Can the Canadian Speak? Lost in Postcolonial Space

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> The Canadian poet can be *avant-garde* with whatever material he chooses. . . . I even wonder whether colonialism may not be, in theory at least, the most desirable poetic state.
>
> MILTON WILSON, "Other Canadians *and* After" (91)

THE LOCATION OF Canada in contemporary postcolonial discourse continues to be a vexing issue. One might even think of the register "Canadian" as a sort of missing link, holding the place between the old (imperial) world and the new. Many recent theorizations of Canada's status as a settler-invader colony have been arguing just this.[1] Yet it is also true that the "Canadian" is increasingly being dropped from international postcolonial debate (particularly outside Britain and Australia/New Zealand). While studies devoted to Commonwealth Literature in the 1960s and 70s included Canada as a key player in their discussions, today, more often than not, the Canadian is being edited out — lost in post-imperial space.[2] It is an irony, indeed, that Canada's long historical struggle for recognition apart from the United States (and, earlier, Britain) can be interpreted instead as linking Canada too closely with these imperial powers to garner it recognition in international postcolonial circles. The even greater irony is that publications about Canadian culture and nationalism are still not considered sufficiently "international" to render them publishable in the United States and Britain, in marked contrast with studies of India, Africa, and Ireland.[3] This, of course, may say something about the continued exoticization of these places in the Western imagination, but it remains a concern for those of us interested in exploring Canada's postcolonial complexities.

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This problem was brought home to me recently while I was preparing the reading list for a second-year university course on "World Literatures in English" — implicitly a course in postcolonial literatures. Does one include Canadian texts on such a list? If Salman Rushdie, who lives in England, is considered an Indian writer, is Michael Ondaatje Sri Lankan or Canadian? How are we to identify Derek Walcott or Neil Bissoondath? National labels have a certain structural and political resonance, so it is not surprising that attempts to "delimit" the contents of courses with such titles as "World Literatures in English" and "Postcolonial Literatures" have sparked enormous debate. In the first place, the discussion involves questions about how to define national identity — whether according to birthplace/homeland, national-cultural identification, race, language, religion, or citizenship — and how such concepts as "identity," "collectivity," and "nation" are problematized within the contemporary postcolonial world. Lurking within these questions is the vexed issue of authenticity: what constitutes belonging within any one categorical context and how does one account for overlaps and interactions between peoples? In the second place, the discussion has prompted immense disagreement about how the term "post-colonial" is to be defined: Should the field of postcolonialism include all writings emerging from an experience of imperialism (past and post)? Should the term be applied only to Third-World cultures, or only to those texts that express clear resistance to colonialist operations?[4] One's definition of the term also engages with the issue of how colonial and post-colonial texts are to be read: Is postcolonialism a reading strategy or a matter of content — or both?

These questions become particularly pressing in Canada, for indeed, where does the Canadian fit in this "scramble for postcolonialism" (Slemon)? Donna Bennett suggests that critics began to identify the "postcolonial" in the Canadian context once the discourse of postcolonialism — sparked by Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 — had entered the critical mainstream. However, Canadian postcolonial concerns had been present long before this, as Diana Brydon argues in her critique of Bennett's analysis ("Introduction" 4-5).[5] The register of the

"postcolonial" indeed can be said to have been present from the very beginnings of Canadian writing and was certainly the informing impetus behind the development of Canadian literature and Canadian studies as a distinct field of study in the academy. I am therefore using the term "Canadian postcolonialism" to include both the cultural "decolonization" developments of the Confederation, Modernist, and 1960s/70s Nationalist periods, *and* after, even if the "post-ness" of such moments remains under negotiation. As Helen Tiffin defines it, "'post-colonial' . . . implies the *persistence* of colonial legacies in post-independence cultures, not their disappearance or erasure" (158). This allows one to discuss how various societies — between and within nations — are "postcolonial" in different ways. I am not primarily interested in what Bruce King identifies as contemporary postcolonialism's emphasis on "a deconstruction of the nation" ("New Centres" 20). The vector of the nation continues to have profound psychic resonance for Canadians — particularly amongst students of Canadian and postcolonial literatures — filling an intense psychic and cultural need. That it is a necessarily imaginary construct does not negate the fact that it has real, symbolic effects. At such a historical moment, to discard the concept of national identity as an oppressive construct seems counter-productive, as is true of notions of the "subject" more generally. However, this need not imply a robotic adherence to essentializing and dictatorial conceptualizations of the nation, as some of these critiques of nationalism might suggest. One can remain committed to some notion of national community while recognizing its inherent diversity, heterogeneity, and flexibility. Indeed, the only meaningful conception of the nation resides in this flexibility and capacity for change — the alternative being an alienating museum piece and not a psychically meaningful "imagined community." It is only through this imaginative act that, to invoke Stuart Hall, we are able to discover places and positions from which to speak ("Cultural Identity" 392, 402).

Getting back to the pedagogical quandary I delineated earlier, should Canadian works be included in World/Postcolonial Literature course lists? And, if so, is it the case that some Canadians

are more postcolonial than others? Is Canada, finally, a part of the World?

If one of the central problems of postcolonial theory has been the "dialectics of home and abroad" (King, "New Centres" 10), in the case of settler-invader colonies such as Canada, this is even more problematic in that home and abroad have been historically intertwined. The difficulty, as Bruce King so ably argues in "New Centres of Consciousness," is to find a balance between national specificities and international developments. This is especially so since it is nationalist cultural movements that have been essential to the internationalization of literatures in English.[6] In other words, how does one discuss *Canadian* literature within a global theoretical context? And what happens when the "native" or national becomes globally postcolonial? — even as it is never, quite, *post*colonial enough?

My discussion falls roughly into five sections. First, I explore some of the theoretical implications when "native" Canadian expression[7] is recognized as internationally postcolonial — when "here" becomes transplanted over "there." Second, I trace the ways the terminology of the "native and cosmopolitan" have persisted, and in many ways stymied, discussions of Canadian literature over the course of this century. I then outline some of the difficulties encountered when the postcolonial or nationalist valuation of Canadian expression becomes compromised through the exportation of terms back to the imperial centre. In the fourth section, I look at the ways contemporary reviews of Canadian literature in England engage with some of these issues while also transforming the Canadian literary, historical, and theoretical locale beyond recognition – into the rarefied realm of the universally local, the internationally postcolonial. Finally, I offer some suggestions of what all of this might mean for the Canadian postcolonial literary critic. Ultimately, what I am asking is, in what way is the postcolonial celebration of the "native/local" compromised once it is invoked from the erstwhile imperial centre which insists, once again, on visualizing the colonial Canadian? And to what extent does the revival of these terms from afar cripple or negate the postcolonial enterprise at home? Is the Canadian at risk of becoming lost in postcolonial space?

I

We have to begin somewhere, even if we *are* lost. So let's begin on home territory. Let's begin with the familiar, or at least with a question that has become all too familiar to Canadian ears, so much so that we no longer hear its conflicted implications.

The question for Canadians, Northrop Frye has said, is not that of "Who am I?" but "Where is here?" ("Conclusion" 220) — a gesture towards a formative lack of cultural coordinates. I want to rethink what this phrase might mean for the "internationalized" postcolonial subject. In having become all too familiar to us today, the very unfamiliarity to which Frye was pointing has become occluded. By extension, that unfamiliarity points to what Canadians have long known only too well: that the territory "here" may look unfamiliar because it has not been adequately recognized elsewhere. In this way the "here" may be only too familiar. It may represent the space one always, but never consciously, occupies: the space which renders its occupants invisible to the international observer and subsequently to themselves.

This brings us into the conflicted territory of the native and the cosmopolitan in Canadian (and non-Canadian) cultural discourse, those terms applied by A. J. M. Smith in 1943 to describe Canadian literary production. This, too, may seem an obsolete phrasing, and yet the legacy of these terms in Canadian literary-cultural criticism has had profound effects on the ways we continue to think about Canada in a global context. In tracing the genealogy of what has been a dominant discourse in Canadian literary theory, I examine these debates as they have taken place in "ethnic majority" terms, although I am aware that there are alternative visions of the "nation" other than those described in this literary history; indeed, this history gives some indication of just which Canadians *could* speak in the formative years of Canadian literary theory. This history is important, however. By charting the lingering traces of Smith's terminology through to one present postcolonial moment, I aim to demonstrate how his colonialist dichotomy (native/cosmopolitan) continues to exert a pull on discourse about (postcolonial) Canadian culture today.[8]

Canadian critics have long been interested in answering two questions: What is distinctive about Canadian literature, and what is the connection between literature and nation? Within Canada, the first implies some notion of the unique versus the derivative (a nationalist position versus a colonialist one). Beyond Canada, it might be phrased as an opposition between international standards (cosmopolitanism) and Canadian qualities (nativism). A paradox emerges, however, because the "native" is also what is most ably anti-colonial, which might be one way of expressing the quandary of the settler nation: it is historically condemned never to be the initiating locus of the terms of evaluation. If occupying the register of the cosmopolitan erases the native from view, to be *only* native is also to be invisible to the rest of the world.

Canadian literary theory has from its beginnings been internally ruptured by the native/cosmopolitan divide, producing in it a constitutive aporia. In the nineteenth century, Canadian cultural critics were already asserting the colonial dichotomy, often phrased as a contest between New-World socio-cultural factors and Old-World literary standards — a binary that was revived years later in the debates about content (thematic critics) and form (formalists) and, in the 1980s and 90s, in arguments about canonization and literary value. The quest for a securely "Canadian" mode of expression marked Canadian literary activity from the 1850s onwards, the assumption being that national integrity would come with cultural maturity. As Edward H. Dewart wrote in *Selections from Canadian Poets* in 1864, "A national literature is an essential element in the formation of national character. It is not merely the record of a country's mental progress: it is the expression of its intellectual life, the bond of national unity, and the guide of national energy." In order to be "firmly united politically," Dewart argued, a nation required "the subtle but powerful cement of a patriotic literature" (ix).

It is an historical irony, however, that the site of the native most ably came into expression through the importation of literary standards from abroad. If Canadian writers and thinkers were, even prior to Confederation, concerned with the distinguishing character of British North American experience

and space, it was, paradoxically, the transposition of British literary/nationalist standards that helped to enunciate this urgent need for distinctiveness, by providing the illusory affirmation of Canadian identity within the context of universal criteria (since, in the metropolitan centre, there is no contradiction between the two). In effect, this is the legacy of Arnoldian humanism in Canada, an inheritance that has immersed the Canadian literary-critical scene in a paradoxical polarization. If Matthew Arnold was committed both to an idea of national cultural greatness and to evaluative codes (the best that has been known and thought), the two were never allowed to merge on the colonial field (one is reminded of Arnold's scoffing at the very idea of "Canadian Literature").[9] Margery Fee demonstrates how a form of Arnoldian criticism was used in Canada to resist the cultural domination of the United States by establishing a national literature committed to humanist ideals in opposition to an American culture that was "science dominated, utilitarian, and materialist" (24). Arnoldianism, therefore, was a Canadian nationalist response; however, it also gave rise to a debate within Canada about "universal" merit versus "local" expression. Since the commitment to Canadian literature was tied to a political motive, it did not mesh with the supposedly apolitical greatness of world standards. In turn, since Canadian literature initially emerged from European models, its authenticity, *as* Canadian, was hard to pin down.

In his preface to *The Bush Garden* (1971), Northrop Frye addresses the links between cultural expression and geographical locale, the latter being further divisible into nation and region. "[S]o far as it affects the creative imagination," Frye argues, identity "is not a 'Canadian' question at all, but a regional question. . . . [W]hat can there be in common between an imagination nurtured on the prairies, where it is a centre of consciousness diffusing itself over a vast flat expanse . . . and one nurtured in British Columbia, where it is in the midst of gigantic trees and mountains leaping into the sky all around it . . . ?" (i-ii). Of course, Frye's account predates contemporary discussions of cultural hybridity. By so separating the realms of the regional and Canadian (what Frye later calls identity and unity), he was

merely widening what was by then an already deforming gap in Canadian cultural discussion. Within the Arnoldian terms of this crippling dichotomy, the native and the cosmopolitan (or the regional and the "Canadian") are always sundered.

The critical postcolonial move has been to enact a form of strategic colonialism — a reversal of terms — by valuing the native over the cosmopolitan in order to leave the staging of comparative evaluation behind. If, according to some critics, the "native" was once the mark of colonial cultural production, today it is that which makes one most authentically *post*colonial — which is, in turn, what lends it validity in the eyes of the international judges.[10] What is interesting, however, is the way the terminology is being reinvoked in accounts of Canadian literature in England, the former cosmopolitan centre, enacting a sort of repatriating of a postcolonial Matthew Arnold. All of which leads one to ask, who is speaking for the postcolonial subject/culture once it is being celebrated beyond its borders as internationally and prototypically "native"?

Who Speaks for Canada? is the title of a recent collection of articles and meditations on Canadian history and culture (Morton). Its appearance suggests that the interminable quest for Canadian identity is far from dead. The title is provocative. It invokes the problematics of how any one voice can represent Canadian multiplicity. It also echoes — perhaps unintentionally — those more theorized questions of who or what or how one speaks for the Other. Shoshana Felman has asked these questions in relation to the category Woman: how does a woman speak (and what would speech mean?) from the location of silence? Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?"offers a similar meditation, in addition to her discussions of who can speak for third-world women specifically.

In the case of a settler-invader-immigrant colony such as Canada, it is not clear to what extent the inhabitant of a Westernized "settler" nation *can* speak as postcolonial. However, this uncertainty renders the inclusion of settler-invader societies beneath the umbrella of the postcolonial all the more crucial. Indeed, settler contexts illuminate the ways transcultural colonialisms and cross-overs persist into the present day. As

Alan Lawson argues, in excluding such societies from examination, one risks overlooking that location "where the processes of colonial power as negotiation, as transactions of power, are most visible" ("Postcolonial" 22; see also Griffiths 169, 175). It may be in a settler context that the "postcolonial" most adeptly refuses the teleological imperative of here/there.

The problem (and perhaps it is the inadequacy of terminology which, finally, has contributed to Canada's infamous cultural "schizophrenia") is that neither term describes the Canadian locale because their very opposition insists on the "here" being judged from "over there," and not, as Frye would have had it, from the position of a clearly located (however lost) Canadian. The split only makes sense in the presence of this geographical divide. The particular dilemma of Canadian historical experience, as with other settler-invader colonies, is that here and there, native and cosmopolitan, are never so clearly defined, which is what Frye omitted to mention. To paraphrase Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, what does one do when "home ground" is also "foreign territory" (11) — and when this paradox is what contributes to its "homeliness" (in both senses of the word) in the first place? After all, "Where is here?" only makes sense if one already recognizes that a "there" exists.

The settler subject is in many ways the prototype of Homi Bhabha's "Mister In-between,"[11] a subject position that has internalized the divide between self and other (native and cosmopolitan). What distinguishes the experience of the settler subject, as Alan Lawson puts it, is that it "not only has to encounter 'the other'; it is constrained by the discourse to *be* 'the other' as well" ("Cultural" 68). To transpose this into the terminology I will be considering in this essay, the settler subject both assesses him/herself in terms of the cosmopolitan while at the same time being expected to be cosmopolitan. This might suggest that the settler subject has to some degree always recognized the cosmopolitan as an empty signifier, while at the same time being forced to embrace it.

These terms have long been imposed on Canadian cultural discourse — and have continually stultified it. If the cosmopolitan is an integrally empty vector, the "native" is a floating signifier

which makes sense only according to who is doing the enunciating. The question "Where is here?" — which assumes an already existent (however fragmented) enunciating subject — is therefore implicitly preceded by the question "Who am I?" In Stephen Slemon's words, "the *illusion* of a stable self/other, here/there binary division has *never* been available to Second-World writers, and . . . as a result the sites of figural contestation between oppressor and oppressed, colonizer and colonized, have been taken *inward* and *internalized*" ("Unsettling" 38). Not only does this make it difficult to conceptualize the relations of the settler to the cosmopolitan Other beyond its boundaries, but it also makes it more difficult to identify contested relations between subjects within a settler society (as well as areas of cross-cultural contact). This might render Frye's notion of unity and identity a misnomer, for by invoking the native/cosmopolitan dichotomy to describe internal Canadian relations, he is ignoring the possibilities of what Brydon calls cross-cultural "contamination" ("White" 191). There are more ways of being postcolonial — and "Canadian" — than Frye allows.

This leads us back into the wilderness of "Where is here?" The question is situational in more ways than one. The very posing of the question, as Frye presents it, requires that one speak from Canadian geographical (and psychological) space. However, as a floating signifier, the term "here" (or "there"), on its own, only makes sense in relation to other coordinates — it can be invoked by anyone. It also, then, necessarily implicates the speaker in the comparative question "Where is elsewhere?" If the Canadian can be heard to be inquiring "Where is here?," the English critic reading Canadian literature from a distance must necessarily rephrase it as "Where is there?" And as soon as "here" becomes "there" we are back in the space of the cultural periphery; back in the oppositional divide of Smith's dichotomy: native or cosmopolitan; colonial or international. The potentially disruptive middle term, the "postcolonial," has disappeared.

II

Most theorists of Canadian literature are familiar with A.J.M. Smith's invocation of the terms "native" and "cosmopolitan" in

his introduction to his 1943 *The Book of Canadian Poetry*. As Smith himself indicates, this conceptualization of the problematics of Canadian literary production had already been circulating for some time: Smith credits W.D. Lighthall's introduction to his 1892 *Canadian Songs and Poems* with identifying the two streams of Canadian poetry (Smith, "Eclectic" 24). Edward H. Dewart and Charles G. D. Roberts, among others, had also distinguished between an identifiably "native" literature and a derivative, colonial one. Writing in 1943, Smith was committed to celebrating the new voice of Canadian poetic modernism and what he regarded as its international flavour, in contrast to poetry written from within what he felt to be a colonial tradition. The native he associated with "what is individual and unique in Canadian life," as opposed to the cosmopolitan which transcended colonialism and represented "what [Canadian life] has in common with life everywhere" (5). In Smith's account, however, the native is equated with parochialism, which he saw it the duty of the modernists to overturn. As early as 1928, writing for the *Canadian Forum*, Smith delivered a blanket dismissal of "poor Canadian" books as opposed to "good foreign" ones (600).

The anthology was revised five years later to accommodate the criticisms that had been raised against this binary terminology. In subsequent editions Smith altered the structure of the collection so that the division into native and cosmopolitan modernist poets did not appear in the table of contents, and revised his introduction to argue for a harmonization of the two poetic strands. To be fair to Smith, it was the inherent colonialism of early Canadian poetry which he opposed and not the native concerns per se, a fact he makes clear in his 1948 revision (see, especially, pages 12-15). By the 1957 edition, he comes close to contemporary postcolonial expressions of the crippling effects of psychological colonialism: "It is beside the point to ask whether poetry in Canada should seek to be 'distinctively Canadian.' . . . The only way to achieve it is . . . to be so rooted in the life around you in a particular place and a particular time that it is impossible not to be specifically and distinctively whatever that life is" (36). Paradoxically, to be

truly postcolonial, this version of Canadian production might necessitate that one be oblivious to one's socio-historical positioning. Even in these later editions, however, Smith continued to invoke the "cosmopolitan" as the superior register; and despite his protestations years later, including his notion of "eclectic detachment," it was the original configuration of the 1943 anthology that continued to hold sway over the Canadian literary field.[12]

In the same year as Smith's groundbreaking anthology, E. K. Brown published his study *On Canadian Poetry*, in which he hoped to evade the shackles of psychological colonialism by forging an indigenous mode of Canadian criticism which would assess Canadian literature according to "native" traditions of expression. In his review of Brown's work, Smith highlighted Brown's emphasis on the colonial mind set while ignoring those elements of Brown's argument that directly contradicted his own (Groening 115-16). In many ways, Smith's and Brown's were formative texts that would influence Canadian literary criticism's engagement with the native/cosmopolitan issue thereafter.

Reviewing Smith's anthology in 1943, Frye defended Smith's assessment, opposing those hyper-Canadianized poems which celebrate "forests and prairies and snow and the Land of the North" in favour of those more "peculiarly our own," those which convey a Canadian attitude of mind. The latter, Frye argues, is not to be found in what he called the "accidental" elements of content ("Canada" 131), thereby anticipating those attacks on the "thematic" critics some decades later.[13] In this way Frye, like Smith, was able to identify a type of "native" or local tradition that was clearly reprehensible, a colonial mode of expression against which he would posit his own theory of international forms. It is interesting to note the divide between the native and cosmopolitan in Frye's own oeuvre. In his "Canadian" writings, Frye is very much committed to a "native" construction, intent on exploring the extratextual links between Canadian literature and society (which at times entails an examination of its inferior status as a cultural product). In his non-Canadian literary criticism, Frye is committed to outlining a science of (world) literature, one

which refutes extratextual factors in a consideration of pure, self-contained, universal forms. This is the central paradox of Frye's critical writings on Canada — his insistence on the separation of text from context. Eli Mandel notes how Frye continually struggles "to hold the discussion of Canadian writing at the formal or literary level" (291), a goal that proves untenable, for in seeking "to move the parochial into the wider world of international concerns," he only locates it more firmly within the realm of the parochial (288).[14]

In his 1965 "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada*, Frye invokes Smith's terms directly: "There is no Canadian writer of whom we can say what we can say of the world's major writers, that their readers can grow up inside their work without ever being aware of a circumference. . . . no Canadian author pulls us away from the Canadian context toward the centre of literary experience itself . . . at every point we remain aware of his social and historical setting" (214). Although Frye claims to take an "anti-evaluative" position here (and also in *Anatomy of Criticism*, where he advocates an "internationalist" mode of literary analysis), he remarks that if subjected to an "evaluative" criticism, Canadian literature would fare poorly in comparison with the truly great literature of the Western world: "If evaluation is one's guiding principle, criticism of Canadian literature would become only a debunking project" (213). By the end of the piece, Frye is testifying, almost with relief, to a world that has become "post-Canadian," a strategy which enables him to bypass the issue altogether by entering the sphere of the securely postcolonial cosmopolitan (249).

By 1971, however, in his preface to *The Bush Garden*, Frye had completely revised the arguments he developed in his 1943 review of Smith. Now, Canadian identity *is* associated with region and place, and the native/cosmopolitan dichotomy has been mapped within Canada internally via Frye's notion of the opposition between identity and unity: "Identity is local and regional," he argues, "rooted in the imagination and in works of culture" (ii). The valuation of the terms has shifted. When translated within regional boundaries, the native/local is positively weighted in its association with imaginative (perhaps even

universal?) expression. On the other hand, the native/national becomes the (overly conflating) universal: "unity is national in reference, international in perspective" (ii). In this way the unifying national has become associated with the political (and international) sphere and has passed outside the realm of aesthetic expression.

What interests me here is the shifting evaluative weight attributed to the native and cosmopolitan, as well as the ways the "cosmopolitan" can become signalled as a negative term when it is transposed within the Canadian domain as evidence of an all too conflating and unifying nationalism (that is, when, as nationalism, it is opposed to Canadian regionalisms). If Smith dismisses the "native" as the maple-leaf school in Canadian writing, itself too politically motivated, Frye defends Smith's anthology as *evidence* of an authentically "Canadian" voice ("Canada" 132), making of Smith's collection a "native" intervention. Indeed, in his support of the new Canadian poets, Smith is propounding his own version of Canadian nativism; on the other hand, his adamant defence of the cosmopolitan marks a colonialist response to local concerns.

John Sutherland responded to Smith by compiling an alternative anthology, *Other Canadians*, in 1947. Here he aimed to complicate Smith's valuations by demonstrating how the cosmopolitan was itself implicated by colonialism. In opposition to Smith, Sutherland posited a native "Canadian" poetic movement which is nationalist in motive while expressing concern with social (as opposed to "natural" or nativist) themes.[15] Earle Birney took a similar position by attempting to deconstruct Smith's dichotomy. In "Has Poetry a Future in Canada?" (1946), Birney identified the supposed "cosmopolitan" standard as "obscurantism" or colonialism in disguise (75): our poets "are betraying still another 'colonial' time-lag in their dependence on the poetic credos and techniques of writers abroad" (76). Voicing what might seem a postcolonial perspective by today's terms, Birney identified the "true cosmopolitan" as that which was most national, the poet who would act as the interpreter of Canada, not to the world beyond, but to "Canadians themselves." As Birney realized, "the true cosmopolite in poetry, the

great world figure, always had his roots deep in the peculiar soil of his own country" (76).

The terminology was revived in much of the nationalist discourse in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s. One need only recall George Grant's identification in *Lament for a Nation* (1965) of a cosmopolitan modernism which threatened local Canadian (both national and regional) particularities. Margaret Atwood, in *Survival* (1972), referred to the internationalist cultural proponents as the "Canada Last" thinkers who believe that there are only two options: Canadian literature is international in flavour or it is "Canadian" and therefore inferior (17). S. M. Crean, writing in *Who's Afraid of Canadian Culture?* in 1976, launched an attack on those Canadians who insist on the dichotomy between the two poles, "excellent" and "Canadian." Canadian culture critics, she argued, evaluate Canadian art "depending on how well it measures up in terms of . . . the grand old imperial centres of Rome, Paris, London, New York and so forth. That, in a nutshell, is the imperialist attitude to culture: '(My) Art transcends classes and national boundaries; (your) Canadian art is provincial'" (12).[16]

There were opponents to the massive decolonizing impetus in the Canadian cultural scene at this time. Frye himself, who was asked to give the annual Whidden Lectures for the centennial year, expressed discomfort with his role as spokesman for the nation. Insisting on discussing Canadian culture in a world context, he hoped "to bypass some common assumptions about Canadian culture which we are bound to hear repeated a good deal in the course of this year" (*Modern* 15). Once again Frye noted Canada's status as "post-national" (17), while persisting in discussing Canada in overtly national terms, particularly in his characterizations of Canadian psychology, which invoked clichés of Canadian self-effacement and moderation (14, 17). In 1969, Robin Skelton's contribution to another nationalist anthology, *Notes for a Native Land*, revelled in the quaint absurdities of renewed Canadian nativism. Hoping to pierce the bubble of self-congratulation by reviving the national/regional split, Skelton identified Canadians as "passionate provincials devoted to local mythologies" (80).

That these questions had not been put entirely to rest during the nationalist period of the 1970s became clear a decade later when John Metcalf revived the Smithian dichotomy with a vengeance. Rejecting what he considered the provincialism of Canadian literature, Metcalf reverted to a Smithian/Arnoldian position in his call for an evaluative approach to Canadian literature that would subject it to an international standard of judgement. Eager to counter what he saw to be the myth, constructed by numerous Canadian literary scholars, of an indigenous tradition of Canadian letters, Metcalf attempted to demonstrate that the "best" contemporary Canadian writers were more heavily influenced by writers of "cosmopolitan" excellence than by any embarrassingly local writers of mediocre value. Similarly, in 1989, George Woodcock argued that the "rejection of literary nationalism" was "linked to a cosmopolitan intent" (qtd. Ware 508).

The native/cosmopolitan dichotomy has since been applied to the practitioners of Canadian literary criticism themselves. One sees this most clearly in the extended debates between the formalist and thematic critics in Canadian literary-critical discourse of the 1970s and 1980s.[17] Each side accused the other of exhibiting what we might today call a colonial cringe. The thematic critics were charged with being committed to a residual provincialism (even, or perhaps especially, when expressed in terms of national themes); the formalists were felt to be too elsewhere-looking, too rarefied, their sensibilities unnecessarily embarrassed by local modes of production. The subtitle alone of Barry Cameron and Michael Dixon's 1977 anti-thematic "Mandatory Subversive Manifesto" revealed the enduring insistence of this polarized terminology: "Canadian Criticism vs. Literary Criticism." The debate was further complicated by Davey's call in "Surviving the Paraphrase" to replace thematic criticism with an exploration of distinctive regional expression. Davey, like Mandel in his *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*, reverted to Frye's opposition of the national and the regional, itself imbricated by the cosmopolitan/native divide, at the very time that he was invoking "cosmopolitan" evaluative criteria.

Traces of this polarization linger today. In *Reading Canadian Reading* (1988), Davey opposes himself to both the internationalist postmodernists/Bakhtinians and the nationalist thematic critics, by criticizing Canadians for turning too readily to international literary theory, while also faulting them for continued expressions of naive nationalism. In a sense, Davey is attempting to promote an indigenous Canadian literary criticism (instead of an indigenous Canadian literature); however, like Frye, he enacts the native/cosmopolitan (local/international) paradox that has shadowed this debate from its beginnings. While charging Canadian critics (primarily in response to the 1986 "Future Indicative" conference in Ottawa) with ignoring the political dimensions of literary theory and with assuming that the international realm is independent of politics (8), Davey also faults those Canadian critics who believe that literature connects to extra-literary (national, social) concerns (12). Ultimately, the realm of the national, in all literary discourse (not just Canadian), can never be wholly discarded, which brings us back to Frye's (via Smith's) local/national dichotomy.

This quandary resurfaced in Davey's 1993 *Post-National Arguments*. In his opening chapter to the book, Davey identifies the split positions of Canadian writers on the 1988 free trade debate — a polarization between nationalists and continentalists, both committed to a homogenizing terminology, either of the Canadian nation or of "world-class" values (13). Like many contemporary Canadian postcolonial critics, Davey straddles both native and cosmopolitan poles through his systems theory approach. Davey, then, is no clear-cut formalist internationalist, but rather is open to the subtleties of textual production, rendering an exclusive reliance on either pole untenable. Canadian literature, he asserts, "is neither distinct and isolated from the contentions of global discourse nor identical with them" (22-23). This places Davey, along with such postcolonial theorists of Canadian culture as Diana Brydon and Stephen Slemon, among the most innovative critics of Canadian literature. However, in his conclusion to the book, Davey undercuts his sense of the various levels of the situatedness of the text by offering prescriptive readings of the political commitment of various Canadian

novels. His interpretation of the inherent "post-national" character of the novels is further compromised when he reads textual signs as metaphors of "ongoing Canadian constitutional arguments" (258). At times, especially in his emphasis on the Canadian places that do not figure in these works, Davey appears to be faulting the novels for not being naïvely nationalist enough, thereby revealing his own obsession (as well as discomfort) with the native/cosmopolitan split.

The knee-jerk response to anything that hints of Canadian nationalism continues to inform discussions of Canadian literature today. The difference now is that one no longer needs to assert one's defence of things Canadian — that has become a given, a mark of the success of the nationalist movement — but rather to insist on one's distance from the cheerleaders of yesteryear. Thus, in 1998, Tom Henighan defended his outline of contemporary Canadian culture against charges of party-line nationalism: "I did not dive into this project as an act of piety to our national icons. . . . I did not want to add to the list of dutiful and tedious celebrations of Canadian culture at all costs" (ix).

However, Henighan's claim that "the rivalry once felt between the nationalists and the American-derived modernists seems to have faded" is not entirely accurate (30). On the contrary, these poles appear to have as strong a drawing power as ever. Indeed, any number of literary articles in the popular media today invoke a mythologized "Canlit" tradition as a kind of monolith defined by its moralizing attention to native/nationalist concerns. In the process, they conflate Frye's categories — the regional and the national — which were themselves an importation of the native/cosmopolitan into the domestic scene. The recent media coverage of the new "breed" of Canadian writer provides one example. These writers want to be considered modern, urban, and international, and they do so by constructing the opposition in familiarly "native" terms, berating the older generation of Canadian writers for their nationalist, and particularly their regional (as opposed to urban), concerns. In April 1999, the *Globe and Mail* ran a story about the new Toronto "brat pack" which exemplifies this attitude. The four featured writers, who pride themselves on their glib disdain for nostalgia

and sentimentality, are heralded as "our country's next generation of great literary figures" (Gill C12). Insisting that they are not concerned with questions of Canadian identity, they sneer at those prissy Cancult nationalists and socially concerned "p.c.'ers" who are still concerned with such naïve notions. Derek McCormack, eager to distance himself from his "Canadian" identity, unwittingly confirms the very colonialist attitudes he rejects: "When I read writing I like, I never think of where it's from. But when I read bad Canadian books, I think, 'That's really Canadian.'" Zsuzsi Gartner is positioned along similar lines. Gartner's book, *All the Anxious Girls on Earth*, which skyrocketed her to almost instant success, was celebrated in the *Vancouver Sun* because "it's not mainstream, at least by certain Canlit standards. Gartner's 'anxious girls' aren't located on ice floes, in canoes, or mooning around on the Prairies" (Ryan E8). In contrast, Gartner is being heralded for her unflinching and innovative evocation of contemporary urban life — as though there hadn't been a long tradition of such writing in Canada before this.

This misperception of the bifurcated "tradition" of Canadian literature was evoked with even more authority by Jessica Johnson in the 12 June 1999 *Vancouver Sun*, in which she opposed a Canadian tradition of "restrained well-crafted realism . . . concerned with place, culture, relationships" against "a new more experimental" mode. In good modernist spirit, Johnson identifies the current moment as a "crossroads" and anticipates "the emergence of a new CanLit . . . that nods to our unique culture even as it looks, and writes, beyond its borders." Perhaps a truly postcolonial literature (although Johnson doesn't use this term) would do just that, although to some degree Canadian literature has always been "postcolonial," concerned as it has been with traversing the national/international divide, the very path that Johnson identifies as the *future* course of Canadian literary history. Surely it is this quandary — how to forge a national literature that is at the same time universally resonant — that has been one of the central concerns of Canadian cultural theorists and practitioners for much of Canadian literary history.

III

In his 1995 *Beyond the Provinces: Literary Canada at Century's End*, David Staines argues that Frye's "Where is here?" has become irrelevant in contemporary Canadian literary discourse (27). In part this is because the terms of the question have lately been interrogated by a postmodern ideology of national-epistemological scepticism. In recent years, however, the academic discourse of literary postmodernism and postcolonialism in Canada has re-engaged the native/cosmopolitan pairing for political effect. As W. H. New states in his 1998 Canadian Studies Lectures, *Borderlands*, a constructive way of reconsidering the defining contours of Canadian identity must involve a transposition of inherited terms so that the postcolonial nation becomes "not the periphery of the 'real' world but the centre of somewhere else" (96). In order to accomplish this, the divide between the national self and universal other, the native and the cosmopolitan, must be imagined differently. However, what is perhaps most definitive of a settler-invader culture is its constitutive inability to overturn this dichotomy, for the terms refuse to be laid to rest, in part because they are always both equally applicable. Canadian literature is never one or the other, always both and neither — a paradox which makes a certain amount of defamiliarizing sense on home ground, but which has a rather different resonance when invoked from afar.

The very highlighting today of Canada's "cosmopolitan" culture (the "mature" version of Canadian literature as identified by Smith) can itself be considered a nativist and anti-colonial move (Smith's opposed terms). By extension, the celebration of the postmodern (and universal/cosmopolitan) fragmentation of Canadian national identity reasserts Canada's locally bound – and postcolonial – roots. This might give another twist to the notion of the empire "writing back," for perhaps it is the imperial centre itself that must now look to the periphery for the "cosmopolitan" standard. The valuing of the "native" today may even be considered a resuscitation of the colonial. This is a frequent move in postcolonial cultural production, what one might call a sort of strategic colonialism, where the "native" takes prominence over the already complicit cosmopolitan.

However, it is also the means by which the postcolonial becomes cosmopolitan — the means by which the "here" gets recognized over "there" — which might be to suggest that the internationally successful postcolonial is always somewhat compromised. If we are to give credence to the dilemma about who is to speak for the subaltern, the question expands into a consideration of who reads and interprets the postcolonial *as* postcolonial — and does it make a difference?

Today, Canada's international cultural reputation testifies to the exportability (from the native to the cosmopolitan) of its literature. Our success on this front has been so phenomenal, in fact, that just last year, upon winning the British Orange Prize for her book *Larry's Party*, Carol Shields expressed concern that she had won *because* she was Canadian ("Shields" A2).

It is a well-known contradiction in contemporary theoretical discourse that within the postcolonial trajectory, especially as determined from outside the nation (and internalized within), national-cultural maturity is revealed in part through a nation's recognition in the imperial metropolis. As Chinua Achebe observes, affirmations of a nation as universally resonant depend not so much on changes in an individual writer's oeuvre, but on a writer's acceptance in the West: "So-and-so's work is universal: he has truly arrived!" (76). Similarly, many critics have pinpointed the imperialist aspects of the Booker Prizes in contemporary England. While on the one hand valuing texts from outlying nations, the prize still insists on the standard of judgement lying with the metropolitan centre, however much post-imperial texts — texts which treat of themes of empire — might be favoured in the results. Margaret Atwood has taken a similar position in her discussions of the reception of Canadian authors in England. When asked by Jeri Johnson of Oxford University, "Is there any way . . . in which it is legitimate to ask you the question 'In what way is your writing Canadian?'", Atwood responded in similar terms: "No. It's like asking an English person 'In what way is your writing English?' The only people who get asked that are, excuse me, colonials" (29).

Johnson's question suggests the ways the terminology of the native and cosmopolitan has been retained by numerous

English critics, in both the academy and popular press, proclaiming a "postcolonial" response to Canadian literature. The realm of the local, or the native, or the colonial, is still identified as that which characterizes Canadian space, even in the midst of celebrating the postcolonial context of the work which has presumably enabled us to reject those imperialist dichotomies. The more the Canadian locale can be delineated and specified in terms of some larger concept of the "uniquely Canadian," the more the projection can be reimported back to England where it can lend the metropole the authenticating allure of the postcolonial.

Arun Mukherjee has highlighted a similar process in her account of the universalist assumptions applied by Western critics in their readings of African and Asian literatures. In her account these critics "downplay the local and the specific" in these texts ("Vocabulary" 19), valorizing the international at the expense of the national, often by missing key elements in the works. While my discussion can be situated within this critical context, I want to distinguish what I have found to be the case in many English readings of Canadian literature. Rather than "downplaying the local," as Mukherjee writes, these critics exaggerate the local/native in Canadian literature in order to make the argument that these texts are postcolonial, and, by extension, universal.[18]

Embedded in a narrative of progress and maturation, paralleling the movement from colony to post-colony, the "universalization" of Canada from abroad paradoxically involves the construction of a limiting national identity for the postcolonial object. In other words, the universal Canadian object must be made to retain some fragment of authentic, perhaps even "native," Canadianicity. This involves a search for a "Real" Canada, either in terms of an authentic Canadian sensibility or cultural history. However, the more affirmatively postcolonial Canada is allowed to be, the more mature and therefore universal it is seen to have become, and the more it has left behind its historical particularities.

In many contemporary readings of Canadian literature in England, texts that are perceived as anti-colonial and nationalist

are read with a "postmodern" twist, that is, they are interpreted as narratives of the deconstruction of national identity which is itself recuperated as a nationalist ideology. While from a meta-postcolonial perspective many Third-World (and European) nationalisms are subject to critique, this is not as true of a settler culture such as Canada, which is held up as a positive example, offering a means of forging an acceptable national identity within a supposedly postnational global context. This interpretative contradiction is identified by Helen Tiffin, who argues that "[p]art of post-modernist 'author/ity' derives from its claims to an 'internationalism' which can loftily eschew the claims of 'narrow' and 'essentialist' nationalisms" (Introduction xi). At the same time, however, this "internationalism" can be used to valorize the local, which is recuperated as a new "postnational" nationalism. In seeking to locate a reassuringly familiar postcolonial Canada, this approach invokes (perhaps like Frye himself) the spectre of the post-Canadian in the guise of the historically grounded.

IV

The terminology of the native and the cosmopolitan has been used in recent years by numerous English critics proclaiming a "postcolonial" response to Canadian literature. In many contemporary English reviews and essays on Canadian literary texts, the postcolonial and/or postmodern aspects of the works in question are celebrated as a means of recuperating the language of national identity within the problematics of a global post-imperial network. The apparent "native" and postcolonial character of Canadian literary discourse is appropriated for its universal or cosmopolitan resonance. This may not, at first glance, be particularly startling. What is of interest in these accounts is the ways the two terms remain foregrounded, the way the realm of the local, or the native, or the colonial, is still identified as that which characterizes Canadian space. If we are to see the celebration of the "native" as a recuperative act within the postcolonial nation, what happens when the recuperative drive occurs from afar? That is, what processes are in place when the native and the cosmopolitan are invoked — perhaps even colonized — by a distant reader?

Alice Munro, Carol Shields, and Margaret Atwood have attracted the most intense discussion in these terms.[19] Munro, perhaps more than any other living Canadian writer, is celebrated in England for her clearly particularized depiction of Canadian specificities which are in turn resuscitated as having "international" significance. The journey from the local to the universal is repeated again and again in assessments of her writings. Philip Howard, writing of *The Progress of Love*, stresses that while Munro's characters "are very ordinary, very provincial, very Canadian," there is underneath "a cauldron of intimate life that is universal." Anita Brookner, identifying Munro's *Selected Stories* with "a still primitive Canada," notes that they also "come with a full complement of mature thought" and therefore are concerned with "the normal human condition." Coral Ann Howells expresses this fixation on likeness and difference in her posing of questions about the Canadian landscape of Munro's work: "How different are these small Canadian towns from English country towns or villages, and is a non-Canadian reader interested in them for the ways in which they are different or the ways in which they are familiar?" (73). The answer to Howells's question appears to be that non-Canadian readers are interested in the ways the different can be made familiar — but always with the necessity of insisting on "difference" first. The Canadian text is thus set on a specific trajectory: from the unfamiliar to the familiar, from the colony ("there") to the imperium ("here"), from the native to the cosmopolitan, only to be rendered solidly "native" once again.

Both Munro and Shields are thought to exemplify a kind of placid New-World innocence. James Wood, in the *Guardian*, notes how Shields has "the lovely repose of one who, like her fellow Canadian writer Alice Munro, spends her writing life hundreds of miles away from the literary metropolis" ("Different").[20] Writing of the 1993 Booker Prize nominees, which included Shields's *The Stone Diaries*, Anthony Curtis comments that "[t]he people involved happen to be Canadian, but the situation and the sense of survival is universal" ("Booker"). The more emphatically one must make a case for international relevance, the more it seems that Canada is not considered of

much international significance after all. As one reviewer writes of Shields's *The Republic of Love*, echoing Hugh MacLennan's words, "even in Winnipeg . . . miracles can happen" (Walters, "Transformation").[21]

In their readings of Canadian literature, these critics are encountering the problem of how to retain the necessary postcolonial "Canadianness" of the text while universalizing its concerns. In the process, they seek to comprehend the new anti-exotic while protecting it *as* exotic, and hence Other. The paradox offered by Shields's writings, like those of Munro, lies in the seductive ordinariness of the material. Amanda Craig, reviewing *The Republic of Love* for the *Independent*, notes that to be a Canadian woman writing of love in Winnipeg is "professional suicide." Yet, having invoked this stereotype of the dullness of Canada, she expresses exasperated disbelief at its persistence: "*The Republic of Love* . . . makes you wonder yet again why Canadians are seen as dull" ("Loving"). If Shields's novels are seen to be satisfying and reassuring because they deal not with the sublime events of spectacular lives but with the quotidian of the hyper-ordinary, they are also exotic for the very invisibility of the subject-matter they depict.

The reception of Shields's *Swann* provides a particularly good case-study of the ways the native and cosmopolitan are being reinvoked in postcolonial readings of Canada in England.[22] In this novel, Shields attempts to interrogate the colonialist readings of Canadian literature that have haunted Canadian culture for years; she is asking, how does the Canadian — perhaps specifically the feminized Canadian — become universally relevant? Shields writes of the "mystery" imposed on her character, Mary Swann, by the "arrogance" of critics: "it's a legacy . . . of conquest, the belief that poets shape their art from materials that are mysterious and inaccessible," in contrast to the "bleak Ontario acres" of Mary Swann's immediate experience (*Swann* 31). Ironically, the very prejudices expressed by the critics within the novel were echoed by many English reviewers. They, like the researchers and academic critics portrayed in the book, marvelled at the co-existence of the aesthetic with the rural (within Mary Swann, within the novel, within Shields, within Canada), even relying

upon similar metaphors to ask, for example, whether genius can "sprout in the most unpromising soil" (Quigley).

Susie Campbell was one of the few English reviewers to note the irony of Shields's portrait of the parochialism of Mary Swann's life. Even she, however, felt compelled to "localize" the text by identifying this "defensive equivocation" as part of "the book's attitude towards its own 'Canadian-ness'. In this way, Campbell praised the novel for its parody of Canadian cultural nationalism, while also undercutting its attempt to ward off the patronizing dismissal of Canadian space as regional. In response to Shields's attempts to thwart appeals to a specifically "Canadian" reality, Campbell identified the Canadianness of the text, not in its critique of those who apply restrictive definitions to Canadian experience, but in its metacritical self-ironizing. Evidently, in order to cease being the Canadian colonial, the writer must be located in identifiably postcolonial but also clearly "Canadianized" space.

This brings us to the iconic Canadian, Margaret Atwood, who is celebrated as both the most average and the most exotic Canadian of all. An article in the 26 October 1989 *Guardian* by Sally Brampton states that Atwood is now one of the world's foremost writers: "she is repatriated, such is her fame." Yet what, in the context of the postcolonial, does it mean to be repatriated? Recycled as a world citizen? Or returned, like Canada's constitution, to her rightful homeland — in this case, England? Or is it to recuperate the universal in an interpretation of the (local) Canadian, through which the boundlessness of Canadian identity is what makes it universal? As Howells writes in the conclusion to her study of Canadian literature, "It is both paradox and consequence of Atwood's [nationalist] position that [her] shift from the absolute opens the way to 'a truly universal literature'" (*Private* 54).

Atwood, beyond all other Canadian writers, is identified as an icon of the internationally successful Canadian. What most contributes to her iconic status in England, however, is her firm identity as authentically Canadian. English critics often attempt to represent Atwood as the prototypical pioneer, constructing her life and career as a metonym for the progress of Canada as a whole. Since at least the early 1980s, English critics have been

fascinated by the fact that during Atwood's childhood, her family spent a portion of each year in the woods while her scientist father did fieldwork on insects. English reviews of her work often highlight Atwood's "wilderness" childhood in order to chart for Atwood a sort of Lacanian entry into the symbolic order, delineating Atwood's progression from an isolated and primitive wilderness state — what one reviewer calls her "bucolic existence" (Kemp) — to her socialization in the world of urban human society.

An idealized narrative of progress is thus constructed for Atwood, an emplotment in which Atwood's career is seen to parallel the growth of Canadian national (and postcolonial) identity. This has its most distilled form in the rags-to-riches histories constructed for Atwood, as the title alone of Heidi Kingstone's report for the *Independent* suggests: "A Writer's Road from Wilderness to Wealth." Kingstone alludes to Atwood's gradual shedding of a "hick Canadian" image, progressing "from the young girl who grew up in the true north of the Canadian wilderness to a woman who enjoys the riches that success brings." The passage traces the repatriation of a verified Canadian. The title of Kingstone's article could therefore be rephrased: *a writer's road from wilderness to wealth* becoming *a writer's road from Canada to somewhere else.*

The Canadian part of the journey, however, must be firmly established before one can proceed forward. This takes place according to the latter stages of a pioneering trajectory (from wilderness to civilization) in which one writes about wilderness in order to escape from it. The summers spent with her father doing field research, Kingstone considers a period of deprivation "in 'the back of beyond.'" Sue Fox concentrates on Atwood's "isolated early childhood in northern Ontario and the Quebec bush," one in which she grew accustomed to "the sounds of loons and howling wolves at night." It was a world in which self-sufficiency was a matter of survival, much as for the early Canadian pioneers. The bush was "too rough for most people," but not for Atwood, who "learnt a healthy respect for rivers, bears, lightning and forest fires." Adam Hopkins announces emphatically, and almost gratefully, that "everything

one has half-imagined . . . turns out to be true. Margaret Atwood, one of the most sophisticated novelists around, really did spend half her childhood in a cabin by a lake in the northern wilderness of Canada." Beverly Hayne, likening Atwood to a "lady of the frontier," states that even today Atwood is not a fully "successful metropolitan intellectual" but a child of the Canadian wilderness. In this configuration, Atwood's emergent urbanization and sophistication is always uneasy: regrettable, but necessary. Atwood's ability to retain both aspects of experience — the idealized imaginary realm of her past and the equally idealized present realm of urban Canadian society — gives her a perceptive edge. It makes of her a transitional figure: both wild and urban, archaic and modern, native and cosmopolitan. It represents the story of an authentic, originary Canada/ian come of postcolonial age.

V

All of this leads us back to the question of how a Canadian becomes, or is made to be, or identifies him/herself as postcolonial. What happens when the native becomes so reified on cosmopolitan ground as to be beyond recognition? Ultimately, as with most reversals, the colonial us/them opposition, when inverted into the postcolonial them/us, is not a solution. One must attend to the *ways* the native/cosmopolitan distinction continues to be applied in order to highlight its context of invocation at any particular moment. This might entail a "de-territorializing" of the postcolonial subject in order to re-locate him/her, a means of focusing less on the supposedly universal facets of an internationally renowned Canadian literature — an emphasis which promulgates a delimiting here/there divide — and more on the politically enabling (and hindering) particularities of the Canadian locale. Frye's long-ago posing of the central Canadian question as "Where is here?" has, as Richard Cavell observes, established the location of Canada as "an abstraction that excludes the social dimension" (112), a fixing of the native locale *as* essentially "native" (if not also utopian). This exclusion of social and political space is central to imperial constructions of colonial space, which is in turn what we see

being revived in contemporary figurations of Canadian culture as either harmoniously "native" or laudably "cosmopolitan."

Configuring the Canadian here/there as a "heterotopia" (Cavell 121) involves recognizing it as a set of overlapping and conflicting sites determined by a multiplicity of social relations, which are nevertheless interpellated by the national label, "Canada." The terrain of the essentially "native" must therefore be conceptually *re*-territorialized for its exploration of discursive and psychic "territories" generally invisible in the containment of "native" space. This must occur, not only on a national scale, within the site of the postcolonial nation, but internationally as well, so that the postcolonial does not operate as a convenient mediator between a cosmopolitan "here" and a native "there." To invoke the phrasing of Martina Michel, who in turn echoes bell hooks, the goal might be to inquire how the subject is *placed* in any particular instance of postcolonial discourse, in the sense of the postcolonial subject being a site of "multiple and conflicting voices within which the individual is embedded" (91) — which is not to say that subjectivity or national identity is nullified, but rather that it is complexly constituted within any given "Canadian" situation. The question, writes Michel, is "not just 'who I am' but 'where am I coming from.' The clear-cut opposition between 'us' and 'them' has been challenged" (92). In this way, one might succeed in shifting the question from "Can the Canadian Speak?" to "If a Canadian speaks in the postcolonial wilderness, does he/she make any noise?" — which might return us to the pedagogical questions I posed earlier on. How *does* one begin to "listen" to the Canadian postcolonial subject/text, either on native ground, or elsewhere?

It is clear that the overarching signifier of Canadianness which so many English readers of Canada seek is a phantom. Nonetheless, these readings of Canadian literature return us to the thorny debates about nationalisms and identity politics which continue to haunt postcolonial discourse. Are such collective abstractions dependent on an exclusivist and homogenizing essentialism, and, if so, do they nevertheless represent a necessary tactical strategy? How would one recuperate the latter while eschewing the former? This quandary, and the various

other internal complexities and cultural overlaps that mark many contemporary societies, reveal that overly restricted definitions of "legitimate" postcolonial expression are inappropriate to discussions of settler-invader nations. Perhaps the obvious lesson is that any attempts at national and/or intra-national self-identification require continual re-negotiation. To deny the force of such identity constructs is crippling. To indulge in nothing else is equally disabling. This problem is clear in many writings on Canadian literature in England in which a crucial amount of complication is lacking, particularly in those discussions which construct a characteristically "Canadian" object.

It may be time to "subject" the Canadian object by offering him/her the full complexity of "self-location" beyond the here and there. Smaro Kamboureli attributes her interest in the contingencies of self-location to a "desire to release myself from the hold that nativism has on Canadian literature (be it ethnic or not)" (8). Accordingly, she seeks a way of identifying herself as "at once Canadian and ethnic": "As her [the diasporic critic's] ethnic background cannot be reduced to a stable and essentially 'true' past, so her national identity as Canadian resists simplification. . . . The objective is neither to construct an opposition nor to effect a balance between these positions; instead, it is to produce a space where her hybridity is articulated in a manner that does not cancel out any of its particularities" (22). Kamboureli's approach points the way to a renewed postcolonial politics for settler societies. Not only might it enable one to discuss the dynamic encounters of difference and commonality within the nation, but it might also facilitate ways of being simultaneously traditional and modern, local and international, Canadian and something else, to the extent that evaluative inflections have been discarded.

Who speaks for Canada? And if it's not the Canadian, who is it? It may be in the nature of the question that there is no satisfactory response. Instead, the question itself comes to have a performative role, *as* a question. If we don't know where we are, and if we can't identify who's speaking, perhaps all we can do is wonder whether a Canadian can speak (internationally) at all — which might move us from the postcolonial back to the

colonial, into the not very appealing territory of Frye's "post-Canadian." Perhaps, when considering these questions in a global context, we need some way of combining both dilemmas. "Where Is Here?" and "Who Speaks for Canada?" might be better rephrased in the words of Rudy Wiebe: "Where is the Voice Coming From?" This may be the question that best attends to the Canadian lost in international postcolonial space.

NOTES

1 For theoretical discussions of settler-invader postcolonialism, see Brydon, Lawson, Prentice, Slemon, and Tiffin. In "Plato's Cave," Tiffin delineates the early split between "Commonwealth post-colonialism" and "colonial discourse theory," providing a convincing overview of the ways the former aimed "to include study of the settler-invader colonies as crucial for the understanding of imperialism" while the latter tended to reject their inclusion within the sphere of the postcolonial (161).

2 For postcolonial literature surveys that include a section on Canada, see Bruce King, New, and Walsh. In contrast, recent texts by, for example, Walder and Loomba do not include Canada within the field of the postcolonial (although sections on South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand are retained). One also finds an under-representation of Canada in postcolonial theory anthologies. See, for instance, Chambers and Curti; and Williams and Chrisman.

3 While studies of such places as India (see Suleri, Viswanathan, Bhabha, and Spivak), Africa (McClintock, Young), and Ireland (Kiberd) find publishers in the metropolitan centres (U of Chicago P; Columbia UP; Routledge; Harvard UP), parallel treatments of Canada and Australia can still only find an "international" audience at home. Canadian fiction might be garnering an international audience, but Canadian nonfiction — especially historical and theoretical writings on Canada — definitely does not.

4 See Slemon's "Unsettling the Empire" and "Post-Colonial Critical Theories" for a clear articulation of these issues, and his further consideration of this complex debate in "The Scramble for Post-Colonialism." In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft et al. clearly state that their understanding of postcolonialism includes both senses: "We use the term 'post-colonial' . . . to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). Mishra and Hodge's critique of this position insists on separating the two while conflating Third-World literatures with literary expressions of resistance. According to Slemon, it is this confusion that has led to the excision of settler colonies from the field of debate. For an analysis of the different ideological uses of the term, consult Bahri; Hall, "When Was 'the Post-Colonial'?"; McClintock, "Angel"; Mukherjee, "Whose Post-Colonialism?"; and Shohat.

5 Tiffin launches a parallel argument in "Plato's Cave." In her view, the influence of post-structuralism on postcolonial theory, following the publication of Said's *Orientalism*, resulted in an "amnesia in relation to the extensive work already done by 1978" (159).

6 For further discussion of the dialectic between nationalism and internationalism in postcolonial discourse, see those articles by Bruce King, Thumboo, and Saint-Jacques in Zach and Goodwin. See also King's excellent account of these issues in "New Centres of Consciousness" and Dharwadker.

7 As will become apparent in the course of this essay, I use the term "native" to refer, not to writings by Canada's Indigenous Peoples, but to "local" cultural production. Also, I should note that I am considering only English-Canadian literature and criticism here, as distinct from French-Canadian and Québecois contexts. For an account of the various ways English-Canadian critics have theorized the relation between the two literary traditions, see Sugars, "On the Rungs."

8 Murray's analysis of the ways English-Canadian literary critical discourse has remained obsessed with questions of evaluation forms a useful parallel to the argument I am making here. According to Murray, Canadian criticism is marked by "Frye's subjective-objective, literary-cultural dilemma" (77), a seemingly irreconcilable clash between literary text and socio-cultural context. Bennett's genealogy of postcolonialism in Canada, especially her account of the split between universal literary values and local content, also forms an important background to this study.

9 See Arnold's essay, "General Grant," in which he decries the dilution of the international literary field and mocks the venture to forge an American literary tradition: "we have 'the American Walter Scott,' 'the American Wordsworth'; nay I see advertised *The Primer of American Literature*! Are we to have to have a primer of Canadian Literature too . . . ?" (177).

10 The role of "native cosmopolitans" such as Salman Rushdie and Rohinton Mistry, writers who are seen as representatives of local cultures despite their cosmopolitan contexts, is an entirely other question here. See Huggan for a discussion of this in terms of the commodification of postcolonial writing and cultural difference.

11 This quotation is taken from the epigraph to Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. Clearly, many Canadians do not self-identify as "settler subjects" even though they might agree with the designation of Canada as an inherently unhomely space. There is no denying that the native/cosmopolitan divide was originally an ethnic-majority preoccupation.

12 In his 1960 introduction to the *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*, and later in "Eclectic Detachment," Smith attempted to resolve the native/cosmopolitan distinction through his notion of "eclectic detachment" which was to signal an authentically "Canadian" literary response to the nation's international marginalization. This term, he hoped, "would be a kind of Hegelian synthesis of pride of place and nation with a cosmopolitan outlook" (Kizuk 110). Specifically, the term referred to the Canadian's unique position in being able "to draw from British, French and American sources in both language and literary conventions while maintaining a detachment that permits him to select what will best work in his own special circumstances" ("Eclectic" 23). However, even in this approach Smith appeals to a broader conception of literary standards and good (universally acknowledged) taste. See Kizuk for a further discussion of Smith's (and Frye's) constructions of Canadian identity/alterity, as well as Kokotailo for an account of the ways Smith's thought evolved towards an increased merging of the native and the cosmopolitan. I am grateful to Seymour Mayne for his comments on this section of my essay.

13 In 1958, Frye revised Smith's dichotomy as operating not between separate groups of writers but within the body of their work, though still seeing it as "a division of mind within each poet" ("Poetry" 86). Moving forward from Brown's *On Canadian Poetry*, Frye aligns the terms centripetal and centrifugal with Smith's native and cosmopolitan: "the English-Canadian poet . . . [is] torn between a centrifugal impulse to ignore his environment and compete on equal terms with his British and American contemporaries, and a centripetal impulse to give an imaginative voice to his own surroundings."

14 See Murray for a useful assessment of Frye's contradictory stance regarding Canadian literature. According to Murray, Frye's "containment of Canadian literature serves to protect his 'other' theoretical system from the challenge posed by colonial and post-colonial writings" (81). Godard, quoting Frank Davey, offers a parallel critique of Frye's "'schizophrenia,'" identifying a "split between semantic and syntactic levels" (content and form) which continues to haunt the Canadian critical scene (29).

15 Sutherland has been attacked for his overtly masculinist celebration of Canadian culture. Dickinson, for instance, attributes Sutherland's discomfort with the "cosmopolitan" style to his barely repressed homophobia (73). Whether or not this is the case, Milton Wilson launched a convincing critique of Sutherland's antipathy to Smith's anthology, in which he asserts that Sutherland's revision of Smith's terms is not convincing. *Other Canadians*, Wilson argues, divides into "the British colonials and the American colonials" and it "requires much self-denial on Sutherland's part not to call them the cosmopolitans and the natives" (78). Louis Dudek's terms for the split echo Wilson's own positioning on the debate: the "meticulous moderns" versus the "lumpen intellectuals" (qtd. Wilson 78). Wilson's article, however, represents one of the most successful early attempts to conflate the two poles and was undoubtedly an influence on Smith's conception of eclectic detachment.

16 Crean further anticipates much current postcolonial discourse by invoking Frantz Fanon in her account of the ways Canadians themselves have become psychologically colonized.

17 For a good overview of these debates, see Cameron. Godard also provides an insightful analysis of this period as a prelude to her discussion of later Canadian critical approaches.

18 This may be because English-Canadian culture is simply not considered as foreign — both because it is part of a Western nationalist tradition and because it shares English as an "originary" language.

19 This section of the essay emerges from a much larger study of the reception of Canadian literature in Britain. The writers I discuss here, along with Robertson Davies and Michael Ondaatje, remain among the most popular Canadian writers in England today, and hence have garnered an immense amount of critical attention, both in academic publications and in the popular press. The writings of Davies and Ondaatje, for a variety of reasons, do not inspire the same sort of figuration as the writers I am discussing in this paper. On the one hand, Davies is generally considered too "Old-World" to lend himself to meditations on the authentically "native" Canadian locale; Ondaatje, on the other hand, along with, for instance, Mavis Gallant, is considered too "international" to fall into the postcolonial trajectory identified for more securely "native" Canadian writers. Ondaatje is generally perceived as an embodiment of a hybridized multiculturalism; accordingly, he becomes emblematically Canadian the more he is figured as having emerged from somewhere else.

20 The fact that Shields is originally from the United States is either ignored by critics or celebrated as evidence of Canada's nurturing effect on the "American" character. For a further discussion of this aspect of Shields's reception in Britain, see Sugars, "Noble Canadians."

21 Hugh MacLennan is infamous for his statement that Canadian fictional settings are not of interest internationally. See his essay, "Boy Meets Girl in Winnipeg and Who Cares?"

22 This novel was first published in England by Fourth Estate in 1990 under the title *Mary Swann*. The North American edition was originally published by Stoddart in 1987 under the title *Swann: A Mystery*. The edition I cite, a 1996 Vintage-Random House edition, goes by the title *Swann*.

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