discloses: the embodied and unwritten earth. And because that re-turn takes place in the very words through which the earth is disclosed, we can say that the awareness of a limit between language and body finds a greater proximity *to both*.

Hence, in the first chapter of this investigation we shall juxtapose language and body and examine the way in which language discloses body. In this way we can establish the grounds for our own search for the “lost body” of the Franklin expedition, and we can also establish the way in which the explorers allowed the Arctic, as body, to disclose itself in their journals. First of all, however, we shall re-define the rather clumsy and amorphous term, *body*, as *phusis*. Our definition of this term stems from Heidegger’s. As we shall see, Heidegger uses the term *phusis*

to denote all those entities (bodies) from nature (*phusis*) which emerge on their own. All the “things” with which humans surround themselves, and, indeed, humans themselves, are—and are from—*phusis*. Thus, when we speak of the Arctic itself, or of the land itself, we are speaking of *phusis*. But, while all entities emerge in their own “proper” way, in their own autonomy, it is the way in which humans respond to the emergence of these entities which determines the measure of their self-disclosure. A stone, for example, partakes in the emerging power of *phusis*, but is shaped into a certain self-disclosure, a certain involvement with the human world, when humans first feel its hard surfaces, or chip it into a cutting tool, or look deep into its atomic structure as if its surface were glass. Each disclosure of the stone is a re-turn to the stone which reveals yet another facet of its own essential nature. *At no time* is the essence of the stone fully disclosed; indeed, we only succeed in obscuring its nature when we assume (as technology so often does) that it is given over in its entirety. Hence, we can say two things of the stone: first, that it never changes; and second, that it never stays the same. We can say the same of the Arctic. Both the waters and the tundra travelled by Franklin and his men remain as they always were, but if we travel them now we are no longer in the same *landscape*.<sup>3</sup> Thus, our use of the term *landscape* refers to the complex, fundamentally-historical interrelationship that exists between a human world and the land itself (*phusis*). And, as we proceed through this first chapter, it becomes clear that the way to landscape, the way to both our landscape and the landscape of the First Franklin Expedition, is through language.

In the second chapter, we move from the concepts we discussed in the first chapter to the journals and *Narrative* of the expedition. Using these concepts as the foundation for our investigation of these texts, we will proceed in a twofold manner. First, we will explore the way

in which the explorers were prepared to let the land reveal itself. This investigation leads us to the realization that the explorers, *freely participating* in a colonialist ideology, were not prepared to let the land disclose itself as anything other than empty space. To the explorers, the Arctic landscape was simply a blank space, a place in which to inscribe both their own exploits and European geography. But as it becomes more and more evident that the explorers were only prepared to see—and portray—the land from a certain, set perspective, flashes of incongruity and lapses in the continuity of the narrative become more pronounced. By examining a series of these “lapses” we began to perceive that the land itself was never as quiescent as the explorers wanted it to be. Indeed, as the chapter draws to a close, two things should become clear: first, that Franklin and his men responded to the land’s emergence in a way which Heidegger would term *inauthentic*; and second, that the land itself still managed to emerge in the very language, in the very texts, of Franklin and his men. This, in turn, implies that neither the land nor the explorers’ *own language* was ever completely under their control.

In the third chapter, we turn to a fictional account of the expedition. Rudy Wiebe’s *A Discovery of Strangers* (1995). Our principal focus in this chapter is on Wiebe’s presentation of the “presenting,” the disclosing, power of language. Wiebe’s concept of language is remarkably similar to Heidegger’s, and both Wiebe and Heidegger emphasize the fact that language and fate are tightly linked in the foundation of humanity’s historical being. As with Heidegger, Wiebe also makes it clear that the land itself is an autonomous co-founder of the historical landscape of a particular people. The people, in this case, are the Tetsot’ine Indians whom the explorers meet on their journey to the Arctic Ocean. Dwelling upon the land, in—and of—this particular landscape, Wiebe’s Tetsot’ine Indians display an awareness and an “acceptance” of fate which is,

in Heidegger's words again, unmistakably *authentic*. Wiebe uses the character of Greenstockings, a Tetsot'ine woman whom the real explorers did meet (and name), to present his own vision of the Indians' authenticity. This authenticity emerges as a form of *grace*. Greenstockings displays this grace by accepting the fate of her existence, of the language(s) in which she lives, and by appropriating the possibilities of this existence and living these possibilities through the fundamental, inalienable individuality of her own mortal body. In other words, Greenstockings insists on her *own* autonomy, her own fundamental limit, and it is this insistence which founds the grace with which she lives. Hence, with the character of Greenstockings Wiebe reiterates the necessity for limit. And Wiebe also makes it clear that the Tetsot'ine respect for the limits of fate (language), land, and their own individuality grants them, in a seemingly paradoxical manner, the ability to truly  *dwell* in an Arctic landscape.

In the fourth chapter we will concentrate our efforts on a definition of the verb, *to dwell*. First we will examine Heidegger's definition of the verb, and then we shall examine the ways in which the Arctic itself enjoins dwelling. In this chapter we will discuss a variety of texts: once again, we will begin with the texts of the expedition, but we will then move to the poems of Alfred Purdy and J. Michael Yates, and, finally, to the Arctic "contemplations" of Rudy Wiebe and John Moss. Our quest, throughout this discussion, is to find True North in the texts of these "explorers." Our first inclination is to regard True North as a place, a perfect embodiment of the Arctic as *the* Arctic. As we proceed, however, True North begins to emerge as a direction rather than a place. Indeed, it soon becomes evident that our concept of True North is not so much a direction as it is a *directive*: a summons from the land itself, echoed in the words of these men, which calls humans to a measure of dwelling upon the land. Engaged in this dwelling, humans

can re-turn to the land which is the Arctic and disclose some measure of its landscape. And it is, finally, in this way that our concept of True North returns to being / a place.

1.

## Landscape

land•scape (lănd' skāp') *noun*

1. An expanse of scenery that can be seen in a single view.
2. A picture depicting an expanse of scenery
3. The branch of art dealing with the representation of natural scenery.
4. The aspect of the land characteristic of a particular region.
5. An extensive mental view; an interior prospect.

**Word History:** *It would seem that in the case of the word landscape we have an example of nature imitating art, insofar as sense development is concerned. Landscape, first recorded in 1598, was borrowed as a painters' term from Dutch during the 16th century, when Dutch artists were on the verge of becoming masters of the landscape genre. The Dutch word landschap had earlier meant simply "region, tract of land," but had acquired the artistic sense, which it brought over into English, of "a picture depicting scenery on land." The fascinating thing is that 34 years pass after the first recorded use of landscape in English before the word is used of a view or vista of natural scenery. This delay suggests that people were first introduced to landscapes in paintings and then saw landscapes in real life.*

*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*

Both the definition and origin of the word *landscape* provide some insight into the essential duality of the term. From the moment it was adopted from the Dutch, *landscape* has referred to both a region of the mind and an "actual," physical region. That both of these references are brought together in one word is a fitting illustration of the interrelationship between the land and the humans who live upon it. The fact that the English may have used the term to designate an art form *before* it came to mean a particular region is also an excellent indication of the depth of this interrelationship. In particular, this leads one to the question of how a people's perception of a particular land is shaped by artistic presentations of the landscape.

Ultimately, this entire study is an investigation of this question. It is an exploration of the line—in Heidegger’s words, the founding and confounding *limit*<sup>1</sup>—between mind and matter, world and earth. The journals of Franklin’s first expedition provide a wonderful space to proceed with this exploration because in the European “discovery” of the Arctic there is a tremendous conflict between what the explorers wished to find—and wished to see—and what the land itself disclosed to them. In “The Way to Language,” Heidegger writes that his goal is to find a “way to language.” On the way to an understanding of language, however, *way* itself comes to prominence. “To clear a way,” Heidegger writes,

. . . is still today in the Alemannic-Swabian dialect called *wëgen* (literally, “waying”). This transitive verb suggests creating a way, giving shape to it and keeping it in shape. *Be-wëgen* (*Be-wëgung*) (cf. *bewegen*, *Bewegung*, to move, motion), thought in this way, no longer means merely transporting something on a way that is already at hand; rather, it means rendering the way to . . . in the first place, thus being the way.<sup>2</sup>

This first chapter is an examination of the *way* in which the Arctic, the land itself, could emerge in the texts of Franklin and his men as a *landscape*, a region possessed of a particular significance and yet retaining its *own* presence in the world of these explorers. And because *way* is of such fundamental importance in Heidegger’s thought,<sup>3</sup> in the theoretical concerns of this first chapter we shall establish the *way*, the grounds, of our own investigation.

We have a set conception of way, Heidegger argues, which elides yet another sense of the term. Way is not simply “a stretch lying between the starting point and the goal” (“BCP” 262); way also refers to the progress of an entity, human or otherwise, from one stage of its existence to another. Heidegger outlines this sense of way in his interpretation of Aristotle’s *Physics B, I*. Aristotle writes that the essential characteristic of beings from “nature” (*Phusis*) is that they “are

moving beings” (“BCP” 227). With this statement, Heidegger notes, Aristotle is certainly referring to those beings who move from one point to another; however, on a more basic level, Aristotle is also referring to the way in which beings change from one form to another according to an end (*Telos*) they set themselves. Thus, the motion, the *being*, of a flower rests in the fact that it is always on its way to full bloom and, eventually, to the bloom’s decay. In both this growth and decay what is essential is the movement itself, the way in which the being follows its *own* form of emergence.<sup>4</sup> As Heidegger writes in *Being and Time*: “Entities *are*,<sup>5</sup> quite independently of the experience by which they are discovered, the acquaintance in which they are discovered, and the grasping in which their nature is ascertained.”<sup>6</sup> Heidegger’s entire phenomenological method is founded on this concept of an essential “line” or limit between the *appearance* of an entity—that “by which” it is discovered—and the entity itself. “Phenomena,” he writes, “are *never* appearances, though on the other hand every appearance is dependent on phenomena” (*BT* 53). Thus, the disclosure of entities—phenomena—is *always* rooted in the entities themselves; however, such disclosure *never* uncovers the sum total of these entities. Indeed, the very moment humans assume that such complete disclosure is possible, the entities themselves are all the more securely hidden away.<sup>7</sup> Hence, a tree in the forest can root, sprout, mature, die, and eventually fall; and in falling it will indeed make a considerable noise. It is humans, however, who *hearken* to the sound, the “appearance,” of this falling and instantly perceive—*in*, and even *before* the crack of breaking wood and the rustle of clutching leaves—that a tree is tumbling earthwards.

It is to this *hearkening* that Heidegger’s definition of way also refers. For while beings emerge on their own, it is only humans who turn to this emergence with some understanding.

Indeed, Heidegger notes that the essence of human existence lies in *ek-sistence*, the ability to stand “outside” beings in “exposure to the disclosedness of beings.”<sup>8</sup> *Dasein*,<sup>9</sup> Heidegger’s term for this ek-sistence, “*is its disclosedness*” (BT 171). Thus, our second definition of way now becomes the way in which Dasein discloses beings, or, more accurately, the way in which Dasein serves as the “place”<sup>10</sup> for beings to disclose themselves in their Being. “The way,” in this respect, “is that by which we reach—which lets us reach what reaches out for us.”<sup>11</sup> In order to “reach” those beings which “reach out” for us, we must “listen” to them with understanding. And this listening, of course, is hearkening:

Hearkening . . . has the kind of Being of the hearing which understands.<sup>12</sup> What we hear is never noises or complexes of noises, but the creaking waggon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling. (BT 207)

What this implies is that when we encounter entities a certain fore-knowledge, a certain prior understanding, informs our apprehension of these entities. Heidegger calls this “fore-knowledge” *world*, and he defines it, in its simplest form, “as that referential totality which constitutes significance” (BT 160). Entities become intelligible when they emerge into the significance of a world: “*That wherein Dasein understands itself . . . is that for which it has let entities be encountered beforehand. . . . this ‘wherein’ is the phenomenon of world*” (BT 119). Entities can appear outside of a world, but when they do so they have no meaning, they are “*absurd*” (BT 193). Hence, from one perspective, the primary implication of “worldhood” is that humans can only understand that which is already understood. This certainly explains the patterns of Old World behaviour which most explorers maintained upon arriving in the New World. The mistreatment of aboriginal peoples, for example, reflects a bias—against less

technological, less materially-driven civilizations—which was inculcated in the Old World. The mere fact, however, that the explorers’ treatment of aboriginals is now recognized as *mis-treatment* speaks for a conception of Being which is broader than mere world. Indeed, it cannot be emphasized enough that Heidegger’s concept of world refers to one aspect, one element, one *way*, of Being.

Moreover, Heidegger argues that the *a priori* character of world is only a “*circulus vitiosus*” if we perceive ourselves journeying towards “a definite ideal of knowledge” (BT 194). If, on the other hand, we simply see this “circle”<sup>13</sup> as the “*existential fore-structure* of Dasein itself,” then we become aware of “a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing” (BT 195). Indeed, a more detailed examination of Heidegger’s circle reveals that far from being an epistemological dilemma, the circle itself serves as the provenance for all knowledge. Clearly, meaning, “that wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself” (BT 193), must have an *a priori* nature—in order to perceive a cloud as a cloud, for example, I must have some measure of “cloudness” already in mind.<sup>14</sup> It is this “measure” that makes up the *Being* of a cloud in a particular world, and it is this measure that “articulates,”<sup>15</sup> *prior* to any description of a cloud, the nature of the cloud and lets me know it. Thus, Heidegger argues, we should not bemoan the circular nature of Dasein’s knowing; rather, we should realize that all meaning and knowing depend on this circle, and that “what gets censured inappropriately as a ‘circle’ belongs to the essence and to the distinctive character of understanding” (BT 362).

Nevertheless, the first consequence of this existential structure is that Dasein is, as Heidegger writes, “thrown”—“delivered over in its Being” (BT 174; 173). Heidegger makes this assertion with two things in mind. First, as we have already seen, Dasein’s exposure to entities is

always already determined by the world in which entities disclose themselves. As Heidegger writes, “when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question *already* [my emphasis] has an involvement<sup>16</sup> which is disclosed in our understanding of world” (BT 190-91). Dasein always understands world before it understands particular beings; thus, a certain understanding of the Being of a being (its “involvement,” its possibilities of significance) also “belongs to Dasein’s ontological structure” (BT 226). Because, however, Dasein finds itself with others, and because it comes into, rather than creates, the world in which it dwells, it is the public world, Heidegger’s “they,” which “articulates the referential context of significance [or, world]” (BT 167). In this first instance then, Heidegger uses “thrownness” to refer to the fact that Dasein’s understanding of beings is already, to a substantial degree, pre-determined by the established world in which it dwells.

On a more primordial level, however, it is the thrown, or “given” element of Dasein which Heidegger terms “state-of-mind” which constantly discloses *both* the thrown nature of Dasein and the entities which Dasein encounters (BT 172). In an everyday, ontical sense, state-of-mind refers to the *moods* in which Dasein finds itself. “In every case,” Heidegger writes, “Dasein always has a mood” (BT 173). Dasein literally “finds itself,” discloses its own Being to itself, in moods: the recognition of mood founds the awareness that Dasein is always and essentially thrown into something beyond its cognitive control: mood. Thus, moods disclose the primordially of state-of-mind. Simultaneously, mood also determines the way in which beings disclose themselves. For beings to disclose themselves to Dasein they must “*matter*” to Dasein, and the fact that they can matter to Dasein “is grounded in one’s state-of-mind” (BT 176). Accordingly, Heidegger writes that “[o]nly something which is in the state-of-mind of fearing (or

fearlessness) can discover that what is environmentally ready-to-hand<sup>17</sup> is threatening” (BT 176).

The “attunement of a state-of-mind,” however, is much more than an easily-defined emotive state (BT 176). Indeed, part of the thrown nature of Dasein’s attunement is that it would be *impossible* to track down all the myriad ways in which beings matter to Dasein. Any discussion of an entity, for instance, juts up from a web of meaning and concern which remains irretrievably unsaid. The other fundamental characteristic of this thrownness is that Dasein is granted a basic attunement in the same way it is granted an understanding of world: “The dominance of the public way . . . has already been decisive even for the possibilities of having a mood—that is, for the basic way in which Dasein lets the world ‘matter’ to it” (BT 213). It is perhaps only to those born into the attunement of a technologically-driven “information age,” for example, that human Being could disclose itself as “human resources” in need of “substantial downsizing.” The final characteristic of state-of-mind is that it shares its primordially with understanding: “A state-of-mind always has its understanding . . . Understanding always has its mood” (BT 182). It is in the combination of these two “sent,” or “given” existential states then, that Dasein finds its possibilities for disclosure. As Heidegger writes, “states-of-mind and understanding characterize the primordial disclosedness of Being-in-the-world” (BT 188).

It seems clear that our definition of way, at this point, paints a rather bleak picture of existence. Absorbed in a world which is not of its choosing, Dasein seems lost in the already-heard, the already-seen, and the already-understood. Within state-of-mind and understanding (attuned understanding), however, lie distinct possibilities for the founding of new worlds. As we have already seen, part of the disclosive ability of a state-of-mind lies in the fact that it discloses Dasein to itself. Dasein is disclosed to itself as thrown. This disclosure is absolutely integral to

the ek-sistence of Dasein, for in the first inklings of its thrown nature Dasein suddenly perceives a distance between itself and the public world, the world of the “they.” It begins to understand “the world *as* [my emphasis] world,” and the fact that Dasein itself is “Being-in-the-world” (*BT* 232). Heidegger chooses “Angst” (translated as “Anxiety,” or “Malaise” by Robinson and Macquarrie) as the exemplary mood for this disclosure because angst constantly “bring[s] Dasein face to face with its world as world,” and in so doing it reminds Dasein that it alone is responsible for the possibilities of disclosure which belong to beings within this world:

Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about—its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world. Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost Being-in-the-world. . . . anxiety discloses Dasein *as Being-possible*. (*BT* 232)

Thus, it is in a state-of-mind that Dasein is thrust into the possibility of new and different worlds.<sup>18</sup> Dasein is revealed as potentiality-for-Being—that which grants disclosure to those beings it encounters. Dasein is made aware of the fact that it alone possesses the “freedom . . . . to [let] beings be” (“ET” 128). States-of-mind then, whose “primary meaning,” Werner Brock argues, “is the ‘past,’”<sup>19</sup> are actually *both* the past to which Dasein is beholden and the constant source of Dasein’s future.

Understanding also holds the possibility of founding new worlds. “The kind of Being which Dasein has,” Heidegger writes, “as potentiality-for-Being, lies existentially in understanding. . . . Dasein is in every case what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility” (*BT* 183). Because the essence of Dasein is disclosure, because it *is* “Being-there,” the way in which Dasein *is*, its understanding of its own possibilities, determines the possibilities of disclosure for *all* beings. Due to Dasein's thrown nature, possibility itself is “*thrown*

*possibility* through and through” (BT 183). Understanding is understood as thrown possibility because it is only the *a priori* understanding of the Being of the “there” (Being itself) that provides the possibility for beings to disclose themselves: “Nature . . . can be discovered only if a *possibility* of it has been disclosed” (BT 184). Thus, Dasein, with its given, attuned understanding, “projects” possibilities of disclosure, “and as long as it [Dasein] is, it is projecting” (BT 185).

At first glance, this projection seems simply an element of the “circle” we were originally discussing. To this projection, however, belongs the property of “interpretation,” and through the interpretation of projected possibilities Dasein finds new possibilities (BT 186). “The projecting of an understanding,” as Heidegger writes, “has its own possibility—that of developing itself” (BT 188). Understanding “develops itself” through interpretation, for in interpretation disclosed possibilities “exert their counter-thrust upon Dasein” (BT 188). Interpretation, simply put, is both the explicit and implicit working-out of an attuned understanding. Because, for example, we already have an implicit understanding of world, we can discuss a cloud *as* a cloud. Similarly, because we have this understanding of world, we can interpret a cleverly-forged piece of hardened steel *as* a hammer, and unthinkingly use it as such. Whenever we encounter entities within our world we employ this “as” structure: our understanding perception always grasps “*something as something*” (BT 189). Clearly, such *implicit* interpretation is the essence of the “hearkening” we discussed earlier, and such interpretation, as the constant working-out of an attuned understanding, is that which grants meaning to those beings we encounter.

Leaving aside, for the moment, the third *existentiale*<sup>20</sup>—“discourse” (from which

language stems and to which meaning defers)—we turn to the *explicit* structure of interpretation to explain Dasein’s “development.” Interpretation, Heidegger writes, is composed of three things: “fore-having,” the prior “involvement” of those beings Dasein encounters; “fore-sight,” the understanding of Being which grounds our approach to a being; and “fore-conception,” the way in which Dasein lets the being encountered “be” itself (BT 191). Fore-conception is the most significant element to us, for it sets the tenor for Dasein’s approach to entities. It can be articulated in two ways:

the way in which the entity we are interpreting is to be conceived can be drawn from the entity itself, or the interpretation can force the entity into concepts to which it is opposed in its manner of Being. In either case, the interpretation has already decided for a definite way of conceiving it, *either with finality or with reservations* [my emphasis]. (BT 191)

Dasein, as we already know, is essentially thrown. The essence of this thrownness is that Dasein is always already “at-home” in its world *and* with those entities that emerge in this world (BT 233). The nature of Dasein is such that as beings emerge, Dasein pulls them into its world and renders them familiar and intelligible. In *Being and Time* Heidegger calls this rendering *Ent-fernung*, which Robinson and Macquarrie translate as “de-severance” (BT 138). Translated literally, *Ent-fernung* means “un-distancing,” which is perhaps a more comprehensible rendering of Heidegger’s meaning. Dasein reduces the “distance” between itself and its environment by disclosing beings and bringing them into the sphere of the known and familiar. As Heidegger puts it, “certain ways in which entities are discovered in a purely cognitive manner also have the character of bringing them close . . . . That which is presumably ‘closest’ is by no means that which is at the smallest distance ‘from us’” (BT 140-41). In “On the Essence of Truth,” Heidegger describes this “un-distancing” as “insistence.” To insist, to be insistent, is to have the

constant urge to “de-sever” or “un-distance” the span of unfamiliarity separating humans from all beings which, as we have already discussed, emerge on their own. Heidegger writes: “*As ek-sistent, Dasein is insistent*” (“ET” 132), and he emphasizes this statement because he wants to emphasize the foundational character of this paradox. And it is, of course, a paradox: he is saying, in effect, that humans, as Dasein, would not ek-sist—would not out-stand in “exposure to the disclosedness of beings”—without the urge to in-sist, to live with some familiarity, some “proximity,” to the beings which surround us.<sup>21</sup>

But as a result of this urge, Dasein is always “turned toward the most readily available beings” (“ET” 132). Moreover, this urge also leads to a phenomenon which Heidegger calls “falling” (*BT* 223). In falling, Dasein turns to the continual decrees of the “they” to bolster its own sense of familiarity with the world. These “decrees” comfort Dasein with the knowledge “that all the possibilities of its Being will be secure, genuine, and full” (*BT* 222). In falling Dasein becomes absorbed in its world, and it takes the particular Being of a being within this world as the sum total of that being’s Being (*BT* 220). In such a case, Dasein assumes “that it possesses everything, or that everything is within its reach” (*BT* 223). Hence, with regards to fore-conception, falling is the interpretation of beings without respect for the proper limit and autonomy—the indissoluble “mystery” (“ET” 134)—of these beings. When Dasein approaches beings with such “finality” beings emerge as, *and only as*, they are previously allowed to be. Thus, they are unable to exert any “counter-thrust” of their own.

This is not to say, however, that falling is a “bad” thing which one can simply avoid—Dasein’s insistent nature means that Dasein, for the most part, *is* in the state of falling. But, to put it crudely, while Dasein is always thrown, it does not have to be entirely fallen.

Dasein can free itself for new possibilities, it can be *authentic*, when it heeds the voice of its *own* angst, which constantly reminds Dasein that it is primordially “*not-at-home*” in the world of the “they” (BT 224; 234). When Dasein “hearkens” to this voice it realizes its own potentiality-for-Being and becomes aware that Dasein itself is the projection of possibilities. Heidegger writes: “the most primordial, and indeed the most authentic disclosedness in which Dasein, as a potentiality-for-Being, can be is the *truth of existence*” (BT 264). The “truth of existence,” we recall, is that Dasein “is its disclosedness”; hence, Dasein is most authentic when it is aware of its own fundamental “responsibility” for the disclosure of beings. The critical consequence of this awareness is a disclosure of the *limit*, the autonomy, of all beings. One cannot, for example, disclose a being unless that particular being *already* exists.<sup>22</sup> Thus, it is precisely an awareness of its own potentiality-for-Being—its own potential to disclose being(s)—which enjoins Dasein to *re-turn* to those beings which Dasein—as “fallen”—has so swiftly “understood” and expropriated. Re-turning to these beings opens new possibilities, new paths, new *ways* for beings to emerge.

Clearly, this does not mean that angst causes Dasein to be “depressed” or “dejected”;<sup>23</sup> angst, in this context, is simply the state-of-mind which undermines the sort of complacency that assumes everything is known and calculable. Angst saves Dasein from falling, while falling stems from the very provenance of Dasein’s ek-sistence—insistence. Natural events can “cast us out of the ‘homely,’” they “can, as it were, assault Dasein’s Being,” but it is only by hearkening to this conflict between angst and insistence that Dasein finds *the grounds* for authentic, historic existence (ITM 146; BT 193). The first chorus of Sophocles’ *Antigone* begins with the lines: “There is much that is strange, but nothing / that surpasses man in strangeness” (ITM 146).

Heidegger's interpretation of this "strangeness" discloses the essence of this conflict and clears the way for us:

We are taking the strange, the uncanny (das Unheimliche), as that which casts us out of the "homely," i.e. the customary, familiar, secure. The unhomely (das Unheimische) prevents us from making ourselves at home and therein it is overpowering. But man is the strangest of all, not only because he passes his life amid the strange understood in this sense but because he departs from his customary, familiar limits, because he is the violent one, who, tending toward the strange in the sense of the overpowering, surpasses the limit of the familiar (das Heimische). (*JTM* 151)

This passage sets up a complex binary relationship between the strange and the familiar, home and the "unhomely," and, looking back, we can see that in our discussion of *way* a series of such binary relations has emerged. *Phusis*, we have seen, always emerges in its own way, while humans respond to this emergence in *their* own way. This way, in turn, is either authentic or inauthentic, and the authenticity of an individual's response to the self-disclosure of beings is founded on that individual's own awareness of their potentiality-for-Being. Neither authenticity nor inauthenticity, however, grant full disclosure of *phusis*. Precisely because *phusis* reveals itself *and* holds itself back, it is the "strange," the "overpowering," that always remains at the heart of the "homely." And because humans themselves are both insistent *and* ek-sistent, they "are the strangest of all"—forever "homeless," forever moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

But how, we ask, does this discussion of *way* reflect on our definition of land and landscape? In order to draw some connections between these two concepts we must turn once again to *Being and Time*. In *Being and Time* Heidegger establishes the grounds for his later discussion of landscape. He does this by investigating the *spatiality* of beings in-the-world (the

ready-to-hand), Being-in-the-world, and Dasein (Sections 22-24). Heidegger introduces this investigation of spatiality with a critique of Descartes' notion of world and beings within-the-world. According to the Cartesian ontology, Heidegger argues, the Being of beings gets "passed off" as substance and "gets represented indirectly by way of whatever substantial property belongs most pre-eminently to the particular substance" (BT 127). With this approach, Heidegger continues, Descartes reifies and silences the very beings he interrogates. Heidegger concludes: "The kind of Being which belongs to entities within-the-world is something which they themselves might have been able to present; but Descartes does not let them do so" (BT 129). Nevertheless, Heidegger *does* agree with Descartes' proposition that entities are primarily spatial: "spatiality is manifestly one of the constituents of entities within-the-world" (BT 134). The question which remains, however, is the question of this "within-the-worldness"; and so Heidegger concludes: "we must show how the aroundness of the environment, the specific spatiality of entities encountered in the environment, is founded upon the worldhood of the world" (BT 135).

We know that Heidegger's world is a "relational context of significance" within which beings have a particular "involvement." Within this world, Heidegger writes, there are particular *regions* (*Gegund*) within which the ready-to-hand—the "involved"—has its "place": "Equipment [the ready-to-hand] has its *place* (*Platz*), or else it 'lies around'; this must be distinguished in principle from just occurring at random in some spatial position" (BT 136). In other words, because the ready-to-hand has always already been involved (been attributed significance) in a world, its "place" in the world has already been determined. A hammer, for instance, finds its place in the "region" of a workshop or a job-site, and its involvement within these regions is truly

articulated *only* when the hammer is used therein as the tool that it is. And in order to use the hammer in its being *as* a hammer, we must already be familiar with the region which grants it space. Thus, “something like a region must first be discovered if there is to be any possibility of allotting or coming across places for a totality of equipment that is circumspectively<sup>24</sup> at one’s disposal” (BT 136). Clearly then, the spatiality of beings within-the-world, the involvement which grants them a space, is determined by their region.

Region and world, however, must not be confused. Region *itself* has the character of readiness-to-hand. The sun, Heidegger writes, “has its own places—sunrise, midday, sunset, midnight; these are discovered in circumspection and treated distinctly in the usability of what the sun bestows” (BT 137). The regions which lie under the sun are shaped by the sun, whose “celestial regions . . . provide the ‘whither’ *beforehand* [my emphasis] for every special way of giving form to the regions which places can occupy” (BT 137). In other words, the entity which is the sun, in its daily emergence, helps shape those regions within which the involvement of the ready-to-hand is constituted. Canadians, for example, inhabit indoor regions whose very constitution—heavily-insulated walls, double-layered windows, substantial doors—is a response to a larger involvement with the regions of the sun. It is this basic familiarity with the sun that also ensures that Canadian houses peer southward.

“The readiness-to-hand which belongs to any such region beforehand,” Heidegger continues,

has the *character of inconspicuous familiarity*, and has it in an even more primordial sense than does the Being of the ready-to-hand . . . . Often the region of a place does not become accessible explicitly as such a region until one fails to find something in *its* place. (BT 137-38)

Regions are “inconspicuous” because Being-in-the-world is spatial, and its spatiality is due to its traits of “de-severance” and “directionality” (*Ausrichtung*). De-severance, as we have already discussed, is the manner in which Dasein brings entities into its sphere of familiarity. Dasein is spatial, with respect to this “un-distancing,” in a way which seems at first contradictory. To put it simply: those beings which are “closest” to Dasein, those with which Dasein is most familiar, are those which are “farthest” away:

When, for instance, a man wears a pair of spectacles which are so close to him distantly that they are ‘sitting on his nose,’ they are environmentally more remote from him than the picture on the opposite wall. Such equipment has so little closeness that it is proximally quite impossible to find. (*BT* 141)<sup>25</sup>

This passage merely clarifies what we have already begun to suspect: Heidegger’s concept of space has *nothing* at all to do with a collection of abstract coordinates. Heidegger sees space as a three-dimensional context of relatedness, where everything known and familiar is so “close” it is almost impossible to see. That which is “remote,” however, offers itself to us in a more remarkable manner. Moreover, while it has nothing to do with our conventional sense of distance, Heidegger’s conception of varying proximities does often correspond to the physical disposition of our environment. To Canadians, for example, Australia is both literally and figuratively remote; in other ways, however, Australia, as a post-colonial state with a democratic structure and an immensely complex aboriginal history, is quite “close.” And the latter proximity, Heidegger would argue, takes precedence over the kind of remoteness that is measured in kilometres or miles. The implications of Heidegger’s argument are profound. If, for example, our perception of space is fundamentally a function of an involvement with world, then plumbing the depths of that which is “closest” to us is extremely difficult. This, clearly, is because that which

we seek in the familiar is ultimately world, and world, first and foremost, founds both our sense of the familiar and the search for world itself. Hence, an explicit interpretation of those beings and regions most familiar to Dasein is extremely difficult and, for the most part, overlooked.

In his reference to the sun Heidegger also illuminates a truth about Dasein's familiar sense of home. The sun, in its disclosure, shapes both the regions of the ready-to-hand *and* the world in which these regions are themselves involved. In other words, the being of this entity, its *own* being, does not simply shape those regions in which the ready-to-hand finds its place; the sun's self-disclosure also reaches into the very foundations of human being. What we see in this relationship can be said of Dasein's relationship to / with *phusis* as a whole: a fundamental understanding of the Being of beings (such as spectacles, or the sun) is buried in the regions of the familiar, of that which we call home. Moreover, Dasein's interpretation of region, and, through region, of world, *must* follow a pattern whose circularity is already familiar to us:

Dasein, in accordance with its spatiality, is proximally never here but yonder; from this 'yonder' it *comes back* [my emphasis] to its 'here'; and it comes back to its 'here' only in the way in which it interprets its concerned Being-towards in terms of what is ready-to-hand yonder. (BT 142)

Dasein's insistence, its desire to pull things "close," is accompanied by a property which Heidegger terms "directionality." Directionality is "founded upon Being-in-the-world," and it determines both the direction in which Dasein reaches out, and the significance of those beings which Dasein grasps and makes its own (BT 143). "De-severing" brings beings into Dasein's world, but directionality functions as the meaningful articulation of those beings Dasein renders familiar. "Thus," Heidegger writes, "things which are ready-to-hand and used for the body—like gloves, for example, which are to move with the hands—must be given directionality towards

right and left" (*BT* 143). Directionality orders and explains, and directionality thus grants beings space to emerge as they are. It is this directionality, this granting of space, which finally defines Dasein's spatiality. Because "Dasein has already discovered a 'world' at any time," and because it thus understands "the significance which is constitutive for the world," Dasein can determine "place"—it can "Articulate the 'hither' and 'thither' within the possible 'whither'" (*BT* 145). And because, as we have already seen, the determination of the "whither" rests on a certain disclosure of beings, Dasein's constitution of space also provides a certain disclosure of *Being*.

Heidegger published a lecture, entitled "Remembrance of A Poet," in which he analyses Friedrich Holderlin's "Homecoming."<sup>26</sup> By examining this lecture we can move from the concept of spatiality which we have already discussed to the relationship between landscape and Being. Being itself is a concept that Heidegger never completely defined, and, given the enormity of the concept, it seems doubtful that anyone ever will.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, we can know identify certain aspects of the phenomenon. Being is *phusis*, that which emerges, that which is "strange" and "overpowers" man with its fecundity. Being is that measure which determines the possibilities of disclosure for beings within a particular world. Being is also the ever-reserved, that which rests in the "merest" and most familiar regions and hides itself from the light. We encounter all these aspects of Being in the regions which we call home, and thus it should come as no surprise that Heidegger turns to Holderlin's "Homecoming" in order to examine them.

There are a few lines in Holderlin's "Homecoming" in which Heidegger traces these aspects of Being. Holderlin writes: "There amid the Alps it is still bright night / and the cloud, / Writing of the Joyous, covers the night / within the yawning valley" ("RP" 246). Heidegger responds:

The cloud writes poetry. Since it is gazing into whence it is itself gazed at, so therefore is its poetry not vainly thought out and invented. To write poetry is to make a discovery. And to do this the cloud must indeed reach out above itself to something other than itself. Not from it does the poetry spring. The poetry does not come from the cloud. It comes upon the cloud in the form of what the cloud is lingering against. ("RP" 247)

We have already discussed clouds, and the measure of "cloudness" which determines their Being. Here, this measure of cloudness—which literally "scales-off," or "measures-up" the cloud—is found in the poetry: "It comes upon the cloud in the form of what the cloud is lingering against." This certainly provides a hint of the power of poetry in Heidegger's thought, but our concern, for the moment, is elsewhere. The cloud is also *phusis*, that which shows aspects of its Being as it emerges on its own. Thus, "it is gazing into whence it is itself gazed at, so therefore is its poetry not vainly thought out and invented." The cloud then, is not some solipsistic invention of the poet. This whole question of "invention," however, discloses the circular nature of the entire passage: it is the *cloud's* poetry which is authentic, and not necessarily the lines of the poet. And what is the cloud's poetry? The cloud is "writing of the Joyous." The Joyous, Heidegger explains, is "everything of home that is openly friendly" ("RP" 245). The Joyous is Being, that which is familiar, the world which Dasein understands but finds so difficult to perceive. The cloud, however, empowers this perception: it writes its Being, its measure, before the eyes of the poet, who can re-turn to the cloud and re-inscribe the space of its disclosure.

Heidegger clarifies this relationship in the passage that follows:

The clear brightness, in which the cloud is lingering, serenifies this lingering. The cloud is serenified into the Serene. What it writes, the "Joyous," is the Serene. We call this also "the spatially-ordered." The spatially-ordered is, within its spatiality, freed, clarified and integrated . . . . While the serenification makes everything clear, the Serene allots each thing to that place of existence where by its nature it belongs, so that it may stand there in the brightness of the Serene, like a still light,

proportionate to its own being. (“RP” 247)

“The clear brightness” is the poem, which founds the measure of the cloud’s Being. The “Serene” is this measuring aspect of Being, and the cloud is “serenified” into this Being by the “lingering” of the poetry. The Serene is also the “spatially-ordered,” such that all beings in the Serene find their “place”—their *a priori* involvement in a region. “Serenification” refers to the process of interpretation which grants significance to beings and lets beings take a hand in their own serenification. And the “Serene,” finally, is that which founds ek-sistence, that which discloses beings and lets them shine, “like a still light, proportionate to [their] own being.”

The sun, as we have discussed, helps order those regions—and worlds—which lie below it. In this poem, Holderlin refers to the “angels of the house” and “angels of the year” which shape the regions in which a people make their home (“RP” 248). “The house,” Heidegger writes, “is intended here to mean the space which for men houses that wherein alone they can be ‘at home’” (“RP” 248). “The earth,” he continues, “serenifies ‘the house.’ And the earth which thus serenifies is the first angel ‘of the house’” (“RP” 248-49). The earth serenifies—influences, shapes, orders—through its self-disclosure. It informs the constitution of our homes through the emergence of the nature of wood, mortar, and stone. Heidegger’s discussion of the “angels of the year” brings us back to the sun we discussed before: “‘The year’ houses those times which we call the seasons . . . . ‘The year’ sends its greeting in the play of the light. The serenifying light is the first ‘angel of the year’” (“RP” 249). Hence, the sun, as this “angel of the year,” also takes a hand in shaping the regions in which we are at home. The familiar Being of both the sun and the earth, however, remain hidden in the inconspicuous regions of home, and they only disclose themselves to those who reach out for them:

The Joyous one [the Serene] and the joyous heralds of the serenification [the sun, the earth] . . . are capable of nothing by themselves . . . they almost exhaust themselves, if there is not at times one who first (and therefore alone) comes singing to *meet* [my emphasis] the Joyous one and already forms part of him. (“RP” 252)

With this last assertion we arrive at two conclusions. The first of these is that the home of a people is of particular importance, for the Being of home—world—is both the “source” of all that is familiar and the “source” of all that is yet to emerge. As Heidegger writes: “What is innermost and best in the homeland consists solely in being just this proximity to the source—and nothing else except that” (“RP” 258). Within home is hidden a knowledge of “the source” which determines the possibilities of disclosure for those beings who emerge from the source. “The innermost essence of home,” Heidegger writes, “has already been given as their own to those who dwell in the land of their birth” (“RP” 244). And in order to know this “source,” in order to open new possibilities, we must listen to “the wanderer . . . [who] has gone over into the source” (“RP” 259). This “wanderer,” who is “strangest of all,” is the one “who comes home for the first time and tells of the mystery” (“RP” 259). The wanderer, of course, is the poet, and “the writing of poetry *is* joy, is serenification, because it is in writing that the principal return home consists” (“RP” 261).

But how is it that the poet gets accorded such a central role in the constitution of a people’s home? Why is it the poet’s responsibility to “meet the Joyous one”? And why is it, as Heidegger writes, that “*the vocation of the poet is homecoming* [my emphasis]” (“RP” 255)? Some of the answers to these questions have already started to emerge, but they should become clearer as we touch on Heidegger’s definition of truth, discourse, and, of course, language. I have repeatedly employed the term “disclosure” throughout the course of this chapter, and with good

reason: central to Heidegger's philosophy is the belief that "truth is disclosure of beings through which an openness essentially unfolds" ("ET" 127). Traditional notions of truth contend "that the 'locus' of truth is assertion (judgement)," and that the measure of a judgement's veracity "lies in the 'agreement' of the judgement with its object" (BT 257).<sup>28</sup> This belief, Heidegger argues, is *not* wholly incorrect, but it fails to recognize the fact that "true" assertions are founded on a world which has *already* provided beings with the open space for their disclosure. Thus, "[a]ssertion is not the primary 'locus' of truth. *On the contrary*, whether as a mode in which uncoveredness is appropriated or as a way of Being-in-the-world, assertion is grounded in Dasein's uncovering, or rather in its *disclosedness*" (BT 269).

Dasein, as we already know, *is* its disclosedness; clearly then, if truth is disclosure, "*Dasein 'is in the truth'*" (BT 263). This does not mean, however, that Dasein lays claim to a complete, definitive "Truth." Truth itself, as disclosedness, is also *un-truth*: "Truth is un-truth, insofar as there belongs to it the reservoir of the not-yet-revealed, the un-uncovered, in the sense of concealment" ("OWA" 185). Truth is un-truth because beings reserve themselves even as they show themselves forth. Their irreducible "mystery" ensures that even in disclosure beings remain entirely "true" only to themselves. The truth of the cloud, for instance, to which we are led by the poet, does *not* speak for the full essence of the cloud; indeed, if we recall correctly, the thrust of the poet's project was simply to return to the Being of the cloud—that which seemed so familiar—and to open new possibilities for the cloud's emergence. Thus, as we begin to close in on this elusive poet, we realize that the poet has a special relationship with truth, and that truth, in a primordial sense, "signifies sheltering that clears" ("ET" 137).

To better understand this "sheltering that clears," we must examine the third existential:

discourse (*Rede*, or *Logos*). To put it simply, discourse *is* truth as the “sheltering that clears.” Discourse is that which grants beings significance. Discourse articulates the attuned understanding of a particular, historical people. Discourse determines all the possibilities of significance for those beings which emerge into a world. Discourse defines “place,” defines measure, renders beings intelligible *as* the beings which they are. Discourse “underlies both interpretation and assertion” by providing the intelligible grounds for both (*BT* 204). Discourse “Articulates,” and articulate, in this respect, is a particularly meaningful term, for Heidegger draws on both of its root meanings. To articulate something means to bring it into the open, to render it intelligible to both oneself and others (See note 15). Heidegger draws on this sense of articulation when he terms discourse “gathering” (*ITM* 171). As Heidegger explains, “[t]o collect, to gather, means: to bring various dispersed things together into a unity, and at the same time to bring this unity *forth* and hand it *over* . . . . Into what? Into the unhiddenness of becoming-present” (“BCP” 252). Our cloud, for example, is gathered (serenified) into the unity of “cloudness,” and in this unity it becomes manifest as itself. Thus, “[t]o gather . . . is to disclose, to make manifest” (*ITM* 170).

To articulate something, however, also means to divide something, to place it within certain limits. Accordingly, while beings are gathered by a discourse, within this gathering they assert their own autonomy, their own limit. Discourse is not the gathering of beings into a silent, reifying harmony, for beings articulated by discourse are never given over in their entirety. Discourse itself is a scene of “conflict,” one in which beings disclose themselves and simultaneously withdraw (*ITM* 61). It is through discourse, as gathering, that “[e]ntities are snatched out of their hiddenness,” but within this gathering entities continually return to the

“strangeness” that is their’s alone (*BT* 265; *ITM* 151). This conflict between emergence and withdrawal ensures both the gathering *and* the differentiation of each being according to its own emergence. “Not only,” Heidegger notes, “does conflict as such give rise to the essent [being]; it also preserves the essent [being] in its permanence” (*ITM* 62). Humans, as the “strangest of the strange,” belonging to Being and exposed to Being, constantly play-out this conflict in their historical search for Being, and “[i]t is this conflict that first projects and develops what had been hitherto unheard of, unsaid and unthought” (*ITM* 62). Thus, discourse is truth as the “sheltering that clears” because in the shelter, the gathering, of discourse beings first come to light, while in the conflict of the gathering new beings, strangely familiar beings, emerge.

Discourse, then, is the gathered differentiation of beings, that which provides space for the emergence of beings and that which grants significance to them. Hence, Dasein’s “directionality,” which we discussed earlier, is, in effect, discourse. Discourse is ordering, rationalizing—but it is also liberating. Beings, we recall, disclose themselves to Dasein “as something”; discourse assigns this “something,” and in so doing it frees these beings for their disclosure. In the “simple” act of *naming* we see what is perhaps the most evident outworking of discourse. “[N]aming,” Heidegger writes, “nominates beings *to* their Being *from out of* their Being. Such saying is a projecting of clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the open *as*.”<sup>29</sup> Through naming we are led to the key aspect of discourse: language. Discourse could not be without language, for “the way in which discourse gets expressed is language” (*BT* 204). Discourse articulates the disclosure of beings *before* they come to language, but it is the role of language to express—and to explore—the measure of this disclosure. Language, in other words, writes *to* perception *from* perception, and because words

endlessly address that which precedes them, that which is perceived always remains beyond reach. Stanley Corngold examines Heidegger's view of literature in his essay, "*Sein und Zeit: Implications for Poetics*."<sup>30</sup> His observations on the role of literature are founded on the basic role of language, and hence they clarify matters for us. "Literature," he writes, "is not an objective fact nor a social function. It would have to be understood principally in terms of an intention aiming at conformity with its source, a goal which it always falls short of."<sup>31</sup> We only begin to understand the importance of language, however, when we realize that language addresses and encompasses truth—the disclosure of all beings:

The way things have been expressed or spoken out is such that . . . it preserves an understanding of the disclosed world . . . . The understanding which has thus already been "deposited" in the way things have been expressed, pertains just as much to any traditional discoveredness of entities which may have been reached, as it does to one's current understanding of Being and to whatever possibilities and horizons for fresh interpretation and conceptual Articulation may be available. (BT 211)

Language speaks from the intelligibility of an attuned understanding, and this attuned understanding resonates in language. Language is also, however, the worldly deployment of the intelligibility of this attuned understanding. Thus, "only where there is language, is there world."<sup>32</sup> Because all beings are granted significance through the *language* of a world, "language alone brings beings as beings into the open for the first time" ("OWA" 198). And thus language, as Heidegger also notes, founds human ek-sistence: "The capacity to speak distinguishes the human being as a human being . . . . the essence of man consists in language" ("WL" 397-98).

Due to the "existential fore-structure" of Dasein's understanding, that which is discussed in language is *already* understood by one's audience. Heidegger explains: "when we are explicitly hearing the discourse of another, we proximally understand what is said, or—to put it

more exactly—we are already with him, in advance, alongside the entity which the discourse is about” (BT 207). Clearly then, Dasein is also thrown into language—but this should come as no surprise: if language is the worldly “expression” of an articulated, attuned understanding, and if the basic condition of Dasein is thrown attunement and understanding, then it is only logical that Dasein be thrown into language. “Every proper language,” Heidegger writes, “is sent, hence fateful” (“WL” 422). Through the “fate” of their language, humans are remanded to the possibilities inscribed in language by their ancestors. Like one’s home region, or the spectacles on one’s nose, language is both the most familiar and the most distant of phenomenon. Heidegger muses: “does the way to language as language constitute the farthest stretch for our thought?” (“WL” 398). Regardless of how we conceive it, however, “we are within language, at home in language, prior to everything else” (“WL” 398). And we “dwell” in language, “prior to everything else,” for reasons which by now seem clear: language is that within which we are most “at home,” most familiar; and language bears the *a priori* understanding which determines the possibilities of Being for all beings. What we can say of language, then, is that language is the way in which all beings emerge into Being.

Simply by *saying* something of language, however, we bring to light the primordial essence of language: saying. Heidegger divides language into speaking and saying. Speaking is the everyday, commonplace manipulation of the already-understood significations of discourse. Speaking discloses beings, but only as they have previously been disclosed. Speaking belongs essentially to world and remains grounded in world. Saying, on the other hand, “means to show, to let something appear, let it be seen and heard” (“WL” 408). When we say something of something we show “one another what the addressed allows to radiate of itself” (“WL” 409).

Saying is not assertion—which relies on a previously disclosed understanding of beings to found its propositional truth. Saying is the saying of primordial truth, the disclosure of beings. It begins, as all knowing and understanding begin, in the already-said and the already-understood. But saying is “projective saying,” that which returns to the underlying discourse and opens new possibilities for the disclosure of beings (“OWA” 198). Saying, as Heidegger calls it in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, is the act of “violence” which ventures into the “strangeness” of even the most familiar of beings and forces them to disclose themselves in new ways (*ITM* 176). Such “violence” forces beings to emerge—but only within their proper limits: “*Legein* and *noein*, to gather and to apprehend, are a need and an act of violence *against* the overpowering, but at the same time only and always *for* it” (*ITM* 176). Saying is “appropriation,” and not expropriation, because in saying beings emerge in their own limits, according to their own Being. Thus, “[w]hat *bestirs* in the showing of saying is *owning*,” and it is owning which “conducts what comes to presence and withdraws into absence in each case into its own” (“WL” 414).

Clearly then, saying, like discourse, is gathering and differentiation. The difference between the two, however, lies in the fact that saying is the *first* gathering. In the everyday world language speaks through the already-gathered. But it is saying which *first* founds the world in which language speaks, and it does so in three ways. The essence of poetry, Heidegger argues in “The Origin of the Work of Art,” is “projective saying,” and it is the saying of the poem which “thrusts up the awesome and at the same time thrusts down the ordinary and what we believe to be such” (200). Thus, saying is first of all a “bestowal” because it brings beings to light in a *completely* new manner (“OWA” 200). Saying, Heidegger continues, is also a “grounding,” and this accords with what we already know of the hermeneutic circle. As grounding, saying is a

return, a homecoming, to the Being of beings within in a particular world: “Truly poetic projection [saying] is the opening up of that into which human being as historical is *already* [my emphasis] cast” (“OWA” 200). By sketching the “bearing ground,” the poet says, discloses, the truth of a particular attunement, a particular understanding; such disclosure, as we recall, is a disclosure of the truth of existence—Dasein’s most authentic truth (“OWA” 200).<sup>33</sup> Finally, saying is also a “beginning” (“OWA” 201). By returning to the “bearing ground,” by bestowing, through an act of “violence,” a new disclosedness of beings, saying founds, begins, a new world, a new totality of significance. Hence, it is only through saying that humans disclose the world to which they are always already given over, and it is only through such disclosure that new worlds can emerge.

The poet, the thinker, the artist: these are the “violent ones” whose saying founds new worlds. “Every thinking that is on the trail of something,” Heidegger writes, “is a poetizing, and all poetry a thinking” (“WL” 425). The vocation of all such “poets” is homecoming, and the purpose of their poetry is to bring out “the peculiar essence of home” (“RP” 267). By returning to that which is seemingly known and understood, they gather new beings, familiar beings, in the shelter of their words, and in the propriative naming of these beings they bring them “to a kind of radiance” (“WL” 424). Those who “hearken” to their words “preserve” this radiance, and such preserving, Heidegger notes, is “equally poetic” (“OWA” 199). Indeed, just as Holderlin’s “heralds” need “one who first comes singing to meet them,” so too do the “poets” need an audience that is willing to listen, interpret, and thus understand their saying:

Therefore the poet turns to the others, so that their remembrance may help towards an understanding of the poetic word, with the result that in the understanding each may have a homecoming in the manner appropriate for him.

(“RP” 269)

And if, as we said earlier, language is our last definition of *way*, then both the poets and those who listen to the poets defend this way, and in this defence they also defend the autonomy of those beings who disclose themselves in *their* own way through the saying of language.

But having thus defined *way*, we seem to have skirted the subject of land and landscape. Moreover, it seems we have still not addressed the role of Franklin and his fellow explorers with respect to this subject of land and landscape. By establishing this multi-faceted definition of *way*, however, we have established the grounds for our investigation of the relationship(s) between land and landscape, explorer and explored. And indeed, something of the nature of these relationships has already begun to emerge. To put it simply: the land, as *phusis*, emerges in every step Dasein takes, and to Dasein this emergence *appears* as landscape. Land exists beyond discourse, beyond words; landscape is always a product of discourse, of wor(l)ds. And because we have seen that the land itself, through its “heralds,” shapes the source of its own disclosure, between land and landscape a complex interrelationship exists. As for the explorers, our definition of *way* brings us to the following question: were these explorers “poets”? Bearing in mind Heidegger’s conception of space, did they ever approach the “remote”? Did they wander in the “strange” only to re-turn to the world which was their home? Or was “the peculiar essence of home” something they quite deliberately brought with them, something they used to confront the very remoteness, the autonomy, of the land they “discovered”? And finally, bearing in mind Heidegger’s conception of authenticity—which certainly entails, but is not limited to, notions of correctness and accuracy—was the explorers’ disclosure of the Arctic authentic or inauthentic? Again, it is only by drawing on our definition of *way* that we can address these questions in the chapters to follow.

## 2.

### Writing For an Elsewhere

Studies of Franklin's first expedition inevitably revolve around the one central issue that first stimulated interest in the expedition and has sustained that interest to the present day. The central issue, of course, is the failure of the expedition and the loss of eleven of its members. As Richard Davis illustrates in his introduction to *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822*, the reasons for this failure are manifold.<sup>1</sup> The expedition was plagued with supply problems, weaknesses in the organization and planning of the expedition, dissension between the English officers, and the early onset of winter in the fall of 1821. All of these problems, however, are as nothing when compared to the one overriding weakness of the expedition: the inability of its English officers to adapt to the demands of a new landscape. Vilhjalmur Stefansson first commented on this inability in his hugely popular text, *Unsolved Mysteries of the Arctic* (1938). The English, he argued, had "minds inhibited by the outlook of their time and service."<sup>2</sup> He directly attributed the failure of both Franklin's first expedition and his last expedition to "cultural," rather than logistic, reasons.<sup>3</sup> Had the officers adapted themselves to local conditions, respected the advice of the native peoples, and adopted the native way of life, Stefansson argued, both expeditions would have succeeded. While we cannot prove this last claim, Stefansson's own travels in the Arctic certainly substantiate his belief that such adaptation is the only successful method of Arctic travel.<sup>4</sup> Regardless, however, of the accuracy we ascribe to our hindsight, debate over the

expedition's failure has moved beyond the question of whether or not such flexibility would have saved the expedition, and on to what seems a much more interesting question: why, in the face of such a new and overpowering landscape, were the English unable—or unwilling—to change their methods?

Such a question thrusts the expedition into the centre of the debate over New Historicism. New historicists, strongly influenced by Michel Foucault and, more recently, by Stephen Greenblatt (who first coined the term “New Historicism”), see individuals as products of various social institutions and social codes. To new historicists, “autonomous self and text are mere holograms, effects that intersecting institutions produce.”<sup>5</sup> As subjects of “[the] interwoven network of practices, procedures, institutions, disciplines, knowledges and truths”<sup>6</sup> of a particular epoch, individuals act in ways that are directly attributable to the forces that shape them. Thus, in order to explore an individual's role in history, the new historicist addresses the institutions and codes determining an individual's behaviour within her epoch. According to such an approach, the officers of the First Arctic Land Expedition could not be expected to see beyond the virulent Eurocentrism of their era, and could not be expected to act in any radically adaptive manner. As Richard Davis remarks:

The pervasive ethnocentric grasp of nineteenth-century Britain . . . made it virtually impossible for Franklin to respect the traditionally-evolved wisdom of Yellowknife Indians and Canadian voyageurs . . . . Franklin was as much a victim as he was an exponent . . . . (*JC* xlv)

The weakness of such an historicist approach, however, lies in the fact that the spectre of individual will, though exiled, remains to haunt the scene. Frank Lettichia captures the essence of the historicist dilemma:

The central commitment of historicists, old and new, is to the self as product of forces over which we exercise no control—the self as effect, not origin: that commitment makes historicists what they are. The central, unacknowledged, and perhaps unacknowledgeable desire of historicism . . . is to avoid the consequences of that central commitment, to find a space of freedom and so free us from a world in which we are forced to become what we do not wish to become.<sup>7</sup>

Davis illustrates this dilemma in a somewhat inverted fashion. First he exonerates Franklin for his actions: “his behaviour was appropriate within the historical context of his time and place” (*JC* lxxxiii). Then Davis is forced to acknowledge that Franklin himself was part of the problem: “it becomes difficult,” he writes, “to speak well of his leadership” (*JC* lxxxvi). Davis concludes by noting that “whatever admirable qualities Franklin possessed, he was no genius” (*JC* xciii). This, clearly, is new historicist equivocation. Had Franklin been a genius, one is left to presume, he would have been able to lift himself above the constraints of his age and act in a more flexible manner. But such a characteristic (albeit implicit) new historicist presumption rests on shaky logic and is ultimately unsatisfying. I believe we can utilize a Heideggerian perspective to explain the inflexibility of the English in a much more consistent manner.

Existence, according to Heidegger, *is* essentially “thrown,” and in this respect Heidegger’s point of view certainly intersects with that of the new historicists.<sup>8</sup> At the heart of the matter, however, the two perspectives could not be more directly opposed. For while Heidegger acknowledges the essentially thrown and inauthentic nature of existence, human agency remains the only avenue to *authentic* existence. Thus, the determinism inherent in the new historicist approach remains applicable only to the possibilities which present themselves to each society and each epoch.<sup>9</sup> The investigation, the *interpretation* (in the three-fold Heideggerian sense<sup>10</sup>) of these possibilities remains the responsibility of each individual as

Dasein. Working from this perspective, it seems clear that the fact that Franklin and his officers did not seem to learn from their experiences has more to do with a quite conscious exercise of will than with the myopia of a specific epoch. To these men, the Arctic was only useful as an ideological and textual construct. They came to the Arctic intent on proving the mettle of a nineteenth-century ideology, and they came to the Arctic very much concerned with the British reading public and the progress of their own careers. Instead of writing *for* the Arctic, instead of allowing it to disclose something of its own Being, they were intent on writing for an elsewhere. Hence, the records of the expedition are a study in control, with the explorers constantly attempting to over-write the Arctic in the terms of their own discourse. Even in the official *Narrative*, however, the land itself seems to resist such a strategy, giving rise to what Barbara Belyea describes as “a tension or dissonance.”<sup>11</sup> This tension is most notable in a series of negotiations which the explorers are forced to make with the land and its peoples. These negotiations are particularly revealing because they function as small, intense crucibles, concentrating and firing the conflicts of vision, freedom, and will which emerge throughout the accounts of the expedition.

Before we turn to these negotiations, however, we should examine that which *was* given to the explorers—the way in which the land first disclosed itself to them. The explorers arrived with a very specific, European perspective, and their freedom in the New World was based on their decision to either maintain, modify, or even abandon this perspective. Over the past fifteen years a debate has been waged over the various pre-conceptions and biases which the English brought with them to the Arctic.<sup>12</sup> While it is certainly possible to examine each of these pre-conceptions and illustrate their assorted effects, it seems more profitable to investigate the one

overriding pre-conception which guided the efforts and decisions of Franklin and his men. This pre-conception was the explorers' belief that the Arctic was not a *place*, a landscape unique in itself,<sup>13</sup> but simply a "blank" space on a map. A place, in Heideggerian terms, is more than a random, reified intersection of two axes on a grid. Spatiality stems from one's world, one's totality of significance. Because the places, the regions, within which one exists exert an influence on the constitution of one's world, the relationship between an individual and these regions does *not* take the form of a constituent subject and an infinitely malleable object. Rather, a place is also a source. From those individual truths which spring from the hidden and predominately overlooked Truth of a place, beings reveal themselves as they are. One's home place, one's home region, assumes a particular importance because it founds one's relationship with *all* beings and *all* other places. "[I]n a certain manner, factically existent Dasein always knows its way about, even in a 'world' which is alien,"<sup>14</sup> because the facticity of Dasein's existence has already been articulated in, and by, one's home region. The English, for example, certainly knew their way about the Arctic: on the disastrous return from the Arctic Ocean, until he was too weak to do so, Midshipman Hood walked behind the man "breaking trail" and, like the good sailor he was, he kept the expedition on the proper compass heading. As Rudy Wiebe has pointed out,<sup>15</sup> however, it was the explorers' reliance on such strict naval modes of travel which contributed to their final difficulties. Indeed, the explorers' mode of travel—overland in a straight line, oblivious to the seasonal patterns of the animals they depended on for food—merely illustrates how alien the English were to the landscape. But this, of course, is Heidegger's point: one can always find one's way in a new and alien world, but only in the terms of the world that has been left behind. A more accurate, more primordial knowledge of the Being of a new world

is much more difficult to grasp. The English had no interest in attaining such a knowledge of the Arctic world. They arrived with a set conception of the land, and when it came time to interpret that conception they were not prepared to let the land exert a “counter-thrust”<sup>16</sup> of its own. And the reason they were not prepared to let the land exert such a counter-thrust, the reason they viewed the land in terms of the sublime, or the picturesque, or in constant terms of absence, finds its foundation in their metaphysical belief that the land itself was simply space, mere *substantia* in need of European *forma*.

Justification for this claim appears in the opening pages of Franklin’s *Narrative*. Within these pages Franklin reproduces Admiral Barrow’s instructions to the expedition. The central purpose of the expedition, Barrow writes, is “to amend the very defective geography of the Northern part of North America.”<sup>17</sup> His statement is certainly logical if one maintains a strict division between the human science of geography and the physical form of the landscape. It becomes more problematic, however, if the two subjects are conflated; and it would seem, from various statements in the expedition records, that the English were not adverse to treating the two as one and the same. Perhaps the best indication of this is found in Midshipman Back’s description of the expedition’s departure from Fort Enterprise in June of 1821: “the positions and dress of the officers as well as the deep contrast between the perpetual silence of the place, and the animation of the party—afforded a most perfect view of a voyage of discovery.”<sup>18</sup> The officers, we are told, are standing on a raised promontory. Their uniforms (or, more accurately, the remnants thereof) identify them as stalwart representatives of the world’s greatest navy. They are the active agents in this scene, while Back’s evocation of the “perpetual silence of the place” effectively marginalizes and reifies the land, justifying and even ennobling the strenuous efforts

of the party. Clearly, where we might be tempted to describe the expedition as simply the outworking of a rapacious colonialist discourse, Back's "perfect view of a voyage of discovery" is one in which the nobility of the enterprise stems from the fact that it is the activity of the explorers which redeems the land from a "silence" which is akin to non-existence. Midshipman Hood reflects the same sentiment when he discusses the loss of the Red River Colony: "the extermination of a colony," he writes, "is no ordinary offence against mankind."<sup>19</sup> For both men, exploration and colonization are acts of creation. Such a belief maintains, as its basic premise, the essential formlessness of the lands and the peoples being "discovered" and/or colonized. As John Moss writes: "Mapmakers were passionate men; they made a place for things to happen. This is not without irony for the indigenous peoples they discovered."<sup>20</sup>

Exploration and colonization are closely linked with yet another method for "amending the geography" of the land: the cultivation of its soil. As Hood remarks: "It is gratifying to contemplate the successful efforts of cultivation on this hitherto neglected land" (*JPH* 45). And Franklin repeats this refrain upon the expedition's return to Cumberland House in 1821: "We perceived many improvements since our last visit, but there was none that gave me greater satisfaction than to witness the increased attention which had been paid to Agriculture and farming" (*JC* 260). Throughout this sequence of exploration, colonization, and cultivation the same fundamental theme predominates: it is only through European activity that the land can be redeemed from nothingness. Indeed, the Arctic is not even a location until the explorers can map it, and it cannot lay claim to being a place until it becomes a clone of European civilization. Thus, it is this pre-conception of the land's emptiness that circumscribes the possibilities of its disclosure to the English. One could certainly argue that had the land *not* resisted such a pre-

conception, the English could have come and gone without ever having visited the Arctic at all. But, as we shall see, the land *did* resist such a false conceptualization, and we are left once more with our original question: if the English failed to respond to the “counter-thrust” of the landscape because, in accordance with their colonialist discourse, they dismissed it as empty, formless space, then why, when the land itself resisted such a conceptualization, did the English cling so tenaciously to this point-of-view?

Clearly, one of the reasons was that the English expected and even welcomed such resistance. The struggle between themselves and the land was viewed as a necessary sacrifice. It was the patient labour which made the victory—in this case, the classification and delimitation of a new world—a victory. To the explorers, exploration was a noble struggle for the cause of knowledge. Hood, for example, completes a lengthy description of the torment of North American mosquitoes with the following apology:

To such annoyance all travellers must submit, and it would be unworthy to complain of that grievance in the pursuit of knowledge, which is endured for the sake of profit. This detail of it has only been made as an excuse for the scantiness of our observations on the most interesting part of the country through which we passed. (*JCH* 117)

Simultaneously, such “annoyance” is ultimately to the benefit of the explorer as well. As Sylvia Van Kirk notes in her examination of fur traders’ journals: “tales such as *Robinson Crusoe* contained their [the journals’] moral precepts: the wanderings of the hero were meant to test and temper his courage and virtue, to bring him to a better understanding of God’s grace and the human condition.”<sup>21</sup> A belief in the spiritual benefits of suffering for a noble cause is evident not only in the journals of this expedition but also throughout the exploration journals of the nineteenth century. Sir Clements Markham, in his *The Lands of Silence: A History of Arctic and*

*Antarctic Exploration* (1921), captures this philosophy well:

The Polar regions . . . [are] of surpassing interest and importance. Here we meet with examples of heroism and devotion which must entrance mankind for all times . . . there are dangers to be encountered and difficulties to be overcome which call forth the best qualities of our race.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the influence of such a philosophy, the explorers' reaction to the difficulties of exploration was also mediated by their perception of their role as explorers. The explorers saw themselves as active imperial agents, and it is their very activity which sets them apart from the landscape. The key word in Back's description of the expedition is "animation"—the animation of the expedition in the face of the quiescent land. As Wiebe notes, the explorers are defined by their "motion,"<sup>23</sup> but their desire to keep moving is itself only an expression of the dichotomy they establish between a passive, reified landscape and their constructive agency as explorers. I.

S. MacLaren writes:

the Englishman 'passed . . . through' and passed through with a purpose: to fulfil the high-minded quest of adding to the English geography of the globe . . . . This worthy, not to say noble, sacrifice of self for geographical knowledge serves in the narrative register to demarcate and to insist upon a hierarchy in the characterization of the explorer and the explored.<sup>24</sup>

Yet another reason the explorers were not disconcerted by the land's resistance was that such resistance actually fed into their masculinist discourse. Masculinist discourse holds gendered values and activities as natural consequences of the differences between the sexes.<sup>25</sup> Males are active and virile; females are passive and fertile. Exploration, throughout the entire course of the nineteenth century, came to be viewed as the perfect male activity because it was seen as the best place—outside of a battlefield—for men to exercise their "masculine" virtues. Lisa Bloom writes: "The difficulty of life in desolate and freezing regions provided the ideal

mythic site where men could show themselves as heroes capable of superhuman feats . . . . The polar explorer represented the epitome of manliness.”<sup>26</sup> Two factors ensured that the English were particularly susceptible to such a discourse: first, they were entering a land in which ostensibly male virtues such as courage and stamina were highly regarded; and second, as “pork-eaters,” new-comers to the land, they had yet to prove that they possessed these virtues. Back writes: “there is a pride amongst old ‘voyageurs’ which considers freezing oneself as clownish—and only excusable in a ‘Pork-eater’ or a peasant just come from Canada” (*JPB* 107). Hood observes a similar value system at work amongst the Coppermine Indians, and his observation also provides a glimpse of the explorers’ ineptitude in the bush: “I was bewildered for several hours in the woods, when I met with an Indian, who led me back at such a pace, that I was always in the rear, to his infinite diversion. The Indians are vain of their local knowledge, which is certainly very wonderful” (*JPH* 57). It was Back, however, more than the other officers, who felt it necessary to continually prove himself against the rigours of the land. Upon the completion of his arduous voyage for supplies in the winter of 1820-21, he remarks:

The gentlemen of both parties [the NorthWest Co. and the Hudson’s Bay Co.] were much surprised at the shortness of the journey with loaded trains—stating that it had never been performed before, and that they had not thought it possible—during the passage there was not an article damaged in the smallest degree . . . . (*JPB* 114)

Significantly, Back’s journal supplies the reader with enough detail to appreciate the difficulty of this trek, but not so much that the reader is led to question the wisdom of travelling in the middle of a Subarctic winter. Back’s intention seems to have been to establish his “manliness” without impugning his (or Franklin’s) judgement. Back also gives no indication that reasons other than the welfare of the expedition impelled him on this journey, though evidence from other sources

indicates that tensions within the party may have played a role in Franklin's decision to send Back.<sup>27</sup>

While Back uses the journey to showcase his "masculine" virtues, the fact that he feels compelled to do so indicates a certain insecurity and perhaps even a feeling of inferiority—and in this respect Back was not alone. While his winter trek is perhaps the most glaring example of this masculinist discourse, it surfaces again and again in the journals of the other officers and frames one significant episode in the *Narrative*. The episode revolves around the expedition's arrival on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. As Franklin notes, the voyageurs "[are] terrified at the idea of a voyage through an icy sea in bark canoes" (*NJ* 358), and with good reason: not only are the canoes too weak for such use, the materials to repair them are conspicuously absent. The explorers, on the other hand, are simply happy to have finally reached "an element which [is] more congenial with [their] habits than the fresh-water navigations" (*NJ* 362). Indeed, upon discovering the voyageurs' misgivings, Franklin notes that the "officers endeavoured to ridicule their fears" (*NJ* 358). Both Davis and Wiebe find this behaviour, and Franklin's account of this behaviour, extremely hard to explain, particularly as the voyageurs' misgivings prove correct.<sup>28</sup> In the terms of a masculinist discourse, however, the actions of the expedition's officers are not so inexplicable. After *years* of voyaging in a new and alien environment, always eager to prove themselves equals and yet undoubtedly aware of their own inadequacies,<sup>29</sup> the English must have felt that their return to a salt-water environment heralded the one occasion in which they could finally hold the upper-hand. Franklin, for example, was certainly not loath to describe, on a later occasion, "the unskilfulness of the Canadians in their Management of the Sail" (*JC* 262). The influence of such a state-of-mind—a combination of a sense of welcome familiarity and a

renewed sense of authority and control—certainly helps explain both this aspect of the explorers' behaviour and their determination to continue exploring the coast long beyond the point at which they could have safely returned to Fort Enterprise.

Thus, in the terms of a masculinist or a colonialist discourse, we can draw two significant conclusions about the proceedings of the expedition: first, because Franklin and his men, for various reasons, *needed* the struggle between themselves and the land, they felt no need to adapt themselves to it; second, because they viewed the land as formless, they felt free to impose upon it a colonial form. But questions still remain. Most notably, there is evidence indicating that one cannot simply discount the explorers' *own* knowledge and manipulation of these forms of discourse. Before we examine such evidence, however, we should establish the broadened grounds of our investigation. Ironically, in order to do so we first turn to a new historicist, Stephen Greenblatt. Greenblatt, in the third chapter of his *Marvellous Possessions*, begins with "the most famous of beginnings"<sup>30</sup>—Columbus's landfall in 1492. Upon landing, Greenblatt observes, Columbus enacts a curious ritual of possession. He unfurls the royal standard, assembles Spanish witnesses, and "officially" takes possession of the land for the Spanish sovereign. As Greenblatt observes, though the scene is certainly familiar to most of us, we should not lose sight of its absurdity. Indeed, the most interesting question about the entire episode is how the Spanish could observe what seems like such a hollow ceremony with perfect sincerity. The Spanish could do so, Greenblatt argues, because the ritual had nothing at all to do with a beach in the New World. Instead, Columbus's "actions are performed entirely *for a world elsewhere*."<sup>31</sup> Greenblatt's point is sound. Indeed, not only is his conclusion sound, I would also add that such acts were a common occurrence throughout the discovery of the New World. By

the time Samuel Hearne's journal is published in 1795, Hearne (or his ghost-writer) could note that "[f]or the sake of form [my emphasis] . . . he erected a mark, and took possession of the coast, on behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company."<sup>32</sup> Moreover, circumstances, in this case, make it absolutely clear that such an act was "performed" entirely for the journal's readers: as Ian MacLaren observes, Hearne makes no mention of this act in his field notes.<sup>33</sup>

But even if it is the case that such acts of possession were enacted entirely for a European audience, what, one might ask, does this have to do with the journals of the officers of the first Franklin expedition? To put it simply: the journals themselves were written—*from their very inception*—for the same elsewhere. This may sound like a rather mundane observation, but it involves some interesting implications. The first of these is that the difference between an explorer's field journal and the final published journal is perhaps not as significant as recent work by Davis and MacLaren would suggest.<sup>34</sup> While the final publication almost invariably shows signs of editorial revision, the difference between field notes and published manuscripts is not simply a matter of comparing an unadulterated text with one that has been altered to meet the demands of the explorer's audience. Rather, the difference between the two texts is one of degree—the final editing of the field journals merely adds the final touches to a work which was almost entirely constructed a continent away. Thus, the whole question of authorial and editorial intent is a broad issue which involves more than just the comparison of two texts. Davis notes that "many explorers were conscious of the possibilities of literary manipulation,"<sup>35</sup> but he does not take this conclusion far enough. Bruce Greenfield's observation—that "the 'discovery of America' was not simply the location of a previously unknown land mass but rather a series of events that occurred as much in language as in a canoe"<sup>36</sup>—brings us further. I would add the

following observation: we should be extremely conscious of the difference between the experience of “discovering” the New Land and the relation of that experience. This is not to say that the explorers were dishonest; indeed, according to the dictates of a propositional truth, the explorers were, in general, fairly honest men.<sup>37</sup> As Heidegger argues, however, the sense of truth itself is based on the prior revelation of the Truth of a whole world of significance. Hence, particularly from a twentieth-century perspective, the assorted “truths” of these journals all too often turn out to be “lies.” There is more to this issue, however, than historical relativism. The explorers did not simply obey the Truth of their European world while describing their experiences in the New Land. They were also very aware of their world—and its concerns—and the expression of their experiences was constantly addressed to that world. However one regards this—as dialogics or deception, between the Old World text and the New World experience a fascinating “subtext” of tension, or resistance, arises.

We first see this tension in the first of the explorers’ forced negotiations in the New Land: their involvement in the liquor trade. The English were well-accustomed to the use of liquor as a medium of exchange. As Davis notes, “on British ships the men were rewarded morning and night with a ration of ‘grog’” (*JC* lxxxiii). When they arrive in the New Land they bring alcohol, along with tobacco and ammunition, as one of their chief articles of trade. What they do not adequately foresee, however, is that trading in alcohol presents some serious moral difficulties. These difficulties arise from the way the explorers view the Indians and from the way alcohol affects the Indian way of life. First of all, the explorers view the Indians as subordinates. In Back’s first encounter with them he pities the “poor creatures” (*JPB* 5); Hood can only note: “I am unable to add fresh interest to a subject [the Inuit] which is almost exhausted” (*JPH* 14).

According to their English ideology, the treatment of all subordinates, of *all* races, follows a paternal pattern. This is illustrated most clearly in the explorers' relationship with the voyageurs. The voyageurs are seen as thoughtless, appetite-driven children who can neither restrain themselves from complaining in times of need nor exercise the foresight to avoid such privation. "These thoughtless people," Franklin writes, "would, at any time, incur the hazard of absolute starvation at a future period, for the present gratification of their appetites" (*NJ* 362). Or, as Back notes in his typically succinct manner: "In short Canadian voyageurs must be treated and humoured exactly like children—that is when you are short of provisions—for as long as the article lasts—you may lead them anywhere" (*JPB* 151). Thus, it is the role of the explorers to act as the curb of a more mature reason on the uncontrolled urges of their subordinates. The explorers provide the guidance, foresight, and dedication to metaphysical vistas that channels the more immediate and physical interests and energies of those below them. Furthermore, while Wiebe writes that the voyageurs, to the explorers, "are little more than thoughtless hirelings of burden,"<sup>38</sup> he underestimates the complexity of the relationship between the voyageurs and the explorers. As with their conception of the land, the explorers view the voyageurs as both malleable and in need of shaping hands. And just as a good steward cares for his land, so too do the explorers feel an obligation to the voyageurs that takes the form of a paternal interest in their well-being. This sense of obligation surfaces in Franklin's dedication to the fulfilment of his contracts with the voyageurs.

But if the explorers feel some obligation to the Indians because, as with the voyageurs, they view the Indians as subordinates, this sense of obligation is augmented by the fact that the character of the Indians is viewed as a complete *tabula rasa*. Perhaps influenced by Rousseau's

vision of the “noble savage,” the explorers view the Indians as pure, raw potential, primitives whose “faint glimmerings of infant reason” (*JPB* 62) are particularly open to both the vices and virtues of European society. As Franklin writes: “They are capable of being, and I believe willing, to be taught; but no pains have hitherto been taken to inform their minds” (*NJ* 65). The Indians, however, *have* been taught, and they have taught themselves. They have learned two things: first, that interaction with Europeans almost invariably takes the form of a trade; and secondly, that alcohol is one of the more desirable articles of trade. Franklin fumes over the canny trading of Akaitcho, the Coppermine “chief” who negotiates agreements between the explorers and his tribe,<sup>39</sup> and he is shocked at alcohol’s effect on the lifestyle of the Indians. Alcohol, he writes, is “productive of an increasing deterioration of the character of the Indians” (*NJ* 84). Hood is more specific: “The deleterious effects of spiritous liquors have transformed the inoffensive and independent Indian into the slave of debilitating vice” (*JPH* 85). Hood’s attempt to rationalize the situation is founded on a basic premise which, by now, is growing familiar:

the fur trade would be ruined, or would undergo a suspension equivalent to it, if spirits were withheld . . . . *The original adventurers were not bound to improve the natives* [my emphasis]: it formed no part of their charter, and by what other code could they have been expected to govern their conduct? (*JPH* 86).

Clearly, while Europeans are either explorers, colonials, or “adventurers,” the Indians—like the land—are simply a potentiality whose actualization depends solely on whoever “discovers” them first. The introduction of alcohol into the native way of life is not seen as a threat to a hitherto autonomous people, but rather as a pitfall along the Indians’ path to civility.

Accordingly, the Indians’ adoption of a European vice is particularly troubling to the explorers because they see it as a flaw in the “redemption” of the Indians and the land. They do

not wish to trade alcohol to the Indians because they are fully aware that such trade is detrimental to the Indians' character. Franklin notes: "I do not wish to give them more of the baneful liquor than the stipulated quantity" (*NJ* 419). As Franklin's statement implies, however, in spite of the explorers' abhorrence of the liquor trade, they are forced to participate in it. And they are forced to trade liquor to the Indians because the image of the explorers which emerges from the *Narrative* and the journals, as commanding and purposeful imperial agents, is *completely incompatible* with the reality of their situation. Hood's journal provides the first inklings of this contradiction: "On the 30th, two Indians arrived, one of whom, named the Warrior, was well known at the house. We endeavoured to prevail upon them to set out in quest of moose, which they agreed to do, on receiving some rum" (*JPH* 54). As with Hood's earlier description of being lost, this passage illustrates the explorers' total dependence on the efforts of their Indian companions, a dependence which Hood underscores in a later, singular admission: "It was impossible . . . for us to subsist without hunters" (*JPH* 147). In order to keep these hunters in their employ, in order to maintain their status as munificent discoverers, the explorers are forced to trade in the very substance which corrupts the high-minded aims of their colonialist discourse. Thus, almost as an after-thought, Hood notes that the Indians agree to hunt only upon "receiving some rum," while Franklin's official version of such exchanges is even more coy: "announcing that he [one of the hunters] had killed a large moose, [he] immediately secured the reward which had been promised" (*NJ* 171). Here, then, two conclusions present themselves: first, the explorers were perfectly aware of—and entirely uncomfortable with—the moral and ideological inconsistencies involved in the trading of liquor; and second, they attempted to minimize the appearance of these inconsistencies in their accounts of the journey. Thus, while providing an

essentially faithful account of such exchanges, the explorers downplay the fact that the expedition was entirely dependent upon them. Ironically, within the language itself, within the explorers' own accounts, something of the original exchanges holds itself back, and it is this holding-of-itself-within-itself, this resistance, that speaks, almost two hundred years later, for a new aspect to the experience.

We witness a similar resistance in the relation of the second of these forced negotiations. This negotiation takes place between the explorers and Akaitcho, and it occurs on the shores of what is now known as Winter Lake. The explorers' plan, upon arrival on the shores of the lake, is to "leave men employed in building a winter abode while [they descend] the Coppermine River, in two canoes, to the sea" (*JPH* 134). But Akaitcho, who had agreed to the substance of such a plan while originally negotiating with the explorers, suddenly changes his mind and argues that it would be folly to proceed to the Arctic Ocean so late in the season. This is a crushing disappointment for the explorers, and it causes Hood to note: "if this undertaking can claim no other preeminence, it is at least distinguished by the most tedious and vexatious delays that have been incurred in the whole progress of discovery" (*JPH* 148). Franklin, however, carefully and logically outlines Akaitcho's argument and writes that he "came at length, most reluctantly" (*JC* 52), to agree with Akaitcho's assessment of the situation. As Franklin relates in the *Narrative*:

he [Akaitcho] began by stating that the very attempt would be rash and dangerous, as the weather was cold, the leaves were falling, some geese had passed to the southward, and the winter would shortly set in . . . (*NJ* 225).

Franklin then writes that "it was far from our intention to proceed without considering every argument for and against the proposed journey" (*NJ* 225). Franklin's characterization of his own reasonable nature, and his generous relation of Akaitcho's argument constitute an extremely

significant rhetorical strategy, for it is the only occasion in the *Narrative* (or in Franklin's journal) that an Indian, and an Indian's ability to reason, is elevated to the same level as the explorers. Why, one wonders, does Franklin suddenly adopt this strategy? There are two reasons, and neither of these reasons has anything to do with the argument on Winter Lake.

Franklin's first motivation stems from his very clear perception of the demands of Admiral Barrow and the Royal Navy. He has orders to explore the coast, and he knows that the more closely he appears to conform to these orders the more he will be rewarded for his efforts. Thus, when he becomes aware that it is impossible for the expedition to proceed to the Arctic Ocean in the summer of 1820, he carefully relates Akaitcho's argument in order to make it seem as if he is still in complete control of the situation, as if both Akaitcho and he have reached this decision together. Based on Franklin's account, one might presume that the entire argument was conducted between two English-speaking individuals over tea. The fact that these are Akaitcho's words in translation, and the fact that language difficulties are entirely glossed-over, should not be forgotten. While these issues of language will be discussed at greater length in later chapters, we should always be aware that Akaitcho's argument is much more of a mediated construction than Franklin allows. Franklin constructs Akaitcho's argument as carefully as he does because he realizes that, according to the terms of a colonialist discourse, it is improper for the decisions of an English officer to be unduly affected by the opinions of his subordinates. Dr. Richardson certainly illustrates such a knowledge when he describes the voyageurs' later discontent and Franklin's subsequent decision to abandon further exploration along the coast:

This conduct of the crew is not mentioned as influencing M<sup>r</sup> Franklin's determination, for it had been long evident to the officers that the time spent in exploring what has been since named Accession Gulf with its extensive branches,

Arctic and Melville sounds and Bathhurst Inlet had precluded every hope of getting round to Repulse Bay and that in order to insure a fair prospect of a safe journey across the barren grounds, our voyage along the coast must speedily terminate.<sup>40</sup>

Franklin also adopts this strategy because it neatly sidesteps the central issue of the “argument”: regardless of the substance of Akaitcho’s reasons, the expedition is helpless without the aid of the Indians, and thus entirely dependent on Akaitcho’s decision. Indeed, Back reveals that Franklin and his officers had actually decided to ignore Akaitcho’s advice, but were brought up short by Akaitcho’s retaliatory decision to withhold aid:

In vain did we argue on our knowledge of the weather—on the accuracy of our instruments and the caution that would be taken for the prevention of any unpleasant circumstance—it was all useless . . . . We had fully determined to go before notwithstanding his remonstrances to the contrary—but his last sentence [in which Akaitcho claimed that he would then withdraw his aid] which would very soon have been put into execution—stopped us at once . . . . (*JPB* 85)

Again, the implications are clear: while the expedition is entirely dependent on the Indians, the explorers’ desire to appear in control means that they must actively over-write some of the aspects of this relationship. Greenfield notes a similar process in the journal of Samuel Hearne: “Hearne had to make many compromises with his companions and the northern environment, and his account of his journey struggles to represent this process of adaptation without appearing to have betrayed the European motivations of his journey.”<sup>41</sup> Hearne, admittedly, was even more dependent on the Coppermine Indians than Franklin and his men, but his authorial “struggles” certainly match those of the later explorers. In both situations, the explorers struggle to reduce a new environment and a new world to the terms of an alien discourse. But the land and its peoples resist such a reduction, and they do so in the very terms, in the very language, of the explorers themselves.

The expedition's third and final negotiation takes place on the long march back from the Arctic Ocean. There are two prominent features to this march: the officers' gradual loss of authority over the voyageurs, and the actual negotiation itself, which takes the form of a deadly decision. Midshipman Back, after having survived the march, and after the voyageurs have undoubtedly saved his life, makes an interesting comment which sheds some light on the nature of the relationship between the explorers and the voyageurs on this final leg of their journey. He writes:

The former [St. Germain, the expedition's Métis interpreter] was to be discharged there [at Fort Simpson] according to his agreement—but more particularly for the line of conduct (his exceeding bad conduct—which increased rather than diminished) he had thought proper to follow during his service with us—on this head I have been almost silent with respect to him—and perfectly so with the others—happy to escape so unpleasant a task—though to say the least no set of men could have behaved worse. (*JPB* 202)

This observation is little short of astounding, especially considering the debt Back owes to the voyageurs who died carrying English goods. It is even more jarring, however, if one reads this passage in comparison with the *Narrative*. To be sure, the *Narrative* also mentions the misbehaviour of the voyageurs, but the *Narrative's* tone differs from that of Back. Nowhere is this more clear than in Franklin's relation of the voyageurs' uprising at Dissension Lake. The *Narrative*, for example, informs us that Franklin had "to address . . . [the voyageurs] in the strongest manner of the danger of insubordination" (*NJ* 217). It is Back, however, who describes the precise nature of Franklin's "manner": "M<sup>r</sup> Franklin told them . . . he would not hesitate to make an example of the first person who should come forward——'by blowing out his brains'" (*JPB* 81). Again, Franklin's diplomacy seems to stem from his desire to appear as if he and his officers are in complete control. After all, to admit that such threats were necessary would be

tantamount to admitting that his hold over the voyageurs was tenuous at best.

Even in the official *Narrative*, however, it soon becomes apparent that the English lost even the semblance of authority on the trek back from the Ocean. Early in the journey Franklin makes the first admission of difficulties: “Our men now began to find their burdens oppressive” (NJ 400). Significantly, he still refers to the voyageurs as “our men”—a practice he neglects as relations become more strained. The voyageurs, meanwhile, must carry two canoes, in addition to their sizable packs, while “[t]he officers [carry] such a portion of their own things as their strength would permit” (NJ 398). Understandably, the voyageurs begin to do a little negotiating of their own. Franklin writes that “they . . . threatened to throw away their bundles, and quit us” (NJ 415). He then notes, on the very same page, that “Dr. Richardson was obliged to deposit his specimens of plants and minerals” (NJ 415). Despite the proximity of these observations he does not acknowledge any connection between the voyageurs’ threats and the fact that Dr. Richardson was “obliged” to abandon his samples. Once again Franklin seems to skew the emphasis of his relation of events in order to assert some narrative control.

As the situation worsens Franklin’s tone begins to take on some of the frustration he feels over his inability to control the proceedings of the expedition. When the expedition is blocked at Obstruction Rapids the explorers and the voyageurs disagree over how to cross the river. Franklin describes this disagreement with the voyageurs (who certainly knew more about crossing rapids than Franklin did) in almost petulant tones: “both these schemes [regarding the construction of rafts] were abandoned, through the obstinacy of the interpreters and the most experienced voyageurs, who declared that they would prove inadequate to the conveyance of the party” (NJ 419). The growing distance between the English explorers and the voyageurs is also

reflected in the almost paranoid tone of his observations. There is, for example, a strange inconsistency in his account of the fate of the two canoes which the voyageurs were forced to carry across the tundra. In the *Narrative* he writes that “the canoes became a source of delay, by the difficulty of carrying them in high wind” (*NJ* 399). In his journal he is more specific about the reasons for this delay: “These poor Men [the voyageurs] Could not Support themselves or manage their unwieldy burdens against the more violent Squalls and often fell down” (*JC* 174). When the last surviving canoe finally succumbs to this rough treatment he notes that “[t]he canoe was unfortunately broken” (*NJ* 413). In the journal, however, he notes that the voyageurs “deeply lamented their folly and impatience in breaking the canoe” (*JC* 192). Clearly, we will never know exactly what happened to such a crucial piece of equipment. Davis notes that Franklin “seemed only capable, like most people, of blaming the difficult circumstances on someone else” (*JC* lviii). And indeed, when the situation gets really desperate, Franklin accuses the voyageurs of “stealing” the officers’ food: “We subsequently learned that the hunters often secreted the partridges they shot, and ate them unknown to the officers” (*NJ* 423). This accusation provides some insight into the complexity of the situation. The officers are completely helpless without the voyageurs. They cannot carry their own belongings, let alone any of the expedition’s supplies, and they are completely reliant on their men for food. The expedition separates into two parties and, in a letter to Back, Franklin reveals the true insecurity of this situation, an insecurity which he struggles to keep out of his journal and the *Narrative*. Back writes:

Bellanger arrived with a note from Mr. Franklin—which informed me that the men were in a state of mutiny—and had commenced throwing away their loads to follow me—that the canoe was broken to pieces and left the day before—and that affairs could not be worse. (*JCB* 177).

Clearly, the truly surprising aspect of this last trek is *not* that the English officers lost control of the expedition, but rather that they managed to maintain any control at all.

The reason they managed to maintain some control over the expedition, however, lies in their last negotiation with the land. One could certainly argue that the voyageurs continued to carry their loads and follow the officers' commands because they themselves came from a highly regimented society. As contracted members of a lower class, they were expected to perform certain duties, and, for the most part, they did so. As Heidegger observes, however, "[t]he present-at-hand, as Dasein encounters it, can, as it were, assault Dasein's Being; natural events, for instance, can break in upon us and destroy us" (*BT* 193). Events had certainly reached such an impasse on this march—so why did the voyageurs not forsake their role, their "Being" as porters, and leave the Englishmen to starve? They may very well have done so, but they could not because *only the English officers knew how to plot the return course to Fort Enterprise*. Back illustrates the officers' awareness of this fact: "the men [were] threatening to leave their small loads, and save themselves by flight—which resolution would have been put into execution—had they possessed a guide to have led them" (*JCB* 175). Since the voyageurs do not have a guide, they do the only thing they can do, which is to "urge . . . [Franklin] . . . to allow them to throw down their loads, and proceed to Fort Enterprise with the utmost speed" (*NJ* 431).

But Franklin cannot allow them to do this because he is *fully aware* that without the weight of their loads the voyageurs would soon leave the officers behind. He writes: "the men were totally ignorant of the course to be taken, and none of the officers, who could have directed the march, were sufficiently strong to keep up at the pace they would *then* [my emphasis] walk" (*NJ* 431). Davis writes that the explorers could not abandon their equipment because "to leave

the instruments and equipment behind would mean abandoning a way of thinking about the universe” (*JC* xiv), but Franklin’s decision, his last negotiation, clearly has little to do with the forms of discourse or social codes ostensibly governing the explorers’ conduct. Franklin’s negotiation, faithfully—if marginally—recorded, reads like an admission of surrender. It abrogates every tenet of a masculinist or a colonialist discourse. It illustrates that the explorers could, and did, adapt quite radically to severe circumstances. And it seems clear that Franklin deliberately minimized this negotiation in order to avoid undermining the ideological structures of the world to which he was writing—but for the addition of a “then” the substance of the entire negotiation would have been lost.

This last negotiation then, like the previous negotiations, illustrates that the inflexibility of the English was both an unconscious *and* a conscious decision. And because the explorers were fully aware of the inconsistencies of their situation, and because they chose to minimize these inconsistencies in deference to the “they,” the public world to which they were writing, their response to the Arctic was fundamentally *inauthentic*. This is not to say that their depiction of the Arctic was inaccurate (though it certainly was); it is to say that they refused to present the Arctic as it appeared to their own eyes, as it emerged in their own embodied experience. They were *not* the blind disciples of Eurocentric forms of discourse, and therein lies the inauthenticity of their response. Their experience in the Arctic made it clear that many of the assumptions of the world to which they were writing were false, but instead of questioning these assumptions they helped perpetuate them. There is yet another example of this unctuousness in Franklin’s description of the return from the Arctic Ocean. As events spiral completely out of control, Franklin increasingly addresses “the mercy of the Omnipotent, who alone could save and deliver

us” (NJ 464). Again, this is a form of narrative control. Franklin makes this gesture for the benefit of his audience, and he does so because he is fully aware that according to English ideology God is the only being to whom he can officially relinquish control. Having framed his relation of the entire expedition around the pre-supposition that an English officer is master of all situations, he uses these references to the “Almighty” in order to avoid making explicit the obvious conclusion: that the Polar regions are not mere geography, and that *authentic* human will also involves the willing freedom to adapt to new worlds and new situations.

In 1823 Frederick Wentzel, a clerk and guide to the explorers, wrote that “it is doubtful whether . . . an authentic account of their [the explorers’] operations will ever meet the public eye in England.”<sup>42</sup> The concerns he expressed in 1823 are just as relevant now. Questions, myriads of questions, still shadow the “true” circumstances of the First Franklin Expedition. The irony is profound: Franklin’s first expedition is arguably the most minutely recorded and widely read of all narratives of exploration, and yet the more accurately it purports to portray the New World, the more questions, details, simply slip past its narrative grasp. The final irony, however, is that all of our critical observations are based on the explorers’ own self-serving texts. As Davis observes, Franklin’s greatest and most inexplicable error may very well have been the fact that he did not edit the final *Narrative* enough (JC lxxxvi). Davis argues that this is simply another aspect of Franklin’s myopia, that Franklin simply could not see that he was implicating himself in the failure of the expedition. Perhaps, however, there are other reasons for Franklin’s complicity; perhaps, as I hope to show in the following chapters, it has something to do with the nature of language itself.

### 3.

## Presenting Language: Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers*

*she [Birdseye] is dreaming another moment far ahead on the continuous circle that is their [the explorers'] travel, has touched on it somewhere nearer to the point where the end they do not anticipate arrives at its beginning again. And perhaps that circle is smaller than they think. Because it is of course clear that, whether they knew it or not, the trek of These English coming has always been here waiting for them.*<sup>1</sup>

Birdseye's dreams, foretelling the fate of Franklin's first expedition, play a significant role in Wiebe's re-presentation of the expedition in *A Discovery of Strangers*. But, to begin with, it is not the dreams I wish to emphasize so much as the "circle" to which Birdseye refers. It is a useful image, both for ourselves and for Wiebe's work. In chapter one we examined the hermeneutic circle, and by briefly examining Heidegger's definition of language we connected that circle to another, more primordial "circle"—the homecoming of the poet. In chapter two, these questions of language were secondary to questions of human agency and will. In this chapter we circle back, touching more specifically on Heidegger's concept of language, and using that concept of language to explore *A Discovery of Strangers*. In this exploration we find yet more circles: the "continuous circle" that describes the explorers' journey in geographic and existential terms; the cycle of Greenstockings' life, "which will continue to circle . . . in and out of whatever pain is patiently waiting for her" (208); and the circle of fate / not-fate which the Coppermine Indians bear with such grace. My thesis is fairly simple, but it involves some interesting implications. The concept of language which Wiebe presents in this novel—and this

is a novel predominantly concerned with language—is remarkably consonant with that presented by Heidegger. By tracing the parallel lines of their thought we can explore both Wiebe’s work and Franklin’s expedition.

There are two key characteristics to Heidegger’s work on language. The first of these is the belief that “language is sent, hence fateful.”<sup>2</sup> The thrust of Heidegger’s early work was to uncover a fundamental ontology, one which was free of the flaws inherent in Western metaphysics. To this end, Heidegger reconfigured traditional definitions of truth and substance. In opposition to the Cartesian ontology, Heidegger argued that a being’s essence could not simply be reduced to its constitutive substance. Similarly, he argued that the essence of truth was much more than *adaequatio intellectūs et rei*; truth, in Heidegger’s schema, was more primordially *alētheia*: “unconcealment.”<sup>3</sup> Heidegger’s project became the uncovering of this unconcealment—in other words, the uncovering of the *Lichtung*, the “clearing,” in which some portion of the Being of a substance was revealed to humanity. Heidegger’s intent, in *Being and Time*, was to uncover the unconcealedness of beings which founded the propositional truth by which they were judged. Time, historicity, became the horizon of this clearing in *Being and Time*, but even at this stage in his career Heidegger recognized the primordial nature of language: “Man shows himself as the entity which talks. This does not signify that the possibility of vocal utterance is peculiar to him, but rather that he is the entity which is such as to discover the world and Dasein itself.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in accordance with his model of the hermeneutic circle, Heidegger recognized that

[t]he understanding which has thus already been ‘deposited’ in the way things have been expressed, pertains *just as much* [my emphasis] to any traditional discoveredness of entities which may have been reached, as it does to one’s

current understanding of Being and to whatever possibilities and horizons for fresh interpretation and conceptual Articulation may be available.<sup>5</sup>

This assertion clearly foreshadows Heidegger's later "turn" to language, both by linking language to the unconcealment of beings and by stressing the fate of language: that the unconcealment, the "Being," of beings is dictated by the possibilities of disclosure inscribed in a language.

The implications of this assertion are profound. As Stanley Hopper writes:

While 'language' remains, indeed, as deeply grounded in the ultimate mystery of things, it is now no longer inscribed within 'being,' but 'Being' is inscribed within 'Language.' What is asserted is nothing less than the verbal condition of reality, and the ontology of western metaphysics is effectually by-passed.<sup>6</sup>

The second critical characteristic of Heidegger's concept of language arises from this alignment of language with Being. Hopper notes: "It has not been sufficiently observed that when Heidegger made his famous 'turn' it was not merely a turn to language, it was more significantly *a turn to poetry (poiesis)*."<sup>7</sup> When Heidegger refers to language as poiesis, however, he is referring to much more than a particular style or form of writing. He writes:

Language itself is poetry in the essential sense. But since language is the happening in which beings first disclose themselves to man each time as beings, poesy—or poetry in the narrower sense—is the most original form of poetry in the essential sense. Language is not poetry because it is the primal poesy; rather, poesy appropriates in language because language preserves the original essence of poetry.<sup>8</sup>

Language as poiesis is a gathering, a making present. It stands in direct opposition to the metaphysical interpretation of language as *mimesis*—the adequation, the assignment, of a sign to a thing. Language as poiesis is a listening. Heidegger writes: "When mortals say, and thus encounter, they respond. Every spoken word is already a response—a reply, a saying that goes to encounter, and listens."<sup>9</sup> To say is to listen due to the "thrown" nature of human existence.

Because a relationship to “Being” is always already inscribed in the language of a given people, to say, to show, what a being shows of itself, is to listen to the way in which a language conducts beings to their own showing.<sup>10</sup> Such saying, such listening, is both a return, a “homecoming,” and a foundation. Such saying returns to those beings which one perceives, and interrogates the basis of that perception. But this is not simply deconstruction; it is also a “saying which, in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into a world” (“OWA” 199). Such saying *gathers* what shows forth of a being and brings that showing to a luminescence.

John Moss provides us with an example. He cites Archibald Lampman:

I sat in the midst of a plain on my snowshoes with bended  
knee  
 Where the thin wind stung my cheeks,  
 And the hard snow ran in little ripples and peaks,  
 Like the fretted floor of a white and petrified sea.<sup>11</sup>

He notes: “What happens, what is felt, what is seen, what it is like—these are fused into a wholeness of ‘what is’ by the consciousness that contains them, by the poem itself.”<sup>12</sup> This is language as gathering, as poiesis. The poet gathers a hearkening to a hearkening; that is, he listens to his perception of the landscape in a perceptive manner. He gathers the emergence of this landscape in the figure of his poem. Metaphor becomes *diaphor*—“a movement (*phora*) through (*dia*) experienced particulars placed in juxtaposition, thus ‘producing new meaning,’ or fresh recognitions.”<sup>13</sup> And through diaphor Lampman gains his world-making power, the sort of power that transforms “what is” into a “thin” wind, “hard” snow, and “fretted” floor of a “white and petrified” sea. Hence, poiesis is not simply a listening that deconstructs speech; it is also a listening which founds world, founds speech.

Clearly, this is too brief an exposition of Heidegger’s project, but as we turn to A

*Discovery of Strangers* we will continue circling back, clarifying those issues we have merely touched on here. In *A Discovery of Strangers* Wiebe portrays the proceedings of the First Franklin Expedition from the perspective of both the explorers and the Coppermine Indians. His attempts to portray the explorers' perspective are marked by the adoption of a first person narrative; throughout the course of the novel he takes on the voices of Midshipman Back, Seaman John Hepburn, and Lieutenant Richardson. These attempts are riddled with anachronisms, historical inaccuracies, and some moments of pure bathos. In the third chapter, for example, Wiebe takes on Back's voice and, in one scene, Back recounts the voyageurs' brief uprising at what is now known as Dissension Lake. "If they do not pick up their packs immediately, for this last portage of the day, he [Franklin] will not hesitate—as he has every right under English law—to *blow their brains out*" (52). Back is speaking, we presume, to his native audience, and so, while his qualification of the legality of the situation is certainly helpful to modern readers, it is hard to believe that a nineteenth-century reader would require such instruction, let alone that a nineteenth-century author would provide it. In this instance—and there are others—the continuity of Wiebe's narrative breaks down. Wiebe crosses the line between *showing* the reader the British perspective, and *telling* the reader the British perspective. Such assertion lies within the role of the historian, and not the artist. Indeed, narrative lapses such as these make Wiebe's numerous historical inaccuracies difficult to defend—one can hardly invoke "poetic license" when the narrative itself turns from poetics to proposition. But while Wiebe's anachronisms are jarring, and his inaccuracies troubling,<sup>14</sup> there are other scenes in his depiction of the explorers which are simply absurd. There is, for example, the memorable scene in which Seaman Hepburn recounts the death of Midshipman Robert Hood:

Mr. Hood did not die beautifully. Death did not carry him peacefully into eternity. No. Despite three years of faultless duty, courage, patience, finally starvation—no dignified death, no “proper” death, no.

You have that story in your reports from the officers. I corroborate what they say. Let them stand.

Our beloved Robert, or as he sometimes joked with me of his childhood name: “Little Robin”—Hood. Ever noble, never a robber of anything. . . . (108)

To put it simply, whenever Wiebe “lapses” into a first-person narrative the novel falters; this, fortunately, is in contradistinction to the sustained excellence of the remainder of the novel.

Throughout the rest of the story, Wiebe adopts a third-person narrative which grants him the flexibility to explore the Indians’ perspective at some length. As the novel progresses he develops a portrait of the Indians’ relationship to their land and to their language. Wiebe makes it clear that the Indians’ close kinship with the land is based on their keen understanding of the way the land manifests itself in their language. He finds this intimacy of land and language on three key elements: the way in which the Indians *name* the landscape and themselves; the way in which their *stories* evoke a meaning-full existence; and the *dreams* which lead them from the singularity of what is into the wealth of what has been and may yet be. It soon becomes clear that this conception of land and language is directly opposed to that of the explorers. The Indians have name, the explorers have sign; the Indians live in stories and dreams, while the explorers have but the shell of a story—the story of their creation, and the silence of one dream: to dissect that creation in the name of their empire and their science. Wiebe links the failure of the expedition to the explorers’ false conception of language, but in the apportioning of blame he raises some complex questions. The failure of the expedition is clearly foreseen by those who know and understand fate: Birdseye dreams their suffering long before they travel north. And yet the explorers do not simply “meet their fate”—the story of their journey is one of sustained

indifference to its call. As for the Coppermine Indians, the Tetsot'ine, "Those Who Know Something a Little" (4), the strength of their vision is matched by the strength of their grace. They sense the pattern of their future in the cataclysmic changes which accompany the arrival of the explorers, and they accept this future with a full awareness of the adversity it holds for them. It is this acceptance, this grace, which lies at the heart of Wiebe's presentation of language. Wiebe, like Heidegger, sees language and fate as inextricably linked, and, like Heidegger again, Wiebe makes it clear that only by listening to the former can one reach an understanding of the latter. This is not to say that through understanding one escapes fate—nothing is more fateful than meaningful existence, but this does suggest, in a seemingly paradoxical manner, that only through an understanding of one's own fate can one find the freedom to live the fate into which one is thrown.

We begin with names. In Chapter One we touched on Heidegger's view of the importance of names: "naming," he writes, "nominates beings *to* their Being *from out of* their Being" ("OWA" 198). Naming is a gathering through which beings unconceal themselves: "Such saying [naming] is a projecting of clearing, in which announcement is made of what it is that beings come into the open *as*" ("OWA" 198). A name functions as both provenance and limit for the unconcealment of a being. The words which nominate a being allow that being to show something of itself, and it shows itself according to the possibilities of disclosure inscribed in those words. As Greenstockings observes, "Keskarrah has told her often enough: talking is never just talk, even when it happens through Twospeaker with These English. Words mirror what there is in the world, *as they also anticipate it . . .* [my emphasis]" (132). Wiebe's Coppermine Indians are always aware of the potency of a name: only men like Keskarrah are "powerful and

old enough to draw the picture of the world and name a few places what they are" (20). Indeed, for the Coppermine Indians, a being and its name are inseparable. It is not that a place *has* a name, it *is* its name: "Of course, every place already *was* [my emphasis] its true and exact name" (24). In such naming of names one swiftly becomes aware of both the autonomy of the beings named—"he [Keskarrah] could draw, very carefully, the places he knew through his fingers from behind his eyes onto the ground, which is where all land already lies fully and complete, though hidden"—and the intimacy of humanity and beings:

"Just making a sound can mean . . . nothing . . ." he will muse into the perpetual fire of the winter lodge, a fire their mothers beyond memory have carried in the flint and touchwood of their pouches. "It is for us to look. Perhaps we will recognize how everything alive is already within everything else. It is like . . . holding water . . . cup it in your hands, and it is the nature of water that very soon it will cup your hands as well." (24-5)

Clearly, the Coppermine Indians see naming as a gathering as powerful as any European technology. Hence, Keskarrah becomes exasperated with the explorer's wilful blindness in their (re)naming of the land: "'The lake you named 'Winter' is really a fish with a head to the east and its tail whipping up the froth of rapids just below us, the place you've tried to draw so often already. . . . If you drew the lake as it is you would have to see the fish, and you could name it correctly. That is, if you wanted to'" (86-7). Similarly, it is this understanding of the power of a name which underlies Greenstockings' loss when she loses her Indian name to become only Greenstockings, forever tied by this nomination to the events of the First Franklin Expedition:

she [Birdseye] said nothing when These English called her daughter "Greenstockings" for the first time, and they found out what that meant. Somehow then Greenstockings' real name vanished from every memory, even it seemed from Birdseye, who bore her and named her first. (17)

The English, however, are not the only ones bestowing names. To the Coppermine Indians the

English become “These English,” or “Whitemuds.” The explorers are given the name “Whitemuds” after the Indians are told of the clay from which the English believe themselves to have first sprung. As opposed to the more amorphous “Englishmen,” the name “Whitemuds” evokes both the drives and beliefs of the explorers and the misunderstandings which plagued the “meeting” of these two cultures. There is also, of course, some irony in Wiebe’s use of such an appellation: mud is certainly a much more humble origin than clay. We see the same irony when the Coppermine Indians name Franklin “Thick English.” We may assume that Franklin spoke as heavily and pedantically as he wrote, and that the Indians name him “Thick English” in response to his speech, but here again Wiebe seems to adroitly play between the world of his characters and the world of his twentieth-century audience. Whatever Wiebe’s Indians were referring to when they dubbed Franklin “Thick English,” to Wiebe’s audience, aware of Franklin’s stolid, unimaginative character, “Thick English” seems rather appropriate.

The aptness of the Indians’ choice of names emphasizes the crucial difference between the Indians’ and the explorers’ concept of language. The explorers try “to name every lake and river with whatever sound slips from their mouths” (22), granting no singularity to the places they so swiftly and arbitrarily name. Their approach, in both Wiebe’s fiction and the 19th-century reality, is overwhelmingly colonial. They are unconcerned with names or places except as possessions or signs of possession.<sup>15</sup> The Indians, on the other hand, see names as a touchstone, an inseverable connection to the essence of the being named.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, they try to find in the names of Midshipmen Back and Hood something which relates to the being of these two men. Hood, who, on occasion, seems to see beyond the rational strictures of his own language, describes his own name *as* a hood: “she [Greenstockings] will suddenly understand from his

intense, pale eyes that he is making a picture of his name with her hand around his face, *hood*"

(22). But it is Back's name which bespeaks more of his character:

Boy English at first does not seem to know how to draw his name in the air, and when he gets hold of her hand he will do almost everything else with it except that. His name is easier to say than Hood's, and she laughs aloud because 'Back' is right: his short back is much stronger than slender Hood's. And though when she stands beside him she can look completely over his head, he is so compactly confident and without concern that he takes her between his hands and lifts her high. . . . (27)

But these attempts to find some significance in the names of these two men are inevitably thwarted by a lack, a deficiency on the part of the English. Greenstockings observes: "What strange names they have—Hood—Back—no *short* back or *red* hood, just one short word to name them. As if they had no stories in them" (39). And, in a way, stories *are* precisely what the English lack.

True names, names which open a space in which a being exists, belong to the same order as stories. Each name has a story, each story a name; and each name draws on all the meaning, all the connections, elaborated in the tale. Stories, like words, like names, do more than simply mirror that which is. In true Heideggerian fashion, they are implicated in the past and they anticipate the future:

he [Keskarrah] lies naked under his robes while the women continue in their endless work, breathing aloud sometimes of what he has seen while he sleeps, or the stories he finds wandering in his head, which he pulls into words so that they are happening somewhere, to someone they probably know, even while he speaks them. Winter is the time for stories, of course, the stories that tell why the world is the way it is and the places are where they are. . . . And some of the stories have never been told by anyone, not even Keskarrah, because they have not told themselves to him yet and so could not be uttered until now. (118)

Stories are speech as a listening to language. Stories tell themselves to Keskarrah as he listens to

his world and that which informs this world. Hence, when Wiebe writes that stories “are happening somewhere, to someone they probably know,” he is not being fantastical, but, according to a certain concept of language, quite literal. Keskarrah’s stories, as poeisis, stem from the fundamental ontology of his people, and they operate on the same level: reflecting on and constructing meaning at a more primordial level than that which distinguishes between fiction and non-fiction. To put it another way, Keskarrah speaks both from and to a primordial truth, truth as clearing, as a making present, and not as a propositional construct. The Coppermine Indians’ story of creation, for example, told over and over “but never in quite the same way” (118), gathers the truth of their existence in its fantastical narrative. Man, alone in the world and unable to hunt because he sinks helplessly in the winter snow, makes himself snowshoe frames but is unable to fashion the *babiche* webbing to fill the frames. One day, however, while he is off trying to find food, a ptarmigan comes to his shelter and begins to fill in the frames. When he returns he hears a noise and rushing into the shelter he frightens away the ptarmigan. The next day he manages to trap the ptarmigan in his shelter and she becomes the woman whose skill keeps them both alive: “She changed when he held her, but her holding changed him as well: frame and woven centre, when she fastened the snowshoes to his feet he became a bird, flying over the soft, deep snow everywhere in the beautiful world, and she prepared the animals he captured, and they ate together, and lived” (91). Such a story, as Wiebe himself remarks in *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic*, lies in illuminating contrast to Western society’s story of creation: “the almost wistful longing for ‘helpmeet’ in Genesis is here fulfilled without any deception or accusation or guilt, or eternal exile from a garden. Living in a climate as harsh as any on earth, these ‘primitives’ emphasize not individual

temptation and disobedience, but complementarity.”<sup>17</sup>

On the simplest level, stories like these are parables, functioning as guides to the Indians. Keskarrah uses the tragic story of *She Who Delights*, for example, to warn Greenstockings of the consequences of her own beauty:

This story shaped to the sharp point of a lance—a story of guidance, under what loosened rock on this otherwise invisible trail has her father placed the telltale shavings, so that when she steps on it, bends and lifts it, she will find them and be truly guided? . . . For she has determined this: her name is *She Who Delights*. (198)

During the very night in which this story is told, however, Greenstockings, like *She Who Delights*, is abducted from her family’s shelter. Wiebe juxtaposes the events of the two stories (his own and Keskarrah’s) in order to reiterate the fact that these stories are much more than parable. Before Greenstockings is even abducted, the story of *She Who Delights* draws her into a new world, one in which men suddenly appear different, one in which she herself looks different to those who now see her as the threat she is, and one in which such abduction is a distinct possibility. Indeed, Greenstockings’ abduction is almost anti-climactic, for the reader, like Greenstockings and those around her, has become explicitly attuned to the conditions of its possibility.

In language as poesis, Hopper writes, “[t]here occurs that coming to presence which was already present, but we were not present to it;”<sup>18</sup> in Keskarrah’s tale of *She Who Delights*, Greenstockings suddenly appears as what she is and what she will become. This appearance, we note, founds a new world, a new context of significance, and in this ability lies much of a story’s power. In Heideggerian terms, a story projects possibilities, it is a “saying which, in preparing the sayable, simultaneously brings the unsayable as such into a world.” As Keskarrah ominously

(and accurately) observes: “‘Stories are like ropes, they pull you to incomprehensible places. . . . Hey! a story can tangle you up so badly you start to think different. I think these Whitemud stories [of creation] could be strong enough to tie us down’” (127).

And the English, of course, *do* have stories. They have stories of Lord Nelson which *reflect* the might and majesty of the British empire; stories of honour, courage, and fortitude which *reflect* what are, after all, acknowledged characteristics of British manhood; and they have stories, ancient stories, which *reflect* the proper hierarchy of the sexes and humanity’s fundamental depravity. This belief in reflection, in mimesis, characterizes the explorers’ approach to language, and it determines their approach to such stories. Wiebe writes: “[The English] see nothing except the folds of papers they always clutch in their hands. . . . Sometime, somewhere, they have decided to believe this simplicity of *mark*, and they will live their lives straight to the end believing that” (147). Wiebe’s fictional re-presentation of this aspect of the explorers’ behaviour is both accurate and illuminating. For the explorers, language is an empirical tool, belonging to a singular world—their own. Hence, one of the key characteristics of their “journey of discovery” is their obsessive note-taking. The strength of this obsession is evinced by the fact that these notes were taken when temperatures *inside* the explorers’ dwellings were often as low as -40 degrees centigrade. Not surprisingly, Franklin noted that Hood, “[e]ver ardent in his pursuits . . . had, through close attention to his drawings and other avocations, confined himself too much to the house in winter, and his health was impaired by his sedentary habits.”<sup>19</sup> As Greenstockings observes, however, all of the explorers have “endless notebooks” (142), and they are certain that somehow they can capture the landscape and the experience—in its entirety—within the texts which they create. They view language ahistorically, as “belonging”

to one world and no other.<sup>20</sup> From such a perspective, language itself is beyond reproach, is crystal clear. There is a small but extremely significant pattern throughout the *Narrative* which illustrates this perspective. Whenever Franklin introduces a painting or drawing by either Back or Hood he is compelled to attest to its accuracy, to its “correctness.” While describing the departure from Winter Lake, for example, Franklin directs the reader to “the annexed accurate and interesting picture” (*NJ* 323). Indeed, on all but one of the occasions in which he introduces these pictures he uses the very term “accurate” to describe them; the sole exception to this pattern is his reference to “a beautiful and correct drawing . . . made by Mr. Hood” (*NJ* 268; see also 323, 339, 350, 394, 412). Clearly, Franklin felt that he had to assure the reader that these images were somehow “correct,” and the fact that he uses the text to validate the image is a significant gesture. In order of authority, of truth, the text is deferred to as an objective and unimpeachable witness; the painted image is not quite so sacrosanct.

The explorers’ conception of language emerges on yet another occasion, one in which the critical difference between the Indians’ and the explorers’ conception of language is thrown into sharp relief. The episode begins as the explorers are taking leave of their Indian saviours. While the explorers are thanking the Indians for their aid, Akaitcho expresses some concern over the explorers’ portrayal of the Indians. Franklin writes: “[Akaitcho made] this quaint remark—‘I know you write down occurrences in your journals but probably you only take notice of the bad things we say or do, and are silent to the good,’ but we assured him of our strict impartiality in that respect.”<sup>21</sup> Akaitcho’s “quaint remark” is really quite perceptive. He is aware of the conflicts which have plagued the relationship between the Indians and the explorers, and he is also aware of the fact that the explorers may present the Indians as something which they are not. This

illustrates what Wiebe makes so clear in *A Discovery of Strangers*—that the Indians are attuned to the existence of multiple worlds, multiple truths, and the contingent nature of all reality. By contrast, Franklin's response is based on the belief that the various texts of the expedition seamlessly reflect the true nature of the Indians' character. His condescension stems from his certainty that everything pertinent has been collected, labelled, and dutifully described. In a very real sense, it is the explorers who believe that such representation can lay claim to the Indians' soul, to the essence of their being. The Indians' concern, on the other hand, reflects their belief that this is precisely not the case, that they remain autonomous beings whose character necessarily remains a mystery to the English.

The explorers' subscription to a mimetic conception of language affects their approach to stories, to "fiction," in profound ways. When language is viewed mimetically, stories reflect, in some way, an "external," demonstrable truth. Hence, stories are removed from any unique sphere of knowledge because the kind of knowledge they hold is reduced to a propositional truth—and such truth is more reliably derived elsewhere. Stories conceived as mimesis are, at best, minor parables; they do not "bring the unsayable as such into a world," nor do they hold any of the world-making power which Heidegger accords them.<sup>22</sup> Poiesis, we recall, is essentially a listening, a listening in which both the storyteller *and* her audience are implicated (as Heidegger observes, those who hearken to a storyteller's words are "equally poetic" ("OWA" 199)). Poiesis, as this peculiar listening, returns to beings their proper autonomy. It is a looking backwards that moves forwards, a resolute openness to that which lies beyond comprehension. In this respect, poiesis rests on one constant: change. When the stories which found a people's relationship to reality are conceived as mimesis, this change is lost. Keskarrah, for example, is astonished by the

intransigence of the explorers' perception of reality:

“Nothing stays the way it is, everything changes when they come, and yet they mark it down as if it will always be the same and they can use it. . . . I think the sun uses their instruments to blind them. To make them think living things are always the same.” (75)

Because stories conceived as mimesis are stable, closed representations of truth, they tend towards two fates: either they are perceived as idle entertainment and dismissed as such, or they coalesce as metaphysical discourses, ideologies, like the ideologies of religion, masculinism, and nationalism which emerge so often in the journals and *Narrative* of the expedition. Significantly, this illustrates that even when stories are relegated to a minor role in a people's consciousness they still retain their ability to mediate between a historical people and their reality. When such stories become ideology, however, listening is abandoned in favour of pre-ordained speech. Indeed, the salient feature of all ideologies is the selective perception and representation of beings and events. In chapter two we examined the specifics of just such a process of conscious and unconscious selection. As Keskarrah notes, “we have to understand this: Whitemuds hear only what they want to hear” (131). And Wiebe makes it clear that the failure of Franklin's First Expedition is intimately linked to this process of selective perception and to the explorers' failure to acknowledge the possibility of alternative realities. The explorers' story becomes one in which they see only what they wish to see:

Before these feet felt this grain of land, they had decided it was empty; they have now been awarded that gift of emptiness to walk upon. Before they had looked through this air, these heads had decided it must be cold, so now cold fondles them with tender constancy. (154)

And it becomes one in which that which is seen is taken for all that there is. As Birdseye muses: “Maybe they don't need to dream. Maybe through those instruments the sun lets them see how

the world is. For them always there, always the same” (78).

Wiebe’s Indians, however, do need to dream. As Birdseye’s statement implies, the primary role of these dreams is to unconceal the foundations of the Indians’ ever-changing world, to bring these foundations into an explicit consciousness. Dreams, in other words, let the Indians “see *how* the world is” what it is. Stories, we recall, have much the same function, but in order of primordially dreams supersede stories: “only an old story can stop a dream being spoken into life, even temporarily” (122). An observation of Keskarrah’s helps clarify the role of dreams: “When you travel and live with a river or lake, or hill, it can remain mostly like it seems, but when you look at it with your dreaming eye, you know it is never what it seemed when you were first awake to it” (76). The complex composition of this statement corresponds precisely to the convoluted—circular—nature of the construction of meaning. Living only in a rational, conscious world, hills are hills, rivers rivers, and lakes lakes. To speak of any of these is already to know their meaning, as they remain “mostly like [they] seem.” Dreaming, however, transforms these all-too-familiar things, and the way it transforms them is by explicitly addressing the way in which they appear. Dreaming provides the space for the fish that is Winter Lake. It is with his “dreaming eye” that Keskarrah sees the fish, and in seeing the fish he also sees the story of its upstream struggle, and, were he to name the lake in accordance with this story, the name would act as the nexus for the story. Dreams, then, are the starting point in the continuous cycle of the Indians’ existence.

Dreams also play another role, and this is due, once more, to the fateful nature of a meaningful existence. Dreams are stories ahead of stories that speak a people’s fate. Dreams are first stories, a first gathering—the first touch of wind that promises storm. As dreams interrogate

landscape, so too do they interrogate world, and because they speak from a people's world and the circumstances into which a particular people are thrown, they seem both inexorable and curiously objective:

Birdseye murmurs sound neither she nor Greenstockings fully comprehend. Though they both hear them into existence syllable by deadly syllable. Her breath brushing the fire raises no fire there that anyone can yet see; the inevitabilities already coming there still invisible, the future still hidden though already born. Like the great north lights flaming in the sky at night: always there but so rarely visible to a human eye. (164)

Dreams address a future which, like the land, is always present but hidden. Unlike the land, however, which lies hidden in and of itself, the future is hidden in the world which founds all the decisions of a specific, historic people. Wiebe emphasizes the "inevitability" of the future because he wants to make it absolutely clear that the future, as fate, stems from decisions which are made in the present and founded in the past. Dreams function as the connection between past, present, and future. Dreams connect world to consequence. As the epigraph to this chapter claims, it is "of course clear that . . . the trek of These English coming has always been here waiting for them" because the trek—and its failure—is written in the presumptions, in the language, of the explorers' world (153). Birdseye's vision of the failure of the expedition rests on an implicit interpretation of the explorers' world. Birdseye's family—Keskarrah, Greenstockings, and Greywing—have absolutely no doubt about the veracity of that interpretation, or the power of her dream:

"It's so long," Greywing sobs. . . . "Why do we have to hear it?" . . . .  
Greenstockings echoes her sister, "Why do we have to hear this? If they have to live it anyway, I don't want to hear it too."  
Gently Keskarrah rocks Greywing against himself. "The White story is what it is," he says. "Story permits no lie."  
Birdseye is dreaming it now. And they must listen. (153-54)

While this implies that individuals are always caught in the grip of a fate beyond their control, the issue is much more than simply a question of fate or freedom. The expedition, for instance, is also a wonderful illustration of the fate of those who pay no heed to fate. The explorers' heedless nature emerges in the fact that, unlike the Indians, the explorers do not dream. We have already discussed *why* the explorers fail to dream—the convictions of metaphysics certainly do not foster such introspection, but we have not fully explored the implications of that failure. One of the first implications of this failure is a certain weakness for ideology which limits the horizon of the perceptible. Because the voyageurs' anxiety is perceived from the standpoint of a masculinist ideology, for example, the explorers perceive this anxiety as evidence of cowardice. On a broader level, however, the explorers' failure to dream ensures that they do not perceive the proximity of their own fate. "Like every one of them," Wiebe writes,

little Boy English [Back] walked across the tundra or sat in a giant canoe with his head so high, as if his stubby nose was all there had ever been there ahead of him; he would be impaled or dead before he even knew what had been following him, here in their country. (74)

Here again, it is a singularity of perception—Back's conviction that "his stubby nose was all there had ever been there ahead of him"—which ensures that Back remains a victim of his world, of his fate. As Keskarrah observes of all of the explorers: "If a person isn't with them as they live and travel, they see nothing until it burns up in front of them. I've never seen them look back to find out what anyone can see is already following them" (77). Wiebe's vision of the "continuous circle" of the explorers' journey, then, begins to look something like this: subscribing to a singular, mimetic conception of language, the explorers are vulnerable to ideology, unable to perceive the "obvious," and ultimately prey to a fate which they have no part

in making. At this point, we seem to have simply replaced the new historicists' socioeconomic determinism with a determinism based on a certain concept of language.

As we saw in Chapter Two, however, the proceedings of the expedition are perhaps more complicated than they first appear. Once again, we cannot discount questions of textuality. We have discussed, for example, the ideologies which seem to govern the explorers' perception. These very ideologies, however, are *presented* in the various texts of the expedition—that is, they emerge both implicitly *and* explicitly. Back, for example, clearly attempts to conjure an image of his own masculinity—and the commendable nature of such masculinity—within the account of his winter trek to obtain supplies. Franklin concentrates on more weighty matters, such as the intents and aims of the British empire and the religious dogma fortifying and rationalizing these aims. Richardson and Hood share the same self-conscious narration, the only difference being that Hood seems more romantic and more honest about the aims of the expedition (a factor which may explain Wiebe's otherwise inordinate elevation of his character). The conclusion which can be drawn from this is that the explorers *were* aware of the constitution of their world, and, hence, should have had some inkling of the nature of their fate. We can certainly assume, of course, that in the contemplation of the decidedly un-metaphysical details of their suffering, the perils of their situation overcame ideological niceties; that is, if we recall, the essence of the explorers' third negotiation with the land. At the same time, however, the explorers did remain remarkably true to the by-now-stereotypical portrait of English exploration which they themselves quite consciously helped create. The reasons for this lie once more in the complacency of their world view. In a way, they are like clever monkeys, pulling levers and performing tricks with a full consciousness of the rewards involved, but without the wisdom to perceive that their tractability

accounts for much of the reason they remain pets. New historicists would argue that such perspicacity, such wisdom, lies beyond human understanding; from a Heideggerian point of view, such wisdom founds human understanding.

Wiebe's Coppermine Indians provide us with a final illustration of this understanding, but before we turn to them we should take note of another observation in Wiebe's fiction that does apply to the actual texts of Franklin's first expedition. The more one examines *these* texts, the more one realizes that they are haunted by a strange "hollowness," a hollowness of the sort that plagued Conrad's Kurtz. In *A Discovery of Strangers* Wiebe writes: "how can one say how These English will behave, so safely far from whatever land they have left that they may do anything at all so long as another English isn't looking" (30). And indeed, evidence from the records of the expedition suggests radical departures from English standards of behaviour. There is, of course, Richardson's execution of Michel Terohaute, but this extreme act, as Richardson and Hepburn later claimed, was necessitated by the fact that Michel had murdered Hood and was acting in a threatening manner. There are also the intriguing questions raised by Frederick Wentzel. His tenure as guide for the expedition ended *long before* the trek on which Hood and Terohaute were killed, and yet Wentzel wrote, in reference to the journal he kept during this time period, "I find no delight in exposing circumstances which might be considered criminal conduct in one of the officers who has survived and been rewarded."<sup>23</sup> As Wentzel's journal never did come to light, his anxiety was in vain, but the expression of this anxiety certainly complicates our perception of the expedition. "When you come to our land," Keskarrah tells the explorers, "you cannot continue to be what you've always been" (202). Ironically, evidence of the explorers' misconduct may be the best evidence that the world of the English explorers *did* undergo substantial revision.

Like Wiebe's character, Bigfoot, the Coppermine Indian who forsakes his Indian beliefs to hunt animals as mere meat for the explorers, the English forsake part of the world which grants meaning to their universe. There is always, of course, some disassociation between public and private worlds; the question which remains, however, is how wide the distance between the two can grow before one or the other comes crashing down. The explorers' questionable conduct may simply be an expression of the distance between an individual and the omnipresent "they" of an individual's society. On the other hand, such disassociation might be an indication of a much larger pattern, a pattern which seems to surface time and time again in the recorded encounters between the Old World and the New. If this is the case, then such misconduct stands as a crucial stage in the shattering of the singularity and unity of the Old World—a stage which Conrad gathered, *presented*, in his brilliant novella.

In Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers* there is also a sense of worlds shattering. From the very beginning, the neutrality of Wiebe's title—who, one wonders, are the strangers?—shifts the emphasis from the explorers to this remarkable encounter between two peoples, two worlds. The encounter, however, is not equal. Old World technology, alcohol, and diseases ensure that it is the Indians whose world faces the most drastic upheaval. The way in which the Indians face this upheaval, the way in which they face a fate which is all too familiar to Wiebe's modern audience, becomes the main focus of Wiebe's conclusion. First of all, Wiebe continually makes it clear that the Indians know and understand the workings of fate. After Keskarrah warns Franklin of the trials he will endure at Obstruction Rapids, Franklin thanks him but tells his translator, Twospeaker (St. Germain): "I am sure, their land being so very large as we already know, that with his warning we will thankfully be able to avoid, wherever they may be, those fatal double

rapids” (207). Twospeaker translates this to Keskarrah, and Keskarrah’s reaction illustrates this understanding of fate:

Keskarrah listens impassively to the translation. Then for an instant his eye catches Twospeaker’s: they both know there is no escape, nor could either imagine what an escape from the inevitability of the land might be in order to want it. Obviously, these Whitemuds will be dead before they recognize this. (207)

But such acceptance of fate, of “the inevitability of the land,” is not to be confused with either apathy or even simple acquiescence. Greenstockings, for example, understands and accepts Hood’s fate, but she does not then relinquish her own individuality. She tells Hood,

“My mother is dreaming all your travels, you can hear your journey, there, and you will die. That’s what she’s already said. She has not quite dreamed you to your death, not yet, but I tell you your heart will never fold around a knife, not here, you will walk and walk over our land until hunger meets you, but now I feed you, now, and you may never starve either, so eat now, you may not ever be cut, nor starve, no.” (171)

Significantly, Hood does not starve, nor does a knife kill him, but Wiebe introduces yet another motif to aid in his portrayal of the complex nature of a fateful, empowered existence. In the brief period which they spend together, Greenstockings attempts to prepare Hood for his last journey. In particular, although he cannot understand her words, she tells him: ““when you are too weak to think, remember: look in the sky. Raven will be there. He will lead you to our sister wolf. Leave food for her and her little ones when you have some, and she will always leave some for you” (173). When Hood is near death, he “remembers” this advice and passes it on to Hepburn and Richardson (223). The inexplicable nature of this exchange emphasizes two things: first, that one often cannot rationalize individual effort through an examination of logical ends and means; and second, that such efforts do, in ways which cannot be extricated from all the complexities of a

world, make a difference.

Despite all this discussion of fate we have not yet touched on the fate of Wiebe's Coppermine Indians. But just as Birdseye dreams and interprets fate on the basis of world, Wiebe presents the fate of the Coppermine Indians in ways which we can swiftly divine. While sketching the outline of the Indians' fate, however, Wiebe implicates that fate with the fate of his contemporary audience. The Indians' fate is that they must exist in a shattered world, a world which no longer enjoys a "unity" with the landscape in which it first grew. This destruction of the Indian world is a direct result of the arrival of the English. But it is not so much the explorers' arrival that challenges the Indians' world, as it is the explorers' indisputable existence in an alternative realm of significance. This is irrefutable evidence that the Indians' contingent view of reality, perceived by the Indians as the *only* way to view reality, is in fact contingent itself. "Maybe," Birdseye muses, "they [the explorers] don't need to dream," and Keskarrah's reaction captures the shock of such a swift and harsh lesson in cultural relativity:

Keskarrah stares at her, dumbfounded. He has never considered that the sun through glass might not deceive Whites; never imagined that something they could make and drag into the world he has always lived, travelling it into existence, might make that world more fixed than his own awareness could recognize. (78)

Clearly, the explorers' arrival brings much more than a change in weaponry, or economics, or even in the health of the Indians. The explorers' arrival transforms the world in which all these find meaning. As Birdseye murmurs to Greenstockings: "Sometimes I think everything has become different. Sound, and taste, different" (38). And as Keskarrah pensively remarks, "I don't understand how we'll be able to live in our world with These English" (75) The answer, of course, is that the Indians cannot continue to live in their world, that the essence of that world has

been altered forever. When Bigfoot is rewarded for his loyalty with a beaver hat, Greenstockings reflects on this symbol of the transformation of the Indians' world and on their growing alienation from the land: "Watching Bigfoot beyond her busy hands, Greenstockings ponders all this; ponders his blunt fingers stroking that seamless fur. Strange things, becoming stranger" (133). It is Keskarrah, however, who first senses the deadly consequences of this alienation: "'Everything,' he says softly, 'is becoming dangerous'" (127).

Wiebe's presentation of this alienation, his presentation of the swift erosion of the Indians' world, takes place with formal history always in the background. Against the backdrop of this history, the Indians' loss seems all the more fateful. And yet Wiebe does offer hope. He makes it clear that the loss of the Indians' world is tragic, particularly in comparison with the European world which almost completely effaces it, but he does not romanticize the Indians' lost world, nor does he propose that it represents, in some way, a forgotten Eden. This is precisely in keeping with the conception of language which he presents throughout the novel. "A story," Greenstockings recalls, "is what it is and will not change no matter what you wish of it" (120). The history of the Coppermine Indians remains what it is, the history of the abrupt decline of a successful and admirable people, but, at the same time, this does not mean that their story ends. Keskarrah, we recall, tells and re-tells the ancient stories of his people, "but never in quite the same way" (118). In Heideggerian fashion, the tales continually alter, continually grow, in order to found meaning in the present.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the story of She Who Delights emerges as both a tale of the past and a tale of Greenstockings' future. In much the same way, Greenstockings emerges as Wiebe's connection between the Indians' past and his audience's future. Her story begins and ends in worlds which are profoundly, and violently, male. Indeed, perhaps the only common

ground between the English explorers and the Coppermine Indians is their profound sexism. Franklin is appalled by the “Sufferings of the poor [Indian] women” (*JC* 227); ironically, however, the specific case which prompts this observation is resolved by the woman leaving her abusive partner. One wonders if she would have enjoyed a similar recourse in Franklin’s society. As a woman, Greenstockings is caught between both these male worlds, and her fate, her story, is clear:

[T]he log walls built by These English and Michel’s groping fists have shown her what she has always known and should have remembered: they are all men, and there are too many of them. Wherever many men are, they can exist only within a certain violence, and they will try to break you again and again.

But Greenstockings’ strength, her grace, lies in the balance she strikes between an awareness of this fate and her fierce determination to live her own life. Wiebe writes:

When had she decided she would grow so strong and smart that she could marry anyone she wanted? Or no one if she didn’t? Why? She cannot remember ever deciding these things, but that is what she is living. . . . So now there are men tearing at her, and will be for the rest of her life. Well—let them. (139).

Greenstockings’ strength stems from the same understanding which founds this awareness of her own fate. Her understanding of the adversity facing her enables her to respond to that adversity in positive, tangible ways. When she meets Back, for example, after the expedition’s deadly return from the ocean, she realizes that she has nothing to fear from him:

She hears Birdseye’s voice speaking to her again, in that strange, abstracted tone, of what may be happening past or future, telling her everything she will encounter sooner or later. Her life already exists, everywhere, in the words with which her mother has surrounded her, so she watches Back’s ragged lips move without fear, his face peeled by hunger and by sunlight dancing its quick irony on the snow. (312)

Ironically, then, by acknowledging fate, by listening to the names, stories, and dreams of the

language(s) in which her fate is written, Greenstockings finds a space within which to exercise her own autonomy. Wiebe emphasizes this autonomy on the concluding pages of the novel. Back and his translator, Twospeaker (significantly, an Englishman and a Métis), interrogate Greenstockings about the child she is carrying. They demand to know whose child it is, so Greenstockings tells them: “I found this child in a caribou hoof-print” (317). “That old story,” Twospeaker scornfully replies, so Greenstockings re-fashions her answer:

She tells Twospeaker, “Maybe it fell from the sky, maybe it’s no bigger than a thumb.”  
 “Whose child is it!”  
 So she tells him: “Mine.”  
 Back, like Twospeaker, stares at her.  
 “Do you hear me?” she confronts them. “Mine.”

This, then, is the grace which so defines Greenstockings’ character: a willingness to face the future, a willingness to move beyond egocentric desires to efface the incomprehensible, and a resolute determination to appropriate the fate, the destiny, into which she is thrown. Through Greenstockings the story of the First Franklin Expedition becomes a contemporary tale. Wiebe uses her to present alternatives, to found a new world. At one point in the story Keskarrah reminds Birdseye that she is “just a woman” (75), but, as Birdseye herself has taught Greenstockings, being “just a woman” involves understanding and appropriating the possibilities present in the world into which one is thrown. From the very second she is born, being “just a woman” draws a woman into a conflict with society over her own autonomy, her own mystery. Wiebe does not use Greenstockings to somehow resolve this conflict, but with her character he does present a way. Revoking the destructive and heedless “all or nothing” approach so characteristic of Franklin and, perhaps, of all such men, Greenstockings fights her battles in order to *preserve* limits, to *preserve* her own autonomy. In the presentation of this way, Wiebe also

speaks for a way to the land, and a way to language. She speaks to preserve her own mystery, her own necessary silence, a speech which Hood echoes as he begins to understand the way to her land:

“I would like to draw her [Greenstockings’] picture . . . at her woman’s work. Making snowshoes,” Robert Hood says in English. Very quietly, as he has learned to speak in this unimaginable land where the few sounds made by trees or rocks or water, or the occasional animal or human, vanish into silence like a snowflake touching into the swell of an ocean. (81)

And in this “speech” we find a way to the concept of language which Wiebe has so carefully presented throughout the novel. This is speech as a listening, speech as a silence, for as Heidegger writes, “We not only *speak* language, we speak *from out of it*. We are capable of doing so only because in each case we have already listened to language.”<sup>25</sup> Hence, to listen to language is to listen, to preserve, the silence preceding language, the silence from which speech grows.

## 4.

### Notes on Dwelling in The Arctic

*The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell. What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the real plight of dwelling as the plight? Yet as soon as man gives thought to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that calls mortals into their dwelling.*

Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking"<sup>1</sup>

*How far north will a mind consent?*

J. Michael Yates, *The Great Bear Lake Meditations*<sup>2</sup>

We could call Franklin's first expedition a lesson in learning how to "dwell." It is, of course, a negative lesson, a "how-to" guide of what not to do unless suffering and death are the ultimate goal. But, strangely enough, even in the shortcomings of this expedition one finds an element of dwelling that reverberates in more contemporary, more perceptive thought. As the first chapters of this study make clear, my examination of the journals does *not* assume that these journals have any particular claim to artistic merit or artistic function (as Heidegger sees art as functioning, in a historicizing, world-fashioning way). But within the journals something does indeed come to presence—the tremendous conflict between the explorers and the Arctic of their exploration. It was the land itself, if we recall, that placed such a strain on the explorers' literary resources, the land itself which continually re-surfaces in the rigid accounts of the expedition. As it stands, however, to say that the "land itself" resists such appropriation is a rather nebulous claim, and one that is prone to vague, romantic, and even pantheistic misconceptions. This fourth

chapter is both an examination of our definition of the “land itself,” and of the sorts of insights which the land founts. In this chapter we will be examining the Arctic poems and prose of various non-aboriginal artists, and it is, I suppose, rather ironic that I would choose to discuss Arctic landscape by examining the texts of individuals (albeit perceptive individuals) who are profoundly foreign to the world and to the land of which they speak. The more one examines the issue, however, the more one begins to realize two things: first, that from the first expedition journals to contemporary prose and poetry, the Arctic has played a consistent, definable role in white, Western writing; and second, that the nature of this role is such as to prompt the realization that the roles of native and foreigner are not nearly so polarized as one might think. This is not to say that the land reduces these roles, in some mysterious way, to a facile unity—we are not, nor ever will be, “just folks”—but it does found the recognition that foreigners are born in the limits of nativity, and that nativity itself spawns the foreignness that haunts it. As Heidegger writes, “rightly considered and kept well in mind,” this conjunction of seeming opposites provides the grounds for an introspection that avoids both the pitfalls of an untenable universality and the limited relevance of an overly specific historicity.

To begin with, and without becoming too deeply involved in the intricacies of Heidegger’s definition of “dwelling,” we should note several key aspects of the term, and the way in which Heidegger’s use of the term intersects with what we have already discussed of Heidegger’s philosophy. Heidegger introduces the term in his essay, “Building Dwelling Thinking.” The form of the essay itself is an inquiry into the meaning and origin of the verb “to dwell,” and as the essay develops it becomes evident that Heidegger sees the term within the context of existence itself. As Albert Hofstadter writes:

In “Building Dwelling Thinking”—note the absence of commas, intended to enforce the identity of the three—Heidegger develops the essential continuity of being, building, dwelling, and thinking. Language makes the connection for us: *bauen*, to build, connects with *buan* to dwell, and with *bin*, *bist*, the words for be. Language tells us: to be a human being is to be on the earth as a mortal, to dwell, doing the “building” that belongs to dwelling: cultivating growing things, constructing things that are built, and doing all this in the context of mortals who, living on earth and cherishing it, look to the sky and to the gods to find the measure of their dwelling.<sup>3</sup>

Heidegger sees dwelling then, as the sort of human existence which is both concerned and engaged—that is, existence which is engaged in a search for its own roots, and existence which is concerned with both the nature and the well-being of its own environment. If this sounds like a rather utopic view of human existence, then we have not adequately addressed the complexities of the concept. Indeed, at the heart of Heidegger’s concept of dwelling is conflict. We begin to see the nature of this conflict when we note the parallels between Heidegger’s concept of dwelling and the concept of authentic existence which Heidegger outlined in his earlier work.<sup>4</sup> It seems clear that by “dwelling” Heidegger is referring to—and elaborating on—his concept of authentic existence: the emphasis on disclosure, both of the self and of one’s environment, the explicit connection between dwelling, *buan*, and *bin*, be, and, perhaps most importantly, the repeated references to mankind’s essential “homelessness”—which, like death, “individualizes Dasein down to itself” by disclosing Dasein’s *own* “potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world” (*BT* 308; See also *BT* 232 )—certainly support such a conclusion. “There is much that is strange,” Sophocles writes, “but nothing / that surpasses man in strangeness.”<sup>5</sup> Heidegger cites these lines in order to emphasize the fact that dwelling—authentic existence—is an unremitting “oscillation” between the “always already,” the founding familiarity of the world within which one exists, and a certain homelessness, the “angst,” born of an awareness of one’s ownmost

possibility of *impossibility* (i.e. death), which constantly undermines the unity and singularity of this world. To those who listen, this oscillation prompts moments of disclosure, but Heidegger makes it clear that existence as a whole is always beyond the transparency so yearned for by new historicists.<sup>6</sup> Heidegger does not, however, see the impossibility of such transparency as a shortcoming; rather, the very historicity which functions as the horizon, the *limit* of disclosure, also functions as the *provenance* of all disclosure of beings.<sup>7</sup> This two-sided definition of limit, of *peras*, is central to Heidegger's thought. Hence, when one "gives thought" to humanity's essential homelessness, one does two things: one quite literally gives over thought to the contemplation, the preservation (in both Heidegger's and the conventional sense of the word) of limits; and one also gives thought, takes the time to think, of the measure, of the limit, of one's world.

But how does this concept of dwelling connect to our examination of Arctic landscape? J. L. Dameron's essay, "Melville and Scoresby on Whiteness,"<sup>8</sup> provides the first grounds for this connection. The subject of Dameron's essay is Melville's indebtedness to William Scoresby, Jr., a British explorer who published two works: *An Account of the Arctic Regions with a History and Description of the Northern Whale-Fishery* (1820), and *Journal of a Voyage to the Northern Whale-Fishery* (1823). That Scoresby's work is contemporaneous with that of Franklin is, in itself, of relatively minor interest to us. What is interesting, however, is Scoresby's description of the Arctic, a description to which, Dameron argues, Melville was greatly indebted. Dameron's argument has two tenets: first, he argues that Melville used the image of the white whale in *Moby Dick* to propose "*whiteness* as the most vivid evidence of the void and the unknowable"; and second, he proposes that "Scoresby's *Account* and *Journal* provided Melville with the pictorial

imagery by which the novelist could in part explore whiteness as the essential paradox of human existence” (97, 98). That Melville was extremely interested in the nature of “whiteness” seems clear—much of Chapter Forty-Two of *Moby Dick* is an explicit contemplation of the very concept—and Dameron’s comparison of passages of Scoresby’s work with those of Melville does turn up some interesting similarities. In particular, Scoresby’s descriptions of the Arctic (and, in some cases, of the Subarctic) emphasize the sublime nature of the land. As Dameron notes, “Scoresby has a tendency to compose his descriptions of nature in phrases of emotive intensity and pictorial imagery, especially the bizarre effects of the landscape upon the human consciousness” (99). Melville, Dameron continues, used Scoresby’s images of the sublime, of the “whiteness” of the Arctic, to further his own contemplation of the nature of human knowledge and human existence. Dameron concentrates on the one aspect of this comparison which he *can* prove—that some of Melville’s passages share a similarity to Scoresby’s—but he then foregoes the questions which are of particular interest to our study. That is, he does not explore the possibility that Melville’s contemplation of “whiteness,” of “the paradox of human existence” (103), grew out of, rather than simply employed, Scoresby’s vivid descriptions of the Arctic. We could, of course, extend this sort of question to Scoresby himself, investigating, as I. S. Maclaren investigates the journals of Franklin’s expedition,<sup>9</sup> the “true” source of Scoresby’s perception of the Arctic *as* sublime. We cannot, of course, hope to entirely define the origin of Scoresby’s perceptions, nor can we prove that Melville was moved in any profound way by Scoresby’s descriptions, but I would argue that Melville used Scoresby’s images of the Arctic because he sensed that there were some insights to be gleaned from the encounter between Western humanity and this strange new land.

Dameron notes that Melville develops this Arctic whiteness as both the “concrete of all colours” and as a presentation of “baneful sterility and ethereal purity, nothingness” (103). The “real” Arctic, on the other hand, is a powerful—overwhelming—presence that prods Scoresby into a contemplation of his own human consciousness, of the world in which he exists. It acts, quite literally, as a dis-placement: it turns him towards a contemplation of his place, his origins, and it momentarily frees him from those origins by undermining their authority, shattering their singularity. Clearly, the Arctic discloses to Scoresby his own essential “homelessness.” Thus, Scoresby’s encounter with the Arctic prompts a certain “dwelling,” a measure of disclosure which, however paltry it might seem today, allows Scoresby a view of his own nineteenth-century world. This is not, of course, to say that all encounters with the Arctic prompt this reaction: as Dameron notes, “Scoresby’s *Journal* and his *Account* are distinctive” (100). But if we are to argue that Scoresby’s reaction to the Arctic is distinctive (although, as we shall see, it is not unique), and that it is distinctive because it exhibits a certain dwelling, then it is even more singular that Melville should choose this particular explorer as a source for his exploration of human existence. Indeed, whether Melville gleaned some insight into the nature of “whiteness” from Scoresby’s encounter with the Arctic, or whether he simply saw that Scoresby’s descriptions were, in fact, an excellent resource for his own purposes, the fact remains that Melville chose Scoresby’s work over the myriad of whaling and exploration journals available to him.<sup>10</sup> Given the existential tenor of Melville’s exploration of Scoresby’s “whiteness,” it seems reasonable to assume that Melville himself recognized a pattern in Scoresby’s journals which can only be described as an encounter with the limits of world, of truth, of the “abyss” of homelessness which both founds and confounds the continuity and singularity of human

existence.

“When outsiders travel to the Arctic,” John Moss writes, “something special happens; not always but enough to be remarkable. In contours of the diverse landscape visitors discover aspects of themselves not usually accessible.”<sup>11</sup> What occurred on Scoresby’s voyage was “something special,” but, as Moss implies, Scoresby’s reaction is hardly unique. Indeed, as we move from Scoresby to the texts of Franklin’s expedition, to a brief survey of modern “poets,” a pattern of such moments of disclosure begins to emerge. The poet’s vocation, Heidegger writes, is homecoming: the poet is one who ventures into the unknown in order to re-turn to the known. We see an echo of this conviction in the popular contemporary belief that one travels in order to “find oneself,” in order to gain some perspective on one’s own existence. But lost in the seemingly self-evident plausibility of this truism is the issue of *why* such travel functions in the disclosive way that it does. The unique environment of the Arctic, I would argue, possesses two things: first, it possesses an exemplary ability to found these moments of disclosure, and second, it provides us with an answer to the *why*—it provides us with the source of its own disclosive agency. All “things,” Heidegger argues, *thing*; that is, in the act of being things all things have an “agency” of their own.<sup>12</sup> “The thing,” he continues, “stays—gathers and unites—the fourfold. The thing things world. Each stays the fourfold into a happening of the simple oneness of world” (181).<sup>13</sup> By gathering we already understand a bringing together that sets something forth; hence, in the gathering of the thing a world—and an earth—come to presence. But, as Heidegger writes, this is not an obtrusive, easily-appropriated presencing: “thinging itself is unpretentious, and each present thing, modestly compliant, fits into its own being. Inconspicuously compliant is the thing: the jug and the bench, the footbridge and the plow. But tree and pond, too, brook and hill,

are things, each in its own way" (182). The Arctic is also a "thing," and it too gathers world in its figure. The Arctic, however, is neither inconspicuous nor compliant. Indeed, what is pre-eminent about the Arctic is its very insistence on presence. Over time—and in its own time—the Arctic, the land itself, reiterates its own selfhood, its own earthly being. One can say, for example, that the Arctic *is* one thing, or that the Arctic *is* yet another, but what constantly returns to this discussion of the Arctic (as it should to all things) is the injunction from the land itself that at all times it simply also always *is* beyond the grasp of its explorers. Thus, it enacts moments of human disclosure *not* because it is a barren space upon which humanity inscribes itself, but, rather, because its insistence on limits, its very presence, brings humanity's "dwelling" to the fore.

In our examination of the texts to follow, then, we find a twofold pattern: first, we continually catch glimpses of an Arctic which resists appropriation, which surfaces in the texts as a withheld promise—or threat; and second, in the words of the "outsider," the foreigner, aspects of world, of language *as* language, "mere / memos re / language," as bp nichol writes,<sup>14</sup> are held up like a negative to light. The texts of the Franklin expedition are an excellent place to begin. We note, first of all, a number of their salient characteristics. We know, from Chapter Two, that these texts are far more "constructed" than they first appear. They belong to a genre of eyewitness reportage whose "authenticity" is complicated by both conscious and unconscious factors.<sup>15</sup> We also know, again, from Chapter Two, that in the texts themselves a curious paradox comes to light. Exhaustively detailed, the various journals record the proceedings of the expedition and the nature of the new land with almost unparalleled exactitude. And yet. Details, questions, the very "land itself" eludes the explorers' grasp. We see this in the explorers'

negotiations with the land, negotiations which also make it clear that the explorers were more conscious of both themselves and their situation than they were willing to reveal. And all this, we said, was evidence of the land itself, evidence of a presence that could not be effaced from the otherwise genteel accounts of the expedition. But there is still more evidence pointing to the fact that the explorers were very much aware of the land itself. We find some of this evidence in a letter of Dr. Richardson which MacLaren cites in his "Retaining Captaincy of the Soul: Response to Nature in the First Franklin Expedition." Richardson, writing to his wife, describes in vivid detail the desolate and lonely "nature" of the land. It is clear that he feels threatened: "I must not, however, go on writing in this strain; there are yet two months of winter to come, and I must endeavour to acquire and preserve that contentment which can render every situation tolerable" (67). Moreover, as MacLaren observes, it is equally clear that "remaining captain of his own soul becomes Richardson's goal" (67). MacLaren then examines the journals and paintings of the other members of the expedition. In each case, he uses the explorers' presentations of the expedition as evidence for the way in which the explorers perceived the experience. The problem, however, is that he conflates perception with expression, entirely discounting the constructive agency of the explorers. He writes: "The reader could be pleased to wonder . . . but the explorer could not: it was not in his orders" (82). The issue is, I would argue, more complex than MacLaren allows. It seems clear that the explorers *did* wonder, that they were fully aware of the powerful presence of this new land. Indeed, as Richardson's letter illustrates, the land threatened them with both a sense of their own insignificance and the possibility of insignificance as a whole. And the explorers, shivering in inappropriate shelters and persisting in a dis-placed way of life, refuse to contemplate what the land reveals. They prefer, instead, to fix

their gaze on visions of their homeland. Hence, the explorers' reaction to the Arctic is a *willed* reaction. One can learn to "dwell" in such moments of dis-placement; it is, however, much easier to turn to the source of one's discomfiture and, like Captain Ahab, attempt to kill it.

Franklin provides us with some additional insights into the nature of the explorers' relationship with the land. We have already touched on Franklin's heavy, pedantic style. "Thick English," as he is dubbed in Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers*,<sup>16</sup> wrote in a way which seems to emphasize his own earnest, methodical character. But Franklin also took pains to present himself as he no doubt saw himself: as a sober and respectable member of society. When, for example, Franklin observes the shortcomings of voyageurs, Indians, or penurious traders, he *always* prefaces his remarks with the same regretful platitude: "I feel the duty incumbent on me to mention . . . ." <sup>17</sup> In each case, Franklin makes it clear that such observations have nothing to do with personal dislike or emotional considerations; they are simply one of the more onerous consequences of his dedication to truth and rationality. And while we cannot prove that Franklin was entirely conscious of the process of fabricating authority, he certainly knew the rules: he knew that much of the authority—the "authenticity"—of his text relied on his own rationality, on *his* presentation of his own reasonable, commonsensical nature. Franklin also enjoins the reader's belief because he draws so effectively on the *forms* of a rational discourse. The lists of provisions, the endless daily journals, and the careful observations function as both witnesses to the experience and witnesses to *his relation* of the experience. We know that Franklin engaged in some very "creative" writing, but, supported with this wealth of empirical data and with his own reasonable tone, it is hardly surprising that the British reading public accepted the *Narrative* so readily and questioned the expedition's leadership so rarely.

Moreover, it is the *Narrative's* pre-eminently reasonable tone which grants significance to those rare occasions when the tone falters, when Franklin's relation of events becomes less controlled, less scientifically detached, and more emotional. Predictably enough, the most vivid example of such a "break-down" can be found in Franklin's relation of the expedition's deadly return from the Arctic ocean. We find a strange conjunction here. On the one hand, Franklin betrays both an impatience with the voyageurs and a certain paranoia about their behaviour; on the other, references to "the great Author and Giver of all good," "the bounty of Providence," "the Supreme Being," and "Divine will" suddenly begin to appear everywhere.<sup>18</sup> "If I were deeply cynical," Wiebe notes, "I might point out that the historical record implies that the greater the numbers of their fellow heroes they [the explorers] take with them in death, the greater the so-called heroism and of course the proportionately larger the resulting memorials."<sup>19</sup> If I were cynical, I might point out that the greater the difficulties facing the explorers, the more prone they are to blaming their companions, and, failing that, to quoting scripture and calling on "the bounty of Providence."<sup>20</sup>

But this is perhaps an unfair observation. In Chapter Two we discussed the fact that Franklin's sudden proselytizing is an effective rhetorical ploy—invoking "Divine will" is certainly a swift and easy way to avoid mortal adjudication—but the point requires some qualification. In particular, while Franklin may have decided against editing the more overtly religious sections of the *Narrative* because his alternatives were distinctly unpalatable, there is evidence that Franklin would have preferred a much more scientific, detached approach. Franklin may have been an extremely religious man, but his religion involved more reason than emotion. When the explorers realize, for example, that an eclipse is scheduled to occur during their stay

with the Tetsot'ine, they take "advantage of this occasion to speak to them respecting the Supreme Being, who ordered all the operations of nature, and to impress on their minds the necessity of paying strict attention to their moral duties" (*NJ*, 228). Here, Franklin emphasizes only the rational aspects of his religion; the irony, of course, is that he attempts to prove the superiority of this religion by manipulating what he perceives as the Indians' overly superstitious nature. With even greater irony, and as a fitting symbol for the progress of the expedition as a whole, a "heavy snow-storm" ensures that neither the explorers nor the Indians actually see the eclipse. It is a similar failure, a failure to control the proceedings of the expedition, that pushes Franklin into the more impassioned Christianity of the later sections of the *Narrative*. As Franklin loses authority the tone of the *Narrative* changes from detachment to involvement, from autonomy to dependence—reluctant dependence on the voyageurs, fervent dependence on God, and, finally, dependence on "even" the Indians. Indeed, throughout these sections, the greatest indication of Franklin's editorial discretion lies in the fact that the tone of the *Narrative* is much *less* religious than that of the letters he sent to Midshipman Back.<sup>21</sup> All of these factors, considered as a whole, suggest that the experience overwhelmed Franklin, that the constant expression of his faith was, in fact, a *reaction* to the land and not simply an indication of the sort of preconception that prevented him from seeing it.

Barry Lopez, in *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in A Northern Landscape*, coins an elegant (and, fittingly, pseudo-scientific) phrase which helps clarify the situation. When the Inuit kill a polar bear, Lopez writes, the dead bear is "propitiated with gifts. Such an act of propitiation is sometimes dismissed as 'superstition.' 'Technique of awareness' would come much closer to the mark, words that remind you of what you are dealing with."<sup>22</sup> Franklin's

propensity to speak in religious terms is also a “technique of awareness.” The difference, of course, is that Franklin does not appeal to religion to remind himself of what he is dealing with, but, rather, to remind himself of his own background, to remind myself of who *he* is. In the last days of this terrible trek, Franklin clings to his belief in the face of a land whose presence, whose unavoidable, ineffaceable presence, has entirely defeated him. We turn to another example: at an earlier stage of the same trek, Franklin mentions that food was still divided by “messes”—between the officers and the other men. Richard C. Davis notes: “The division of messes seems particularly uncalled for when the food consisted of putrid bone marrow or *tripe de roche*, but it was a convention Franklin preferred to maintain in the name of discipline and order.”<sup>23</sup> Eventually even this convention broke down, but the fact that Franklin maintained it for so long reveals more than just a desire for order. Clearly, discipline and order are not, of themselves, an end but a means. Franklin himself could provide us with a rational and cogent argument in support of the benefits of a disciplined military. But if we have learned anything from Heidegger, it is that humans do not divide their existence between the progress of their lives and the pathways of their thought. Hence, it is safe to say that Franklin’s *irrational* pursuit of discipline and order is indicative of a deeper desire. We can say, of course, that it merely indicates the explorers’ historicity, their British inflexibility, but we have already seen some of the pitfalls of such arbitrary conclusions. Indeed, while Franklin’s actions were based on possibilities which were *unquestionably* historical, because we know that the explorers could—and did—adapt to the demands of the New World, it seems much more likely that Franklin quite consciously maintained discipline and order in defence of a very specific way of thinking. Or, to put it another way, Franklin’s insistence on order was also a “technique of

awareness,” a way of re-affirming meaning in the face of the *mere possibility* of unmeaning.

Consider the situation: between fainting and stumbling, too weak to even shoulder his own belongings, Franklin still maintains the scrupulous division of rotten marrow and northern lichens. This is more than inflexibility; this is an act of faith. One takes afternoon tea in the Congo, or reads vespers in a tent, covered with lice and mosquitoes and stinking with constant dysentery, for precisely the same reason: these are forms of belief, affirmations of ideology. In each case the explorers return to that upon which their world is founded: reason, discipline, order, the neat script of the King James Bible. Each acts as a talisman against the “barrens” outside, each repeats, like a soothing mantra: I am not absurd, my world is not absurd, these words are not absurd. . . . Hence, even in the texts of these ardently metaphysical explorers, the land itself *does* emerge—as threat, as recalcitrant witness, as a “whiteness” which, they later maintain, improvements in technology will subdue. As for the language, the world, of the explorers, it constantly emerges in the figure of this “thing” called the Arctic. Within its displaced zone foundations emerge, foundations as explicit as order and discipline or as implicit as a perception of the “desolate” character of the land. In each case, it is the contrast between such foundations and the land itself which enjoins dwelling, which thrusts forth both the foundations themselves and the question of such foundations in general.

It is this question of foundations which provides the connection between the texts of Franklin’s first expedition and the work of contemporary Canadian poets. In the first poem of Alfred Purdy’s 1967 collection, *North of Summer: Poems from Baffin Island*,<sup>24</sup> we catch a glimpse of an Arctic which is already familiar to us:

The full shape of the Arctic moves

under us and flows  
 into quiet islands and swinging coastlines  
 blue seas reflecting our tiny aeroplane  
 the runaway world upside down  
 and no god of chaos to lift one hand  
 and make the place behave (18)

This is the Arctic as a presence, the sort of overwhelming presence that Franklin and his men could not keep from their journals. Purdy writes that the “runaway world [is] upside down” in recognition of the fact that suddenly the conventional (and incorrect) relationship between man and land, subject and object, has been subverted. It is, for example, the *land* which gathers the diminutive nature of the aeroplane. Similarly, there is “no god of chaos to lift one hand / and make the place behave” because the land itself disallows such a human imposition. Again, the reason it disallows such an imposition lies in its very presence, in the fact that human desires and human will suddenly appear insignificant in the face of such a vast and overpowering land. It is fitting, then, that the poet’s companion is an agnostic stewardess who, nevertheless, sometimes “see[s] angels out there” (18). Significantly, however, when the poet asks: “Human angels?” the stewardess swiftly changes the subject and Purdy writes: “I must have said the wrong thing . . .” (18).

The name of the poem, “The Turning Point,” is particularly apt, for not only is there a turning point within the structure of the poem itself, the entire focus of the poem is on the shift, the turning, from a temperate world to an Arctic existence. The turning point in the poem occurs just after the passage we originally cited. One moment we have an agnostic stewardess, a tiny plane, and the enormous presence of the land, the next “it’s gone completely / we’re lost / entombed in wool blankets / and go whispering thru nothingness / without sun or moon / human

instruments haywire” (19). This entrance into the clouds is a perfect symbol for the poet’s loss of all conventional reference, of all the “human instruments” which constantly assert the human as subject, human as master. But just as suddenly as the plane enters the clouds, it emerges from them, and “we find another world / a few moments later / with snow-streaked hills down there / that must be Baffin Island / . . . / a land most unlike Cathay or Paradise” (19). Purdy’s characterization of this world provides the reader with two critical insights: first, the Arctic is presented in its dual nature—not only does it dis-place Southern forms of reference, it *is* “another world”; and second, it is a world which frustrates the human will to power, the sort of desire which founds the metaphysical realms of “Cathay or Paradise.” Purdy then writes: “It’s getting cold as hell here / I guess / the Arctic is no place for shirtsleeves” (19). His plaintive “I guess”—a fitting qualification of both observations—is both a reiteration of the poet’s sudden displacement (is hell cold?) and a reminder of his own foreignness to the landscape. Finally, “the Arctic is no place for shirtsleeves” because not only is such southern apparel inappropriate, on another level, a very immediate level, the land itself demands a much more thoughtful response to its presence.

Moss, in *Enduring Dreams*, writes that Purdy’s poems tend to elide the land, that Purdy uses the Arctic “as context” (138). He introduces a passage from Purdy’s “Metrics,” another poem in this collection, with the following observation: “the essence of the following image is metaphysical, not physical—it asks not where is here, but what am I?” (35). What Moss overlooks, however, is that while “Metrics” is indeed an exploration of the question of “what am I,” it proceeds *precisely* by exploring the unfamiliar “here” of the Arctic.<sup>25</sup> Heidegger writes that “dwelling itself is always a staying with things”;<sup>26</sup> Purdy’s poem is an exploration, brought on by

the Arctic, of the nature of humanity's "staying with things." The poem begins with the poet's arrival on an Arctic island. Purdy writes:

At first I think it must be  
 the place I'm supposed to arrive at and  
 the facsimile I'd made beforehand didn't match  
 the real thing  
                                   tho it has  
                                   the same sky and the same sea  
 as the place in my head (37)

The dichotomy which Purdy establishes here, between "the real thing" and "the place in my head," informs the structure of the entire poem. In an effort to get to the "real thing" Purdy employs some metrics. First he takes a quick census, which reveals "(14 Eskimos 1 white man some dogs)" (37), then he proceeds into an examination of his surroundings. He strings together an enumeration of all the "things" in his environment with a minimal narrative and some illuminating commentary. He finds: a man, "brown children with snotty faces," a hunter, a torn spare tent, the hunter's wife, a hand-powered sewing machine, stones, a blind husky bitch, bones everywhere, pieces of animal carcass, yellow blubber, a white whale's body, another island, gaunt starving dogs ("like goats apparently"), a portable typewriter, a cardboard box, some beans, a windup gramophone, and some Old Squaw ducks (37-39). Purdy includes himself in this list as "a man / with heavy loneliness included" (37)—which merely emphasizes the obvious: the man is completely out-of-place in this environment. Indeed, the very incongruity of Purdy's list—the gramophone, we are told, is playing "You Are My Sunshine"—makes it clear that the man is unable to link all of these things to *his* world, *his* referential "context" of significance.<sup>27</sup>

What is truly interesting, however, is that the man's inability to significantly link these diverse things *does not*, in any way, reduce their presence. Even in their absurdity, in their



accurately conveys is the fundamental *disorder* of things. Or, to be more precise, the poem illustrates that attributing either order *or* disorder to the land is, in fact, a false anthropomorphism. Indeed, the poem does not attempt to establish the “what” of the land, the people, or even of the ducks; rather, it “simply” preserves (1. attends to, 2. listens to, 3. gives itself over to) their irreducible autonomy. Purdy listens, he watches, he *hearkens*, and his own dis-placement finds a meditation, a dwelling, on the complex relationship between humans and things.

While I would argue that these questions of home and homelessness continually re-surface throughout Purdy’s collection of Arctic poems, there is yet another poem in the collection within which these issues emerge in a more explicit manner. The poem, entitled “What do the Birds Think?” is founded on a contemplation of the annual migration of birds to the Arctic. Purdy, like Barry Lopez,<sup>28</sup> connects the migration of these animals to the ceaseless movement of human beings. Heidegger writes that “man is the strangest of all . . . because he departs from his customary, familiar limits, because he is the violent one, who, tending toward the strange in the sense of the overpowering, surpasses the limit of the familiar.”<sup>29</sup> Purdy’s examination of these birds is a reflection on the strangeness of human being. The entire poem is a series of questions which, merely by being questions, function as a denial of assertion, a denial of the sort of being-at-home that divides and subdivides the universe into the silence and immobility of simple answers. The first of these questions sets the tenor for the poem. Purdy asks: “Are they [the birds] exiles here from the rest of the world?” (72). If so, he continues, then from *what* world:

the yellow-Sahara ocean  
or farmlands in Ontario

.....

Or exiles from the apple country  
 where Macs and Spies plop soft  
 on wet ground in slow autumn days  
 with the rotten tangy odour  
 of cider on moonswept nights? (72)

Purdy stresses the multiplicity of these worlds in order to explore the ambiguities of his first question. The mere presence of all these parallel worlds makes the definition and division of “exiles” and natives extremely difficult. Similarly, the abundance of these worlds underscores the naïveté of establishing a simple dichotomy between the Arctic and “the rest of the world.” At the same time, in the gentle precision of his description of “the apple country,” Purdy evokes his own sense of home and connects himself to the meditation. Later in the poem he establishes yet another connection. Did these birds, he muses, ever touch down on the first ships to sail these waters, connecting themselves in both a literal and a metaphorical sense with the peregrinations of these other explorers? Both of these connections set up the question which follows, the question around which the poem revolves:

How are we kept here  
 by what bonds  
 are we always exiles  
 . . . . .  
 by what agency of restlessness  
 in the driftwood heart? (73)

Purdy does not answer the question, but he emphasizes the fact that the “homelessness” of these birds applies to himself as well. “In the southland,” he wonders, do these birds think of the North? Do they think of “Cumberland Sound / and the white places / of Baffin / that I will remember soon?” (73)

J. Michael Yates’s collection of poems, entitled *The Great Bear Lake Meditations* (1970),

is shot with a variety of different themes, but there are three in particular which are of interest to us. The first of these is, once again, this question of humanity's essential homelessness. Yates writes, on the second page of his unpaginated volume: "The wolves say to the dogs what the madman of me says to the citizen. I need to go fishing until I need to return." With this first poem Yates establishes the character of his "northern retreat." And, first and foremost, it is a retreat: Yates makes it clear that he is escaping into an "otherness" which is both equal to and, ultimately, as temporarily satisfying as his civilized existence. Yates's second poem underscores the transience of the sense of belonging he finds in either place:

First sense as I awaken under the fans of northern summer light: perhaps I shall get well here. Who can remain that long? Light has more duration than the eye. To remain too long is to become a sickness of another syndrome. I've summoned and survived that too—and carry it, asleep now, in the caves and crevasses of my blood.

There is a significant ambiguity in the second line of this poem. The "that" in "Who can remain that long?" can refer to either the state of health Yates wishes to return to—hence, "who can remain well long?" or it can refer to a mere staying—"who can remain in one place long enough to get well?" The significance of this ambiguity lies in the fact that one can assume either case without negating Yates's final implication. Indeed, it seems clear that the relationship between these two options is not an either/or relationship, but is, rather, conjunctive—hence, one cannot remain well long, *and*, as Yates himself puts it, "to remain too long is to become a sickness of another syndrome." This poetic sleight of hand serves to emphasize Yates's point, that a "healthy" sense of home and a fundamental alienation are "sicknesses" between which we all alternate.

Like Purdy before him, Yates also sketches the Arctic as a deconstructive zone, one

which provides the space for his own meditations and one in which his own world comes to presence. He writes:

The roads I followed here are washing away. This is the Lazarus who returned with no more to show than a yawn, the taste of dying in his mouth, vague hunger, thirst and no recollection of awakening at an earlier dawn. This was the sleep within the tent that I sewed. I entered, shut out the weather and went to sleep for darkness' sake. The afternoon and the insects have waited. I dream I only dream I am awake.

Here the land becomes a place of re-birth, and here the poet awakens from the “death” of his civilized existence. Fittingly, however, Yates presents this not as an awakening but as a release into slumber, an exercise, as Wiebe would put it, in “playing dead.” Yates writes: “This is the sleep of mastodons and mammoths; this is not the sleep of winter bears I’ve buried beneath the cornices of words.” This is not, in other words, the sleep, the silence, induced by the assertive, expropriative power of words; this is, instead, a more primordial re-turn. Yates sleeps for the “sake” of the darkness that eludes cognition, and he writes “I dream I only dream I am awake” because he wants to emphasize that in such a state of awareness—of awakening—things also emerge.

And the first thing that does emerge is humanity’s all-too-often-arbitrary definition of *thing*, of things: “Not even the mosquitoes,” Yates writes in the next poem, “are mosquitoes here.” But if, in this dis-placed zone, even familiar mosquitoes reflect the strangeness that is their own, then what of that most familiar of things, language itself? Yates writes:

Language melts in my mouth like August ice caught in a flash-change of weather. Nouns dissolve in search for things to name, the search for nothing, the no-thing at the edges of wind and water. Sound of a loon stuns the silence, a bloom, a hatch of insects. The bird or something to do with birds follows me into my sleep. One particle of the dark I carry with me into the light. It’s nothing I would name.

Like Purdy's metrics, Yates's nouns are disconnected from the Arctic landscape. In both of these states of "disconnection" something of the nature of naming, of saying,<sup>30</sup> emerges. In the naming of Yates's "bird" *as* bird, in the "cornices of words" that bury bears, there is a consigning to "darkness," an elision of the full being of the animal so named. Purdy's "cosmic emptiness," on the other hand, is a reminder of the historical and, perhaps, ephemeral nature of this entire process of naming. But both of these "flaws" in the nature of language only become flaws when we view language and beings a certain way. When human being, through language, is viewed as the endless and limitless articulation of meaning, then any and all impediments to this articulation are viewed as a threat. From such a perspective, historicity is a threat, the autonomy of all beings is a threat, and, for the way it highlights both these things, the "white" Arctic itself is a threat. If, however, we see human existence as beginning in limit, as an out-standing, an ecstatic (from the Greek: *exo*, "out of" and *histanai*, "place") exposure to the disclosure of beings, then limit also becomes provenance and a cloistered, complacent sense of home becomes a sickness as chronic as intimations of "cosmic emptiness." As Yates writes: "It is the nothing at the floors of all my black water that whispers into my dreams: I am alive." Similarly, Purdy's intent, if we recall, was *not* to present some melancholic vision of the emptiness, the hollowness, at the "heart" of mankind; it was, instead, to explore two things: the nature of the interrelationship of humans and "things"; and the timeless autonomy of the environment in which, through which, humans exist.

Moreover, Purdy's exploration of autonomy, of limit, is also echoed in Yates's work. Limit, presence, becomes that which denies the stasis which the persona of the poet continually seeks. Accordingly, the third theme we will examine in Yates's collection is the concept of limit

itself, which Yates presents in the frustration of the poet's art, in the immense presence of the land, and, finally, in the poet's own historic sense of self. Yates first hints at the poet's frustration with his art in a poem in which the poet and a carver are discussing poetry, carving, and art in general. He writes:

He [the carver] came to this city with his family from a small village now very distant in time and space. I'm on my way into the bush again. We speak of the diseases of both places, of the little there is to depend on concerning art and people. . . . he cannot understand why one who carves well doesn't also dance well, and sing and write beautiful books. We agree and don't understand together.

In this poem there is a dual sense of limit: first, art itself slips beyond reach, leaving the artist with "little . . . to depend on"; second, the artist lacks omniscience—he does not possess an abstract, readily interchangeable ability; at a fundamental level he himself is always given over to a particular medium. Moreover, as Yates makes clear in a subsequent poem, even within the artist's own domain the "things" he gathers somehow manage to elude his grasp:

*Legend:* The god in the sun made two men. In the hands of one he placed a book. An axe he handed the other. *Decree:* In search of one another they shall circle the earth forever. *Curse:* May you walk upwind all of your days. *Act:* The left hand loses memory of the right. Neither blade nor word gives the feel of gods at this long high noon of the night. The wind, like consciousness, appears only in other things.

In this poem Yates sets up a series of relationships which all revolve around the question of limit. Hence, the man of the word and the man of the blade are connected by their search for one another but are doomed to never meet. The wind opposes them for "all of [their] days," yet it is this very wind which the men attempt to coax into appearance. The god which first makes the artist, the god which provides the artist with the very means—the word, the blade—to seek his maker, always remains beyond reach. And the pivotal sentence in this poem—"The left hand

loses memory of the right”—emphasizes the fact that all of these elements, the men, their art, the wind, and the gods, remain elements of one body, inextricably bound together and yet somehow held apart. Thus, the fate of both the poet and the carver is twofold: first, bound by earthly ties, they endlessly chase the wind, an earthly “thing,” in an effort to reach the gods; second, the wind and the gods, gathered in “other things” (a first aurora, the skeletal streets of a lonely city), remain forever beyond their reach.

This then is the limit, the fate, of the art with which the poet attempts to “capture” his Arctic experience. But the Arctic itself, as body, as presence, exacts its own limits. Yates presents his recognition of these limits in another poem:

I haven't time, because the glacier dwindles beneath this escalate light. If the ice has always been going, I haven't known it, and there isn't—clearly—time. I sense the fish begin to rot before the boat casts off—so little has time been. The absence of anyone or anything by which I measure my motion outside time commits me to death before my death. In time, but not of time, the fish move not moving in the shapes of water that move and do not move. Ice is and is not, quite simply. Emptiness contains is emptiness contained. Nothing speaks for the blue moraines.

At first glance this dense poem yields little, but if we attune ourselves to the ways in which Yates dis-places conventional turns and terms of speech, then, as Ondaatje puts it, things begin “moving to the clear.”<sup>31</sup> First of all, Yates sketches the bare outlines of the situation: the poet is standing in “escalate light” before a glacier. It is the sheer presence of this glacier that founds his meditation. He writes “I haven't time,” which sounds simple enough, but even here, in this first sentence, we should proceed with caution. Indeed, if we peer past the edges of our conventional sense of this phrase, we can see that Yates's confrontation with this glacier brings him to the realization that he literally does not *have* time, that time is not something he can simply strap to his wrist. The obvious alternative is that the poet is thrown over to time, that time “has” the poet.

Hence, “[t]he absence of anyone or anything by which I measure my motion outside time commits me to death before my death.” But this is more than a poem about time; this is a poem about presence. Whether ruling time or ruled by time, humans themselves are responsible for time’s invention. Confronted with this glacier, which moves by the years and melts by the centuries, Yates can only observe: “there isn’t—clearly—time.” Yates’s meditation then broadens: the fish, like the glacier, *is* in time—the poet’s time, but it also maintains its presence outside the time which is the poet’s existence. “Ice is and is not” because at one and the same time ice *is* both ice as we define it and some timeless substance that remains to haunt its definition. Similarly, the very moment we turn to assertion, when we say “emptiness contains” one thing or another, we “contain” (1. restrict 2. elide 3. obscure) the emptiness, the propriety, that remains to each being. Hence, nothing *does* “speak for the blue moraines.” Nothing is the limit that sets out the blue moraines, and it is the nothing in each presence (glacier, fish, ice, moraines) that speaks for presence itself. Again, the Arctic finds this disclosure because its very presence stretches meaning and dis-places worlds, bringing us closer to the edges, to the limits, to the no-thingness that belongs to each being.

Yates’s encounter with the land also finds a recognition of his own limits. The poet comes to the Arctic, we are told, “to become an animal, to turn the whole day toward food and a place to sleep warm.” As his language disconnects and deconstructs, so too does the poet’s own sense of self: “Small cracks begin at the bases of marble angels that were his ideas. His days come down like trees felled to feed an insatiable fire. Like trees felled to raise a cabin whose windows and doors vanish a little hour to hour.” In Yates’s presentation of this deconstruction there is a sense of threat, a feeling that beneath the stability of the poet’s world there is a

bottomless abyss, a “cosmic emptiness.” As Yates writes:

At freeze-up and break-up the suicides occur. . . . At freeze-up the pliant things we depend on go solid. At break-up the ice-bridges we’ve gotten used to give way. . . . You can only go inside and wait it out. You never know when there’ll be nothing there.

But the poet’s vocation, if we recall, is homecoming. It is the poet’s responsibility to wander in the strange, to rummage around in the “rejected things, the things denied,”<sup>32</sup> only to re-turn to the place in which the poet makes her home. Thus, empowered by the dis-placing agency of the Arctic, Yates “unbuilds” himself and his world in an effort to understand his own foundations:

I’ve been right here, in the air, without scaffolding, turning expertly at coruscate nuts, lock-washers, ends of mammoth bolts at all my contiguations. Farther down than I could see, girders and beams struck and reverberated a long time up the faces of the air around me. It was good at last to come around to what at last was good to come around to. Side by side and storey by storey, I unbuilt toward the centre. I’m sitting in sheer air now—very slowly, very reflectively, bending back and forth now and then, just a little, the flared feet of the last cotter-key.

Here again, however, Yates makes it clear that such ambitious deconstruction presents a threat to the poet. But the source of this threat is *not* Yates’s meditation on the nature of his own origins; rather, the sense of threat stems from the fact that these meditations hold no consideration for the poet’s own limits, his own historic body. The implication which haunts this poem, for example, is that the poet lives in the very building being unbuilt. Or, to put it another way, beyond geographies of the body or the metaphysics of evolution, the poet is both the scientist *and* the specimen pinned open for dissection.

In recognition of this fact, Yates, in one of the last poems of this collection, presents the dangers of failing to recognize the limits of human presence. He writes:

I’m coming soon to the end of me, to the edge, the drop-off, to the place where the tundra halts, even the mosses don’t survive, and the ice presides for all seasons. . .

. I came up from the south, from the equator at the centre of all bone where the hot dark whispered into my animal listening. But there was something else, always something else, had to be. . . . I'm coming soon to the end of me, to the membrane which contains all my mortal remains. The needle of my compass points always north like the finger of a prophet until I become north, and, like a shot swan, it bewilders in terrible circles. There is no object in the white landscape upon which to triangulate. Hunter and weapon merge, and the quarry whirls at the box-canyon wall to battle the nothing at all behind him.

This poem draws on all three of the themes we have already touched upon. Intimations of humanity's homelessness emerge from Yates's statement that "there was something else, always something else, had to be." The Arctic, the "north" emerges throughout as a dis-placed, deconstructive zone. The south, "the equator at the centre of all bone," symbolizes Yates's origins, his own world (as a relational context of significance). The north becomes the "other" to which Yates's restlessness drives him, and within which the foundations of his own origins come to light. "I'm coming soon to the end of me," he writes, and this movement is analogous to the "unbuilding" we examined earlier. But while Yates's unbuilding merely threatens him with nothingness, in the movement beyond body, beyond "his mortal remains," he *becomes* nothingness. In other words, by "unbolting" all connections, rejecting all mysteries, the poet effaces all limits and levels the very world of his existence. Thus, the poet's nothingness is not of the sort that resides in the tension of a mystery, or a limit; rather, it is an undifferentiated nullity that is both everywhere and nowhere. "There is no object in the white landscape upon which to triangulate" precisely because all limits have collapsed and nothing remains that can out-stand. Finally, the "hunter" is the poet, and he scours the land for himself. The very presence of this land provides the hunter with the nothingness, the dis-placement, with which he hunts his "quarry." When "hunter and weapon merge," the poet himself becomes a nothingness. As for the

quarry, the poet, he must battle himself in search of himself in defence of his own existence. “Emptiness is” becomes his own “emptiness contained.” Yates, then, is speaking in defence of his *own* nothingness: in effect, he is saying that “true” nothingness, an undifferentiated vacuum, awaits those who do not return to themselves a measure of the nothingness which provides the space for all beings to exist. In this presentation of the peculiar nature of nothingness, Yates tackles the “classic” quandary of the deconstructionist (who must, someday, construct) and emerges with that which he cannot deny—his own earthly body, his own historic presence.

Rudy Wiebe’s *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic* (1989) is also a “poem” about presence. What is fascinating about this work, however, is that Wiebe, like the “Mad Trapper” he pursues, “doubles-back” on his own trail, beginning with assertion but constantly ending with question. *Playing Dead* is precisely an exercise in “playing dead”: it is Wiebe’s attempt to examine the conflict between his own desire to find meaning, to empty secrets, and the Arctic’s injunction of limits, secrets, and silence. In the first chapter, entitled “Exercising Reflection,” Wiebe examines the texts of the First Franklin Expedition. Throughout the course of the chapter he illustrates the explorers’ failure to exercise reflection. Ironically, in order to do so he employs one of Franklin’s strategies. Like Franklin, he gathers a seemingly endless collection of facts and numbers and adds them like weights to the substance of his argument:

They [the explorers] have laboured over 1224 miles of rivers and coast that summer, the last 300 miles on foot with the voyageurs sinking in September snow under ninety-pound packs because the freezing rivers and rapids have finished what the sea had begun in destroying their canoes. (25)

Wiebe even uses numbers and facts supplied by the explorers themselves: he cites Hood’s

exhaustive list of the expedition's belongings in support of his argument that the explorers "travelled heavy" (22). In effect, Wiebe flogs the reader with all these facts, beating the reader into an unconditional acceptance of Wiebe's assessment of the situation.

But beyond Wiebe's desire to correct the historical record (which is certainly a factor here), Wiebe also uses this accumulation of facts to found some interesting questions. Indeed, just as Melville uses an endless accumulation of whaling facts to highlight the nature of facts themselves, so too does Wiebe use his crisp, rapid-fire argument as part of a larger strategy. The outlines of this strategy emerge in the final paragraphs of the chapter. After Wiebe's facts have accumulated into a great, white monolith, he writes:

But when one goes to the Mackenzie Delta, Franklin and Richardson seem amazingly irrelevant. There they appear little more than blind or at best partially seeing men who will force themselves upon a landscape, will try to bulldoze through whatever confronts them and who, when this deliberate blindness kills their companions and, eventually, themselves, will become heroes to be forever memorialized. . . . However, on a tributary of the Mackenzie River, the Peel, such thoughts seem to me unimportant; at best merely clever. (43)

With this last statement Wiebe creates a wonderful anti-climax. After expending twenty-four pages on a careful explanation of the shortcomings of the expedition, Wiebe discounts his labours with one small sentence. The swiftness with which Wiebe "doubles-back" leaves the reader, who has been coerced into following Wiebe, somewhat disoriented. And it is this disorientation which Wiebe himself employs to disclose the "true" (i.e., contingent, even "amazingly irrelevant") nature of the seemingly implacable facts which Wiebe musters to support his case. There is, of course, a notable distinction to be made here. Wiebe is *not* saying that his argument is incorrect; he is saying, however, that in the presence of the land itself it simply does not matter. Like Yates's glacier, or Purdy's ducks, Wiebe's Peel, "strange and secret" (43),

maintains a presence that discloses the emptiness of Wiebe's numbers and the insouciance of Franklin's exploration. The river, Wiebe continues, "reveals nothing at all; only glistening surface"—and this is precisely the point. The river, by revealing nothing, gathers nothingness itself between its banks, and Wiebe is forced to the limit of his rational argument. Beyond that limit, he notes, there are "[s]ecrets; secrets everywhere" (44).

Wiebe uses the second chapter of *Playing Dead* to search for the body of Albert Johnson. Of course, he does not actually say this; in fact, he writes: "[by] contemplating Albert Johnson's secret I believe some of the wider secrets of the arctic landscape will become clearer. At least I hope their outline will" (52). But this second chapter is founded on Wiebe's own return to the place in which Johnson's story, his "told and untold, his trackable and untrackable, story" (66), first "took" place:

I saw what I had imagined, tried again and again to image years before: I saw the tight reversed S turn of the narrow river outlined by the straggling black spruce, the tight reversed S where Johnson, deceived at last by the twists of the river, ran backwards in his tracks . . . . It was so exactly as I had imagined it, in the plane I knew I was dreaming. It seemed I saw through that window, past the strut and the motionless wheel, under the shadow of that wing the actualization of what I had dreamt sixteen years before and then dreamt over and over again, tried to snare in the words of a short story, of a film script, of an essay, of a novel. There, exactly on such ice, between those precise tiny bristled trees; fifty-five years ago. (57-8)

Like the poem we examined from Yates's collection, this entire passage revolves around the issue of limit. It is the limit of Wiebe's art which dictates that a short story, a film script, an essay, and a novel are still unable to capture the essence of Johnson's flight, to capture the substance of his secret. It is the limit of place, of presence, that Wiebe emphasizes in his last line: "There, exactly on such ice, between those precise tiny bristled trees; fifty-five years ago." And Wiebe, finally *there*, in body at the place he has described so many times before: "It was so

exactly as I had imagined it . . . I knew I was dreaming.” Wiebe knows he is dreaming because the rational mind insists on a distinction between what we imagine and what we see. There is, of course, a distinction, but it exists much more clearly between what *is* and what we see, than between what we see and what we imagine. In the gathering of such a place, “between those precise tiny bristled trees,” Wiebe comes to a twofold realization: here, imagination and perception emerge in the proximity which they always share; and here, in the reverse S turn of the narrow river upon which Albert Johnson died, place, limit, body, and presence emerge as that within which humans truly dwell. Accordingly, Wiebe uses the remainder of the chapter to explore imagination and perception, to explore the stories of the story which is Albert Johnson’s life. And in the limit of Johnson’s life, in the man’s own refusal to have it spoken, Wiebe sees something of the autonomy, of the secrets which the Arctic holds as its own.

Wiebe’s third and final chapter is also a doubling-back to a recognition of limit. His focus in this chapter, entitled “In Your Own Head,” is on language. He examines the presentation of the Arctic put forth by various explorers, anthropologists, and by the Inuit themselves. His discussion of these texts is ostensibly an exploration of *what* the Arctic is, but in this exploration aspects of language as language also come to light. Indeed, the bulk of this chapter is a critique of language, a critique of both the recorded actions of earlier explorers and the worlds which they unwittingly (and inevitably) reveal in their depictions of the Arctic. Wiebe’s critique is also an exercise in reflection, for Wiebe “corrects” the historical record as he goes along. At the same time, however, Wiebe’s collection of myopic “discoverers” speaks for much more than mere correction: the sheer number of barbarities and inaccuracies, carefully and methodically recorded by these men, illustrates the dangers of treading with confidence where so many have erred

before. And indeed, while I would argue that Wiebe eventually does find “True North” in the Inuit presentation of the Arctic, it seems clear that True North is not—nor ever has been—a location. Instead, True North emerges here as a way in which to listen. Wiebe cites Orpingalik, a member of the Netsilik Inuit:

A person is moved just like the ice floe sailing here and there out in the current. Your thoughts are driven by a flowing force when you feel joy, when you feel fear, when you feel sorrow. Thoughts can wash over you like a flood, making your breath come in gasps and your heart pound. . . . And then it will happen that we, who always think we are small, will feel even smaller. And we will fear to use words. But it will happen that the words we need will come of themselves. When the words we want shoot up of themselves—then we get a new song. (119)

And this too is “playing dead,” a listening which is founded in patience, humility, and a recognition of the limits of human experience and language.

“I am trying to understand and accept that,” Wiebe writes, “and to prepare myself. To walk into the true north of my own head between the stones and the ocean. If I do, I will get a new song. If I do, I will sing it for you” (119). In *this* song, Wiebe’s text, the limit of the Arctic emerges in the line separating “the stones and the ocean.” It is the ocean which grants the Inuit life, the ocean waters which first grant Europeans access to the Arctic. As Wiebe notes: “One might deduce from my considerations that all human beings, certainly all whites, made their entry into the arctic landscape by means of water . . .” (77). But water both begins and ends in land, and for white explorers the presence of Arctic land has always frustrated their efforts—in boats and metaphors—to be elsewhere. The explorers, Wiebe writes,

want water, and not in its peculiar, inconvenient at best and deadly at worst, mix of ice / fog / liquid either. They want nothing except liquid water so they can get past the land because they do not want to stop in the Arctic at all: they merely want it to be a convenient passage to another place altogether. And the Arctic has never cooperated; it is too much itself to be merely a means for anything. (77)

As we have seen before, this “being itself” is both the land’s definition and its exemplary lesson. Wiebe notes that “the movement (life) of human beings is analogous to the line water draws upon land” (78), and if we allow him the conceit an interesting set of correspondences emerges. The water which gives life becomes life, becomes world, and the land that holds the water becomes the earth and the earthly “things” which found the limit of human worlds. The two cannot exist apart and yet are never simply one, for, as Heidegger observes, it is the “essential strife” between the two that discloses each to each:

The earth cannot dispense with the open region of the world if it itself is to appear as the earth in the liberated surge of its self-seclusion. The world in turn cannot soar out of the earth’s sight if, as the governing breadth and path of all essential destiny, it is to ground itself on something decisive.<sup>33</sup>

Wiebe, walking the line between water and land, world and earth, is listening for things he will never say with complete “decision,” but in the very frustration of his utterance the land grants him a language in which to speak.

Moss’s *Enduring Dreams* is also a text about speech, and it too takes the form of a constant doubling-back. Throughout the text, Moss moves back and forth through time, place, text, and body. Each movement, however, keeps circling back to a core of central issues, many of which are already familiar to us. It was Moss, if we recall, who writes that “[i]n contours of the diverse [Arctic] landscape visitors discover aspects of themselves not usually accessible.” And Moss, like his predecessors, presents the Arctic as a deconstructive zone. More principally, though, Moss’s concern is with the Arctic’s *actual* presence, its own being, and the way in which this presence is represented in a foreign—that is, English—language. Because he begins this search for True North with a mimetic conception of language, Moss is particularly concerned

with the (in)accuracy of historical representations of the Arctic.<sup>34</sup> In the face of misrepresentation, Moss attempts to find *the* “true” Arctic in two ways: first, by analysing Arctic narratives and recorded history, both public and private; and second, through his own personal experience of the Arctic. It is, finally, through his own Arctic experiences that Moss also finds True North, and it is, again, much more than mere location. Indeed, as Moss “discovers” the Arctic he moves from a mimetic to a poietic conception of language, one which is founded on the Arctic’s own lessons: the importance of listening and the necessity for limit. To begin, we turn to another conventional truism, which maintains, in effect, that in order to “know” a certain place one must travel there. This implies, accurately enough, that in order to know the Arctic one must actually visit the Arctic. But getting to “know” the Arctic—or any landscape, for that matter—is not simply a case of visiting. As Heidegger so clearly demonstrates, humans are given over to specific worlds, and it is the nature of these worlds that they do not merely “condition” one’s perception of a land, they *found* perceptions of a land.<sup>35</sup> And between one’s world and the land itself, we recall, one finds the *landscape* that belongs to a particular region.<sup>36</sup> And so, because worlds themselves originate, emerge, and even end in language, language becomes the space in which to look for a measure of the land which one perceives.

It is precisely this reasoning which first prompts Moss to turn to the texts preceding his own. He writes: “Every venture into Arctic landscape, recorded to extend knowledge of the known world and impose meaning on the unknown, participates in a text of infinite complexity” (93). Or, as he observes some pages later:

When you enter Arctic narrative, you enter every narrative of the Arctic ever written. When you enter the Arctic in person, you become part of the extended text. When you write the Arctic to affirm your presence in the world, you become

in writing an imaginative creation. You could imagine anything and write it down and it would seem real forever. (105)

Here, history becomes the narrative in which, and through which, narratives themselves are written. This is, as Moss later notes, an issue of “[T]ext echo[ing] text” (143), but it is also an issue of text writing consciousness: texts can only echo texts through the hands of their authors. Hence, Moss is concerned with the texts preceding his own because they have “written” his very perception of the Arctic: “Conventions of the text precede, determining how the wilderness is read; limits of narrative become the boundaries of landscape, and grammar topography” (54). And because these texts hold such an enormous power—“You could imagine anything and it would seem real forever”—the authenticity of these texts becomes all important. So Moss, like Wiebe, but on a much larger scale, searches through a vast collection of Arctic literature in an attempt to piece together what is real, and to discard what merely “seems” real.

Michel de Certeau, in his analysis of Montaigne’s “Of Cannibals,” observes that Montaigne’s essay proceeds by “establishing a distance from nearby representations [of cannibals] . . . . Faced with . . . increasingly authoritative discourses, the essay only repeats: that’s not it, that’s not it.”<sup>37</sup> Moss also examines the representation of an otherness, and he too continually repeats, “that’s not it, that’s not it.” He writes of Yves Thériault’s *Aguguk*:

It has sold nearly half a million copies since it was first published in 1957. It is standard fare on curricula, especially in Quebec. It has been celebrated by critics, including myself, both for its allegorical transformation of Inuit life into an emblem of emerging Québécois nationalism and for the apparent accuracy of its vision of Inuit reality. Yet, for all that, it is racist, sexist, and an egregious misappropriation of native experience. (85)

In this passage, Moss’s belief in a text’s ability to structure reality emerges in his preoccupation with the popularity of Thériault’s work. His concern over Thériault’s errors is obvious, and it

leads to the following observation:

[I]f misappropriation occurs in the course of writing another's life, if the lines running through the text between writer and reader, between textual reality and actuality, limit or distort that other's world, then such a work should be treated with the same contempt we hold the mindless tracts of misogynists, racists, and religious fanatics. (86)

The indignation which Moss expresses here is understandable and necessary; his directive, however, is inherently problematic. If, for example, reality itself is a limitless text of "infinite complexity," then on what basis are we to judge actuality? Moreover, the very moment we admit that there *is* a difference between "textual reality and actuality" we admit that *all* writing will somehow "limit or distort [an]other's world."

But this is, in a way, what Moss proposes all along. He views language as mimesis, but he really does not trust the reflection. Indeed, what Moss sees reflected in most Arctic texts are endless projections of the author's *own* world. The Arctic itself is conspicuous by its absence: "From intertextual adventuring we conceive the Arctic wilderness a place where stories happen, written down, in effect, to articulate terrain like the lines of a topographical map. Narrative writes narrative. The rest is empty; solipsism is endemic" (143). Clearly, Moss does not consider that the solipsism he finds so pervasive in these texts may, in fact, stem from the disclosive agency—the very presence, the "emptiness"—of the Arctic itself. As we have already seen, foundations are swift to emerge when they are dis-placed by the Arctic. Moss is more concerned, however, with accuracy, with "getting" the Arctic right; and "language," he notes, "is the problem" (14). Because all southern languages are displaced in the Arctic, because they are always spoken from another world, another *landscape*, they can never represent the Arctic with any degree of accuracy. Moreover, because text precedes perception, perceptions of the Arctic

are radically circumscribed by the language of one's origin. This is, it would seem, an insolvable (new historicist) dilemma. But Moss proposes a very Heideggerian solution. He writes: "If all the world's a text, then everything we know and do is intertextual. Not only is life a metaphor but living it is plagiarism. But only if. There are ways out; there are ways back again" (41).

Moss's "way out" is to restore limit, to re-turn to an Arctic "beyond" language. "The more time I spend in the Arctic," he observes, "the less sure I am about what I imagine it to be, even on the best authority" (41). In this passage, the actuality of his Arctic experience is contrasted with the "authority" of Arctic texts. Clearly, the experience itself undermines the singularity of Moss's original, textual—metaphysical—conception of the Arctic. Moss finds his "way out" by visiting the Arctic in the flesh. We see this most clearly in the fourth chapter of *Enduring Dreams*. This chapter is conspicuously divided into two parts: the first is an examination of a variety of exploration journals, and it is entitled "Landscape Writing Landscape"; the second is a collection of Moss's own Arctic observations, entitled the "Katannilik Journals." In the journals of the first explorers Moss sees "landscape writing landscape": a European landscape (written itself) writing the explorers' perception of the Arctic, and the ensuing textual "landscape" writing the Arctic of our own contemporary perception. In the second part of the chapter, Moss explores his own relationship with this Arctic landscape, and, like Yates, in the presence of the land itself he finds an overtly non-textual, deconstructive space:

Busy in the awkward chill of morning  
 I forget how old I am, forget my name, forget to watch  
 my hands, nimble with details, glistening;  
 I forget everything  
 but how to eat for the weather, break camp

in the fine mizzle that covers our gear,  
 how to shoulder the weight, walk out of the circle,  
 with no evidence left of our passing  
 into the opening landscape. (114).

Significantly, it is by releasing all worldly details that the landscape “opens” for Moss and his partner. This is “playing dead,” or “sleeping,” or listening in silence to the sound of far-off birds. At the very moment this occurs, however, Moss and his partner are moving out of one of the most significant figures of human existence in the Arctic: the “circles” of stones which aboriginal peoples left hundreds, even thousands, of years ago. These circles *are* “evidence left of passing,” and they connect these peoples to the land in which they still exist. Likewise, there *is*, of course, evidence of Moss’s own passing: it remains in the figure of his poem, in the words with which he gathers the experience. But, like the circles again, Moss’s poem speaks for both a presence *and* an absence—his presence in the Arctic, whose presence, in turn, dis-places Moss from his southern world; and the presence of each word, each precise description, juxtaposed with the very forgetfulness of words which discloses the “opening landscape.”

Moss’s journals, in fact, centre on this question of presence and absence. Moss gathers Arctic “things” in precise, vivid detail, but in his collation of the land Moss keeps doubling-back to a meditation on the elusiveness of the land itself. His “entry” for “Saturday, July 25, 1992,” is a perfect example. The entire poem is composed of a long, careful description of an extremely brief occurrence: Moss finds an old Canadian flag and buries it. He finds the flag, he writes,

in the shattered bright of a split boulder  
 held in the clawed shadows of moss campion,  
 wormwood and prickly saxifrage, among  
 the clumped gravel, mouse-eared chickweed and Arctic heather,  
 lapland rosebay and snow cinquefoil,  
 mountain aven and bilberry,

the caribou scat, the beginnings of soil  
in the lee of our tent . . . . (116).

He then describes the flag in similar detail, and as the poem moves to a conclusion he returns to a more “concrete,” mundane tone: “after coffee / I bury it under a rock that is clenched in lichen, / replacing the rock exactly, / as if it had never been moved” (116). Here, Moss is using the same strategy Wiebe used in *Playing Dead*: Moss’s descriptions pile up like a growing refrain of human insistence, while the flag itself is a powerful symbol of human machinations enacted both upon and against the land. In addition, the “rock” which buries the flag is a fitting symbol for the land itself, whose presence, like the presence of the Peel River, makes such human imposition “amazingly irrelevant.” At the same time, however, in Moss’s careful description we catch a glimpse of the *necessary* strife between world and earth. It is, for example, in Moss’s precise language that the earth—the Arctic—emerges within its *own* particular limits: each careful phrase reiterates: here, now, in this particular place, this particular moment. And it is Moss, if we recall, who “replac[es] the rock exactly, / as if it had never been moved.” Moss’s human agency is both a response to, *and* an evocation of, the autonomy of the Arctic, which, we recall, requires a human world if it is “to appear as the earth in the liberated surge of its self-seclusion.”

And it is, in the end, within this strife that Moss finds True North. In his fifth chapter, entitled “Ultima Thule and The Metaphysics of Arctic Landscape,” Moss’s conception of True North emerges in his definition of Ultima Thule:

there is a distinction between Thule and the Northwest Passage in the shaping mind of Canada. . . . Adventurers of the past who sought the east in a westerly direction found the north an impediment (and the south, distracting). The Arctic was not a destination; of only incidental consequence. But explorers of the longitudes, from Pythias to Robert Peary, dreamed of pinnacles, not passageways. . . . The Arctic was a place to be; visionary, not linear. Not means, but end. Ultima

Thule was about the substantiality of dreams; not a dream to be endured. It is the difference between being and becoming, presence (however unlikely) and imminence (however promising) . . . . (135)

Ultima Thule is *phusis* over *meta-phusis*, landscape (shaped by humans; shaping humans) over space. It is, in Purdy's words, "a land most unlike Paradise or Cathay," and its difference lies precisely in its own denial of appropriation. But as with Heidegger's conception of earth, Ultima Thule is not simply beyond language, as if language were inevitably metaphysical. Ultima Thule is also "about the substantiality of dreams"; which is to say, it is the region in which human will re-turns to the earth on which it is founded. Moreover, "[n]ot every writer," as Moss notes, "finds the Arctic barren. . . . [Some] write their language into Arctic landscape, and in their writing carry readers to the very edge of territories undreamed in the dreams of others" (132). And this is language beyond mimesis; this is language as *poesis*: a gathering, a making present. Within such language, Ultima Thule *can* indeed appear, and the way in which it appears is primordially, fundamentally, as itself. That is, the essence of the Arctic emerges as we have already seen it emerge from the texts of these poets: it emerges in its own autonomy, its own necessary limit. Ultima Thule, then, is a *landscape*—like all landscapes—of *both* mind and substance; a conjoint creation of those who live in time and experience a measure of the land's disclosure, and the land itself, which, as Moss notes, is "eloquent in its refusal to yield" (xii).

But having said all this—that the Arctic enjoins human dwelling, and that it does so through its own insistence on limit—are we not, once again, imposing a colonial point-of-view? Is it, for example, simply the frustration of our "implacable white man's obsession to know" (Wiebe 76) which leads us to label the land itself as ultimately unknowable? Perhaps. Certainly, the universalization of particularity is also metaphysical. But it should be noted that our

investigation of the land's autonomy does not speak for an end but for a beginning: that is, the fact that the land itself exists, as Wiebe writes, "Beyond Words"<sup>38</sup> invites us *back* to language as a listening to the land. Hence, in this very acknowledgement of limit we bring language itself back to the very earth of its foundation. Moreover, our conception of True North is perhaps not so distant from that of the inhabitants of the Arctic. Wiebe, if we recall, turns to an Inuit poet to find True North. And Wiebe finds in this "True North" a summons to listen, wherein both this summons and the listening itself are founded on a recognition of limit. Hugh Brody notes that within Inuit culture "conventions that guide the way in which people listen are no less rigorous than those that shape speaking styles."<sup>39</sup> Barry Lopez makes an observation which suggests that the technique of "listening" goes to the heart of Inuit existence:

the meticulous inspection of the land that is the mark of the good hunter becomes most evident when he uses a pair of field glasses. Long after the most inquiring nonnative has grown weary of glassing the land for some clue to the movement of animals, a hunter is still scouring its edges and interstices.<sup>40</sup>

What all this suggests is that the Inuit themselves, whom Westerners have long described (and dismissed) as "one with their land," are in fact exemplary dwellers. The proximity of their relationship with the land is based on their very distance from it—that is, by refusing to take the land for granted, by constantly examining the measure of its disclosure, the Inuit allow the land to disclose itself in ever-changing ways.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

There is, in Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers*, a brief interlude that encapsulates much of what we have discussed in the preceding chapters. Wiebe bases this interlude on a very real piece of history: a portrait of Greenstockings and her father that Midshipman Hood completed in the winter of 1820-21. In the picture, Greenstockings is sitting at her father's feet, weaving the *babiche* webbing that covers snowshoe frames. In *Playing Dead* Wiebe observes that the woman who appears in the portrait is, surprisingly, quite unattractive: "her face is framed by thick hair cropped shaggy, shoulder length; her eyes look up from heavy brows, peering intently; her face is still and regular, it could easily be masculine."<sup>1</sup> He wonders:

Why, during that interminable winter in Fort Enterprise when he had months to fashion the one woman whom, as far as we can know, he loved in his brief life, when he deliberately drew her in the snowshoe image of the Yellowknife creation myth, why was his eye so dark, his hand so stiff? (37)

Aside from the fact that Wiebe may be drawing on standards of beauty which are somewhat inappropriate for Hood's milieu, Wiebe's question deserves consideration. Certainly, Greenstockings' pose in this portrait does suggest a reference to the Yellowknife story of creation.<sup>2</sup> In the second chapter of *Playing Dead*, Wiebe muses: "When in the long winter of 1820-21 Robert Hood painted Green Stockings mending a snow shoe, was he listening to this first story of man's and woman's creation?" (71). In *A Discovery of Strangers*, Wiebe answers this question in the affirmative. While the fictional Hood is painting Greenstockings' portrait, Keskarrah—in words which Hood cannot, of course, understand—narrates the story of humanity's creation.<sup>3</sup> In this way Wiebe makes the connection between the story and the portrait quite clear—in which case the *real* Hood, in stiff lines which betray none of his own feeling, was actually portraying Greenstockings as the mother of all humanity. And if this was indeed the

case, then Hood's ennoblement of Greenstockings would only emerge where the connection between the pose and the myth would be obvious: that is, in the world of the Tetsot'ine. This, in turn, founds the following observation: by drawing on a myth that is grounded in a culture which was completely alien to him, the real Midshipman Hood may have found the freedom to express his "improper" feelings towards a Tetsot'ine woman.

This certainly seems to be Wiebe's opinion: in *A Discovery of Strangers* the defining characteristic of Hood's and Greenstockings' relationship is the freedom that both characters find in the presence of strangeness. Wiebe describes their encounter as a "strange, short moment of profound difference" (207), and the substance of this difference lies in a movement "beyond" language. After Hood receives permission (of a sort) to paint Greenstockings' portrait, he tells her uncomprehending family: "I . . . she is the most . . . beautiful woman I've ever seen . . . I . . ." (82). Wiebe notes:

Even very softly, Robert Hood can only say this because neither he nor they understand a single sound either can utter. He does not consider what they can obviously see; it is enough for him that the meanings of their two incomprehensible languages pass each other unscathed in the close warmth of these hide walls, . . . vanish outwards into the fierce darkness before they can reach the cold mud-smeared logs of the officers' quarters, . . . vanish long before they can reach the smaller house where Ordinary Seaman John Hepburn must live crowded with the twenty voyageurs and their three wives . . . Years of latitudes and distance, of darkness, of cold, and the absolute secret constructs of language: Robert Hood knows he has fallen into freedom. Unfathomably. (82-3)

And the freedom which Hood finds here is precisely the sort of freedom we uncovered in our earlier examination of the dis-placing agency of the Arctic. In *Playing Dead*, the Arctic dis-places Wiebe's Southern perspective, and Wiebe is "steadily rendered more and more word-less" (113). In this passage, Hood's encounter with a radical otherness also places him "beyond" words—beyond the words which dictate the propriety of his own embodied experience. In the

Arctic, Wiebe learns to “play dead”; in the Arctic, Wiebe’s character, Hood, awakens to his own repressed sexuality. In both cases an encounter with the limits of language finds a moment of “dwelling,” of disclosure.

In *A Discovery of Strangers*, however, Wiebe uses Hood’s new-found freedom to present his own exploration of the limit of language. The real Hood has become, through his untimely death, mere text, one of the many “heroes of the Arctic” whose life, recounted over and over in the mythology of exploration, moves farther and farther from his earthly body. In *A Discovery of Strangers*, Hood’s character seems to sense this fate. As he lays dying, “[h]e realizes he no longer has dimension. He is a sheet laid between frozen hides, become his own pencilled calculation so thin it cannot be eaten, a hide ’twere better ’twere scraped clean of hair and eaten . . .” (249). The irony, of course, is that Wiebe also “takes” the life of Midshipman Robert Hood. He takes Hood’s life *and* uses it for his own textual purposes; and he takes Hood’s life *by* using it for his own textual purposes. Wiebe, however, is not as interested in the mythology of the man as he is in exploring the sorts of places—strange, dis-placed places—where myths, texts, and language first encounter the silence that is at once the limit and foundation of their speech. Hence, in his depiction of the relationship between Hood and Greenstockings, Wiebe asserts the limit of his own interpretation of both Hood’s life and his portraiture. He does this by making it clear that Hood’s interpreter has left the scene long before Keskarrah re-tells the creation myth. By doing this, Wiebe emphasizes that the connection he makes between a Tetsot’ine myth and Greenstockings’ pose, and the significance of such a connection, are creations of his own conjecture, “mere” fiction. And by doing this, he acknowledges the autonomy, the mystery, the undeniable *remains* of Hood’s life.

At the same time, however, by asserting the primordially of Hood's body, Wiebe is neither discounting the truth of his own speech, nor is he placing it, in some established table of authority, below the truth of the actual expedition. As we have seen, attempts to reach *the* truth of the expedition are haunted by a "silence," a presence, that belies both the surety of the explorers' facts and the eminently rational ends of their (and, of course, *our*) assertion. But, as we have also seen, such silence is much more than an error which we can somehow correct. This is *not*, of course, to say that Wiebe has an implicit claim to veracity because everything, at heart, is simply a lie. And Wiebe is *not* implying that Hood's portrayal of a Tetsot'ine woman is as fictitious as his own. But what Wiebe does illustrate, however, is that the truth of the expedition's texts—either authentic or inauthentic, as we discussed in Chapter Two—operates on a level which is simply different from that of his fiction. With *A Discovery of Strangers* Wiebe does what art does pre-eminently: he discloses something of the world founding the "speech" of these explorers. Moreover, by simultaneously speaking *for* limit, *for* silence, Wiebe's art functions as a twofold act of foundation: it finds a revelation of the world underlying / underpinning a particular epochal truth; and it finds a contemplation of the "strange" construction of truth as a whole.

And it is this strangeness that keeps re-surfacing in the texts of the First Franklin Expedition. Unwilling to admit to any differences between the land itself and the landscape they perceived it to be, Franklin and his men attempted to force the land into a false conceptualization. The land itself, however, the Arctic as earth, *phusis*, denied them the intransigence of their perspective. Thrown back on themselves, suffering, starving, the explorers adapted only when forced to, and having adapted to the land—hence approaching an *Arctic* landscape—they

deliberately obscured the extent of their adaptation. But the gaps, the inconsistencies, in their narrative bespeak a presence they could not efface. Indeed, while it is always easy to dismiss our awareness of these inconsistencies as a product of the difference between our time and theirs, we would be failing to adequately address the nature of time if we did not then wonder how this very difference has come about. Clearly, if our consideration for the Arctic and its peoples has grown, then it is because the Arctic always was more than the explorers could represent. And if this is the case, then this lesson—of the land’s autonomy, of its foundational role in a people’s landscape—should be all the *more* evident to us now, who have seen the consequences of the explorers’ complacency. If we simply correct the historical record, however, if we simply enumerate the misconceptions of these explorers, we not only fall prey to the complacency which is so remarkable in their texts, we also ignore the question of how and why the record has become “strange.” We would do better to attend to that which is strange, that which speaks of, and from, limits and silence—and this is precisely what Wiebe does in his exploration of the composition of Greenstockings’ portrait. This study has also been an attempt to address this strangeness, and throughout its course two distinct possibilities have emerged. The first of these is, by now, almost self-evident: if, as we propose, the land holds itself as itself, both revealed and concealed, then the discovery of the New World is far from over; indeed, the nature of land and language dictate that such discovery will never be over. The second of these possibilities is the possibility that in the European “discovery” of the New World something of the essential historicity of truth and language was disclosed to Western society. To put it another way: there is the possibility, tantalizing in its implications, that the foundations of Western postmodernism—characterized by its concern for questions of truth, language, and possibility—lie in the European discovery of new worlds—to the north, south, east, and west.

## Notes to Introduction

1. John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of The Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969). Hereafter cited in my text as *NJ*.
2. As a *small* sample of these analyses, see Vilhjalmur Stefansson's explanation of the failure of the expedition in *Unsolved Mysteries of the Arctic* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1938); see Leslie H. Neatby's discussion of the motivations for the expedition in *In Quest of the North West Passage* (Toronto: Longmans Green, 1958); for an examination of the sketches and paintings taken throughout the course of the expedition, see Robert Stacey's, "From 'Icy Picture' to 'Extensive Prospect': The Panorama of Rupert's Land and the Far North in the Artist's Eye, 1770-1830," in *Rupert's Land: A Cultural Tapestry*, ed. Richard C. Davis (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988); and, for a fictional treatment of the proceedings of the expedition, see Rudy Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers* (Toronto: Vintage, 1995).
3. This is not to say, of course, that the land has stayed precisely the same for almost two centuries. Nevertheless, at the most basic, geological level, little perceptible change has occurred over this time period. Those changes which are noticeable are almost invariably due to human development, and they are both products and reflections of a particular concept of landscape.

## Notes to Chapter One

1. "Limit," Heidegger notes, "is always that which limits, determines, gives footing and stability, that by which and in which something begins and is." Martin Heidegger, "On the Being and Conception of *Phusis* in Aristotle's *Physics B, I*," trans. Thomas Sheehan, *Man and World* 9.3 (August 1976): 245. **Hereafter cited in my text as "BCP."**
2. Martin Heidegger, "The Way to Language," trans. David Farrell Krell, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 418. **Hereafter cited in my text as "WL."**
3. "All," Heidegger was to write, "is way." Martin Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," trans. Peter D. Hertz, *On The Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 71.
4. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), Heidegger writes: "both *truth* in the sense of unconcealment and *appearance* as a definite mode of self-manifestation *belong necessarily* [my emphasis] to being [*Phusis*—see p.104]" (109). **Hereafter cited in my text as *ITM*.**
5. As Heidegger often emphasizes the terms of his argument, all quoted material which is emphasized is, unless otherwise noted, directly transcribed from source texts.
6. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 228. **Hereafter cited in my text as *BT*.**
7. See Heidegger's discussion of *errancy* in "On the Essence of Truth," trans. John Sallis, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 132-35.
8. Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," trans. John Sallis, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 126. **Hereafter cited in my text as "ET."**
9. *Da-sein*, translated crudely, means "There-being," or, more comprehensibly, "Being-there." While particular aspects of this term will be explored in more detail as we proceed, we should note that when Heidegger introduces the word he makes it clear that *Dasein* itself is a process, a "how," and not a "what": "we cannot define *Dasein*'s essence by citing a 'what' of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter . . . its essence lies rather in the fact that in each case in has its Being to be" (*BT* 32-3).
10. The overpowering [the "emerging power" of *phusis* (see *ITM* 162)] . . . in order to appear in its power, *requires* a place, a scene of disclosure. The essence of being-human opens up to us only when understood through this need compelled by being itself" (*ITM* 163).
11. Martin Heidegger, "The Nature of Language," p. 91.

12. While hearkening is generally associated with the sense of hearing, Heidegger uses hearkening to illustrate the fact that *all* perception is based on a prior understanding. Thus, he writes in Section 31 of *Being and Time*: “all sight is grounded primarily in understanding” (187).
13. While this term proves useful as an image, we should be aware that Heidegger, in “A Dialogue on Language,” in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), disavows his earlier use of the term. He does so, he writes, because “talk of a circle always remains superficial” (51).
14. Or, to put it another way, as John Moss does in *Enduring Dreams* (Concord: Anansi Press, 1994): “You do not imagine a photograph / unless it is a photograph you are imagining” (61).
15. Heidegger uses “Articulate” to indicate the intelligibility of a being *before* that particular being is actually articulated in speech: “Articulation lies *before* our making any thematic assertion about it [the being]” (BT 190). He writes a little later in *Being and Time*: “The intelligibility of something has always been articulated, even before there is any appropriative interpretation of it” (203). That which articulates beings, that which “gathers” them and preserves them in their limits, Heidegger terms *logos*, discourse. We shall examine discourse in more detail in our examination of language.
16. Through “involvement,” Heidegger writes, beings are “*assigned or referred*” according to “Dasein’s very Being” (BT 115; 116). The cloud which we discussed earlier is “involved” in the Being of clouds in a particular world.
17. That which is “ready-to-hand” is “involved” in a world. As Heidegger writes: “To the extent that any *entity* shows itself to concern—that is, to the extent that it is discovered in its Being—it is already something ready-to-hand environmentally; it just is not ‘proximally’ a ‘world-stuff’ that is merely present-at-hand” (BT 118).
18. Thus, state-of-mind opens space for the questions which create history, the founding of new worlds. As Heidegger notes, “the ek-sistence of historical man begins at that moment when the first thinker takes a questioning stand with regard to unconcealment of beings by asking: what are beings?” (“ET” 126).
19. Werner Brock, “An Account of *Being and Time*,” *Existence and Being*, ed. Werner Brock (South Bend: Regnery/Gateway Inc., 1949), p. 80.
20. *Existentialia* are the fundamental elements of Dasein. State-of-mind, understanding, and discourse make up the three existentialia.
21. For a more in-depth exploration of this paradox see Chapter Four. The entire chapter revolves around this issue.
22. In “The Way to Language,” Heidegger makes this clear: “Self-showing as appearing characterizes the coming to presence or withdrawal to absence of every manner and degree of thing present. Even when showing is accomplished by means of our saying, such showing or

- referring is preceded by a thing's *letting itself be shown* [my emphasis]" (410).
23. Though these feelings may certainly attend Dasein's "dis-placement" from its familiar, comforting world.
24. One "circumspectively" swings a hammer to hammer nails, connect materials, build a house. Circumspection refers to the implicit and instant process of interpretation which, based on a prior understanding of region, informs one's use of a piece of equipment.
25. Conversely, those beings which are proximally more distant, and to which Dasein relates itself, can be quite "close" even though they seem "far." In his lecture "Building Dwelling Thinking," trans. Albert Hofstadter, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), Heidegger states: "When I go toward the door of the lecture hall, I am already there, and I could not go to it at all if I were not such that I am there" (359).
26. Martin Heidegger, "Remembrance of the Poet," trans. Douglas Scott, *Existence and Being*, ed. Werner Brock (South Bend: Regnery/Gateway Inc., 1979). **Hereafter cited in my text as "RP."**
27. Such a definition is perhaps besides the point; as Heidegger observes, the only way to know a mystery is "by carefully guarding the mystery *as* mystery" ("RP" 259).
28. Heidegger refers to Thomas Aquinas for this interpretation of the essence of truth. Truth, in this respect, is *adaequatio intellectus et rei* (BT 257). Interestingly, Heidegger neglects to mention that Aquinas' predecessor, St. Augustine, shared a conception of truth which is very similar to Heidegger's, save that for Augustine truth and Being lie in an eternal, immutable God. As Augustine writes in *On the True Religion*, XXXIX: "If we be both see that what you say is true and that what I say is true, where, I ask, do we see it? Neither I in thee nor thee in me, but both of us in that which is above our minds—the changeless Truth." Cited in James F. Anderson, *St. Augustine and Being: A Metaphysical Essay* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), p. 46.
29. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," trans. Albert Hofstadter, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p.198. **Hereafter cited in my text as "OWA."**
30. Stanley Corngold, "*Sein und Zeit*: Implications for Poetics," *Martin Heidegger and the Question of Literature*, ed. William Spanos (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996).
31. Corngold, p. 107.
32. Martin Heidegger, "Holderlin and The Essence of Poetry," trans. Douglas Scott, *Existence and Being*, ed. Werner Brock (South Bend: Regnery/Gateway Inc., 1979), p. 276.
33. See Corngold's essay for an examination of poetry's ability to disclose the attunement of a particular historical people.

## Notes to Chapter Two

1. Richard C. Davis, ed., *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1995), see pp. xliii; xlv; xlv. Hereafter cited in my text as *JC*.
2. Vilhjalmur Stefansson, *Unsolved Mysteries of the Arctic* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1938), p. 115.
3. Stefansson, p. 106.
4. Stefansson is certainly not alone in this belief. Olivia Patricia Dickason, writing about the voyages of Henry Kelsey in 1690-92, notes: "Adapting the Amerindian expertise was a major factor in the success of later voyages; Hearne, for example, encountered only failure until he accepted the advice of his Chipewyan guide. "Three Worlds, One Focus: Europeans meet Inuit and Amerindians in the Far North," in *Rupert's Land: A Cultural Tapestry*, ed. Richard C. Davis (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), p. 66.
5. H. Aram Veeseer, "Introduction," *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeseer (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. xiii.
6. John E. Grumley, *History and Totality: Radical Historicism from Hegel to Foucault* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 192. As Foucault writes:  
     the signifying chain by which the unique experience of the individual is constituted is perpendicular to the formal system on the basis of which the significations of a culture are constituted: at any given instant, the structure proper to individual experience finds a certain number of possible choices (and of excluded possibilities) in the systems of the society.
- Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p.380.
7. Frank Lettichia, "Foucault's Legacy: A New Historicism?" *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeseer (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 241.
8. It should come as no surprise that new historicism has appropriated many of the tenets of Heidegger's philosophy. The new historicists' debt to Michel Foucault is widely acknowledged, and Foucault credited his "entire philosophical development . . . [to] the reading of Heidegger." Heidegger, he admitted in an interview, "has always been for me the essential philosopher." Cited in C. G. Prado, *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), p. 5.

9. We should still be aware, however, that there are key differences between a new historicist and a Heideggerian investigation of these possibilities. Integral new historicist beliefs and practices, such as the functionalization of social codes, the levelling of art to the status of cultural “product,” and the conception of language as mimetic representation, are inimical to Heideggerian philosophy.
10. See Chapter One, pp. 15-16.
11. Barbara Belyea, “Captain Franklin in Search of the Picturesque,” *Essays on Canadian Writing* no. 40 (1990): 22.
12. See, for example: I.S. Maclaren’s study, “Retaining Captaincy of the Soul: Response to Nature in the First Franklin Expedition,” in *Essays on Canadian Writing* 28 (Spring 1984): 57-92; Barbara Belyea’s “Captain Franklin in Search of the Picturesque”; Richard C. Davis’s “History or His/Story? The Explorer Cum Author,” in *Studies in Canadian Literature* (16.2) 1991: 92-111; and Robert Stacey’s “From ‘Icy Picture’ to ‘Extensive Prospect’: The Panorama of Rupert’s Land and the Far North in the Artist’s Eye, 1770-1830,” in *Rupert’s Land: A Cultural Tapestry*.
13. For a complete discussion of the differences between landscape and geography, see John Moss’s *Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape* (Concord: Anansi Press, 1994), pp. 3-27. See also Lorrie Graham’s and Tim Wilson’s Heideggerian interpretation of Moss’s work in “Questions of Being: An Exploration of *Enduring Dreams*,” in *Echoing Silence: Essays on Arctic Narrative* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1997). For a discussion of the use of “blank spaces” as a discursive strategy in Western colonialist discourse, see Lisa Bloom, *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
14. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 407. **Hereafter cited in my text as BT.**
15. Rudy Wiebe, *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1989), p. 16.
16. See Chapter One, p. 15, for a more detailed discussion of this term; see also *Being and Time*, p. 188.
17. John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of The Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969), p. xii. **Hereafter cited in my text as NJ.**
18. Stuart C. Houston, ed., *Arctic Artist: The Journal and Paintings of George Back, Midshipman with Franklin, 1820-22* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1974), p. 129. **Hereafter cited in my text as JPB.**

19. Stuart C. Houston, ed., *To the Arctic by Canoe: The Journal and Paintings of Robert Hood, Midshipman with Franklin* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), p. 36. **Hereafter cited in my text as JPH.**
20. Moss, p. 6.
21. Sylvia Van Kirk, "'This Rascally and Ungrateful Country': George Nelson's Response to Rupert's Land," in *Rupert's Land: A Cultural Tapestry*, ed. Richard C. Davis (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), p. 116.
22. Cited in Bloom, p. 120.
23. Wiebe, p. 43.
24. I. S. MacLaren, "From Exploration to Publication: The Evolution of a 19th-Century Arctic Narrative," *Arctic* Vol. 47, No. 1 (March 1994): 44.
25. For a complete discussion of masculinist discourse see Arthur Brittan's *Masculinity and Power* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989).
26. Bloom, p. 6.
27. The evidence for these tensions within the party comes from Joseph René Bellot's *Memoirs*, in which Bellot writes that seaman John Hepburn, the only English seaman to accompany the expedition from beginning to end, was witness to a duel between Hood and Back over an Indian woman known as Greensleeves to the English. According to Bellot, Hepburn "drew the charges" on both men's pistols before the duel, and no one was hurt. Joseph René Bellot, *Memoirs, etc.*, Vol. 1 (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1855). p. 253.
28. See Richard C. Davis, ed., *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822*, p. lxxxiv; and Wiebe, p. 31.
29. As Hood notes in his journal (and Franklin appropriates for the *Narrative*): "the Canadians show great dexterity. Their simultaneous motions were strongly contrasted with the awkward confusion of the inexperienced Englishmen, deafened by the torrent; who sustained the blame of every accident which occurred" (*JPH* 106).
30. Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Marvel of the New World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 52.
31. Greenblatt, p. 56.
32. Cited in MacLaren, "Exploration to Publication," p. 44.
33. MacLaren, "Exploration to Publication," p. 44.

34. See MacLaren, "Exploration to Publication"; and Davis, "History or His/Story? The Explorer Cum Author."
35. Davis, "History or His/Story?" p. 104.
36. Bruce Greenfield, *Narrating Discovery: The Romantic Explorer in American Literature, 1790-1855* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 25.
37. Franklin, for example, scrupulously honoured his contracts with the voyageurs, Mr. Wentzel (a clerk who acted as interpreter and guide), and, eventually, with the Coppermine Indians. As Franklin remarks at one point, "I would stake my life on the certainty of their [the Indians] getting paid" (*JC* 139). While the fairness of the remuneration of these parties is certainly debatable, there is no question that Franklin acted in accordance with the contracts he negotiated.
38. Wiebe, p. 24.
39. "[H]is Conduct," Franklin writes, "reminded me of the pettish freaks of a Spoiled child" (*JC* 137). Davis observes: "One wonders if Franklin would have seen these same bargaining skills in a Scottish trader as canny, rather than deceitful or treacherous" (*JC* cii).
40. Stuart C. Houston, ed., *Arctic Ordeal: The Journal of John Richardson, Surgeon-Naturalist with Franklin, 1820-22* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1984), p. 111.
41. Greenfield, p. 42.
42. Frederick Wentzel, Letter to Mackenzie, 10 April 1823, in L. R. Masson, ed., *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest: Récits de Voyages, Lettres et Rapports Inédits Relatifs au Nord-Ouest Canadien* (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), p. 146.

## Notes to Chapter Three

1. Rudy Wiebe, *A Discovery of Strangers* (Toronto: Vintage, 1995), pp. 153-54. **Hereafter cited in my text.**
2. Martin Heidegger, "The Way to Language," trans David Farrell Krell, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 422; for a more detailed explanation of the argument which follows, see Chapter One.
3. Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," trans. John Sallis, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 125.
4. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 208-9.
5. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 211; see also Chapter One, p. 31.
6. Stanley Hopper, "The Word as Symbol in Sacred Experience," in *Silence, The Word and the Sacred*, eds. E. D. Blodgett and H. G. Coward (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989), p. 88.
7. Hopper, p. 87.
8. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," trans. Albert Hofstadter, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 199. **Hereafter cited in my text as "OWA."**
9. Heidegger, "The Way to Language," p. 418.
10. For a more detailed explication of this argument, see Chapter One.
11. Archibald Lampman, "Winter-Solitude," cited in John Moss, "Landscape, Untitled," *Essays on Canadian Writing* 29 (Summer 1984): 37.
12. Moss, p. 37.
13. Hopper, p. 93.
14. Many of these, to be sure, are of minimal importance. There are occasions, however, when Wiebe's inaccuracies silence the very complexity he is endeavouring to bring to light. He makes it very clear, for example, that Franklin was vehemently opposed to the cohabitation of British men and aboriginal women (96). This belief certainly accords with the official view—there is a conspicuous absence of such cohabitation in the official records of the expedition, but it glosses over the questions raised by letters such as the one Franklin penned to Back in the fall of 1820:

We get on very well *en famille* not a single dispute or unpleasant word. You will hear of the *change* [my emphasis] that has taken place in Family affairs. Perhaps you were prepared to expect the pleasure of having a Female companion in your room . . . .

Cited in Richard C. Davis, *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1995), p. 393.

15. As Moss notes: "Inuit names for places are descriptive; *qualunaaq* names (*quallunaaq*, *qadlunah*, *kabloona*, *kablunait*, as whites are called for their bushy eyebrows) are expressions of sovereignty." John Moss, *Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape* (Concord: Anansi Press, 1994), p. 18.

16. It should perhaps be noted that this characterization of the Coppermine Indians' concept of names is certainly not unique. Edmund Carpenter, in "Image Making in Arctic Art," in *Sign, Image, Symbol*, ed. Gyorgy Kepes (New York: George Braziller, 1966), examines certain aspects of the Eskimo language, and the similarity between his observations and Wiebe's text suggests that Wiebe may have used Carpenter's work as a source. As Carpenter notes:

Eskimo is not a nominal language; it does not simply name things which already exist, but rather brings both things and actions (nouns and verbs) into being as it goes along. This idea is reflected in the practice of naming a child at birth: when the mother is in labor, an old woman stands around and says as many different eligible names as she can think of. The child comes out when its own name is called. Thus the naming and the giving birth to the new thing are inextricably bound together. (207-8)

17. Rudy Wiebe, *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic* (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers Limited, 1989), p.71.

18. Hopper, p. 101.

19. John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969). **Hereafter cited in my text as NJ.**

20. This is "pure" mimesis, a stable system of representation, as opposed to the "slippery signifier" of new historicist discourse.

21. Richard C. Davis, ed. *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1995), p. 231; see also Franklin's *Narrative*, p. 475.

22. New historicists, who subscribe to a mimetic concept of language, have failed to adequately explain the creative role of art when language / art is conceived as representation. Greenblatt assures readers that "any given representation is not only the reflection or product of social

relations . . . it is itself a social relation. . . . This means that representations are not only products but producers, capable of decisively altering the very forces that brought them into being.” Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvellous Possessions: The Marvel of the New World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 6. Similarly, Michel de Certeau focusses on the “slippage” between sign and signified to explain the emergence of “new” meaning and “new” representations: “A truth is spoken by the organization of a culture, but it escapes its own collaborators. Certain relations predetermine subjects and cause them to signify something other than they think they say or can say.” Michel de Certeau, “The Black Sun of Language: Foucault,” in *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 181. The problem with both arguments is that they rely on a vague notion of “correct-ness”—as if, given enough time, one could simply unearth the “social relations” that determine meaning and ascribe to representations their “proper” meaning. Ontologically, such arguments seem naive.

23. Frederick Wentzel, Letter to Mackenzie, 1 March 1824, in L. R. Masson, ed., *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest: Récits de Voyages, Lettres et Rapports Inédits Relatifs au Nord-Ouest Canadien* (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), p. 150.

24. As Heidegger writes: “In the tragedy nothing is staged or displayed theatrically, but the battle of the new gods against the old is being fought. The linguistic work, originating in the speech of the people, does not refer to this battle; it transforms the people’s saying so that now every living word fights the battle and puts up for decision what is holy and what unholy, what great and what small, what brave and what cowardly . . . .” “The Origin of the Work of Art,” p.169.

25. Heidegger, “The Way to Language,” p. 411.

## Notes to Chapter Four

1. Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," trans. Albert Hofstadter, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 363.
2. J. Michael Yates, *The Great Bear Lake Meditations* (Toronto: Oberon Press, 1970). **Hereafter cited in my text.**
3. Albert Hofstadter, "Introduction," in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p.xiv.
4. See *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 308. **Hereafter cited in my text as BT.**
5. Sophocles, *Antigone*, cited in Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 146. See also Chapter One, pp. 18-19 for a more detailed discussion of this "strangeness."
6. Among other things, Foucault in particular has been accused of a constant vacillation "between totalizing and detotalizing impulses" (Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, cited in Horace L. Fairlamb, *Critical Conditions: Postmodernity and the question of Foundations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 171; I would argue, however, that his greatest shortcoming lies in his inability to adequately address the problem inherent in human self-knowledge. He admits that "the positive knowledge of man is limited by the historical positivity of the knowing subject," but because he can only see limit as a threat, he looks forward to a utopian, "pure theory of language," and to the discovery of the "formal structure" of the unconscious. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 372, 381, 380.
7. See Chapter One, pp. 10-11.
8. J. Lasley Dameron, "Melville and Scoresby on Whiteness," *English Studies* 1 (1993): 96-104. **Hereafter cited in my text.**
9. I. S. MacLaren, "Retaining Captaincy of the Soul: Response to Nature in the First Franklin Expedition," in *Essays on Canadian Writing* 28 (Spring 1984): 57-92. **Hereafter cited in my text.**
10. Dameron cites a number of these resources in his article (pp. 98-99).
11. John Moss, *Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape* (Concord: House of Anansi Press, 1994), p.125. **Hereafter cited in my text.**

12. Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter, pp. 176-182. **Hereafter cited in my text.**

13. The "fourfold" to which Heidegger refers is the fourfold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals, that he explores in his later work. It is difficult to provide a swift definition of these terms without reducing them to mere abstractions. To begin, at least, we can recall Chapter One, in which we touched on the "angels" of earth and sky—the mortar and stone of a people's dwelling, and the patterns of sunshine which regulate their existence (see pp. 26-27). These angels of earth and sky interact with the mortals who are both of Being and who disclose Being and who thrust up divinities whose presencing requires earth, requires sky, requires the history of human Being. Indeed, if we are to define the fourfold in any swift manner, we should emphasize this: the fourfold, as "elements" of world (which in itself outsteps cognition), are always joined, always reciprocating: "In the ringing of the mirror-playing ring, the four nestle into their unifying presence, in which each one retains its own nature. So nestling, they join together, worlding, the world" (180).

14. He writes, in "Parallel Lines":

a final  
movement

to speak

language  
is merely  
memory

mere  
memos re

language

bp nichol, *An H in the Heart: A Reader*, eds. George Bowering and Michael Ondaatje (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), p. 160.

15. One wonders, too, if it is an indication of our technological, hyper-rational epoch that we find these problems of accuracy, of authenticity, so notable. With another sense of being, of language, such questions of authenticity might seem irrelevant—after all, it is only when we are convinced that language should be transparent that its opacity begins to haunt us.

16. Rudy Wiebe, *A Discovery of Strangers* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 26. See also Chapter Three, p. 70.

17. See Richard C. Davis, ed., *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1995), pp. 79, 108, 149, 269.
18. See Chapter Two, pp. 22-23; John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of The Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969), p. 413, 418, 427, 443. **Hereafter cited in my text as NJ.**
19. Rudy Wiebe, *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1989), p. 43. **Hereafter cited in my text.**
20. As Charles M. Sherover writes: "A founded existential ethic would not . . . out of disillusionment or despair, permit the suggestion that 'only a god can save us.'" Charles M. Sherover, "Heidegger and Practical Reason," in *Phenomenology: Dialogues and Bridges*, eds. Ronald Bruzina and Bruce Wilshire (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), p. 34.
21. See Franklin to Back, 15 October 1821, and Franklin to Back, 17 October 1821, in Richard C. Davis, ed., *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822*.
22. Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987), p. 113.
23. See Richard C. Davis, *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822 The Journals and Correspondence of John Franklin*, Note 452, p. 198.
24. Alfred Purdy, *North of Summer: Poems from Baffin Island* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967). **Hereafter cited in my text.**
25. And indeed, as Heidegger writes, "[t]he openedness of being as a whole does not coincide with the sum of all immediately familiar beings. On the contrary: where beings are not familiar to man and are scarcely and only roughly known by science, the openedness of beings as a whole can prevail more essentially than it can where the familiar and well-known has become boundless, and nothing is any longer able to withstand the business of knowing, since technical mastery over things bears itself without limit. Precisely in the leveling and planing of this omniscience, this mere knowing, the openedness of beings gets flattened out into the apparent nothingness of what is no longer even a matter of indifference, but rather is simply forgotten." Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," trans. John Sallis, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 129.
26. Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," p. 353.
27. This list brings to mind Borges' infamous "Chinese encyclopaedia," which Foucault cites in the preface to *The Order of Things*. The (to us) bizarre composition of the encyclopaedia divides

- animals into those “(a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs,” etc. Foucault writes: “In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.” Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, a translation of *Les Mots et les Choses* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. xv.
28. See Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*, pp. 178-202.
29. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 151. See also Chapter One, pp. 18-19.
30. See Chapter One, pp. 32-34, for a complete discussion of “saying.”
31. From Michael Ondaatje, “The Gate in His Head,” in *The Cinnamon Peeler: Selected Poems* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989), p. 40. The stanza which precedes this phrase helps clarify both Yates’s intent and the intent of this study:
- And that is all this writing should be then.  
The beautiful formed things caught at the wrong moment  
so they are shapeless, awkward  
moving to the clear.
32. Wallace Stevens, “The Well Dressed Man With a Beard,” in *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Vintage, 1990), p. 247.
33. Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art,” trans. Albert Hofstadter, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 174-75.
34. After all, according to a mimetic conception of language, “things attain to existence only in so far as they are able to form the elements of a signifying system.” Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 382.
35. As Heidegger writes: “‘Earlier’ than any presupposition which Dasein makes, or any of its ways of behaving, is the ‘*a priori*’ character of its state of Being as one whose kind of Being is care” (BT 249).
36. See Chapter One.
37. Michel de Certeau, “Montaigne’s ‘Of Cannibals’: The Savage ‘I,’” trans. Brian Massumi, in *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986), p. 69.
38. Rudy Wiebe, *A Discovery of Strangers* (Toronto: Vintage, 1994), “Acknowledgements.”

39. Hugh Brody, *Living Arctic: Hunters of the Canadian North* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre Ltd., 1987), p. 159.

40. Lopez, pp. 260-61.

41. As Heidegger writes: "To engage oneself with the disclosedness of beings is not to lose oneself in them; rather, such engagement withdraws in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are, and in order that presentative correspondence might take its standard from them." Martin Heidegger, "On The Essence of Truth," p. 125.

## Notes to Conclusion

1. Rudy Wiebe, *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1989), p. 36-7. **Hereafter cited in my text.**
2. We discussed this story in Chapter Three, p. 72; Wiebe recounts it on pp. 70-71 of *Playing Dead*.
3. Rudy Wiebe, *A Discovery of Strangers* (Toronto: Vintage, 1995), pp. 89-91. **Hereafter cited in my text.**

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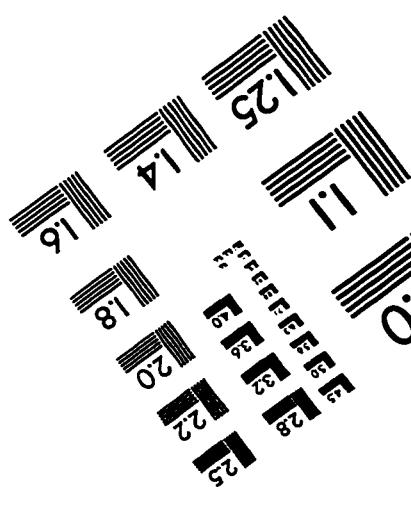
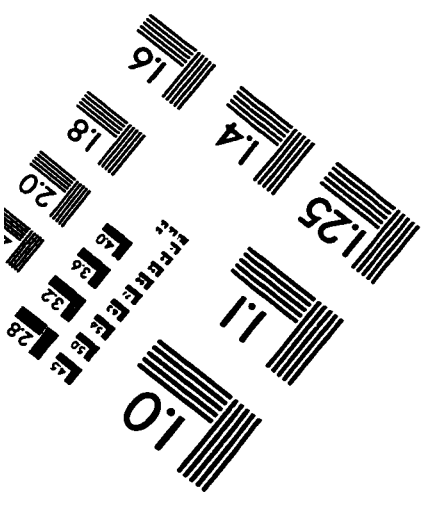
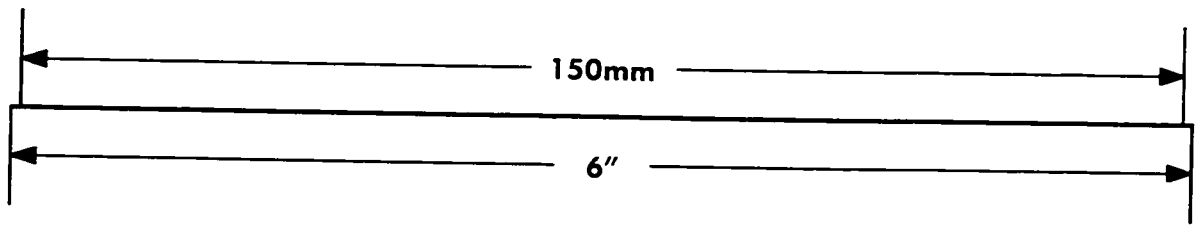
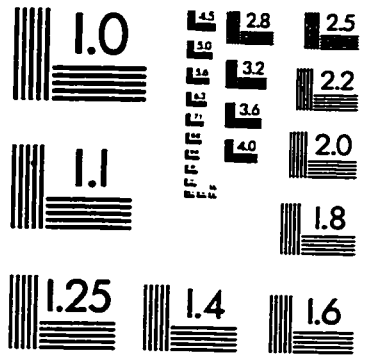
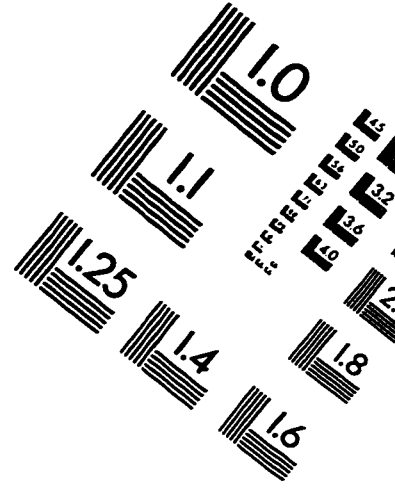
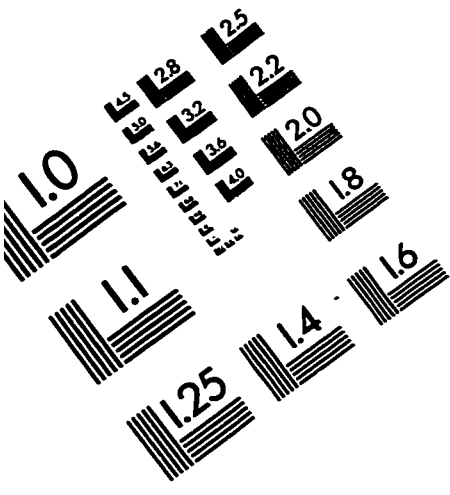
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