Continuing Dispossession: Clearances as a Literary and Philosophical Theme[*]

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1. Critique, Hope, and Inhabitation

> *a blue heron*
> *and it occurs to me*
> *that if I were to die at this moment*
> *that picture would accompany me*
> *wherever I am going*
> *for part of the way*

From "The Last Picture in the World" by Al Purdy[1]

The study of culture in English Canada seems now to be suffused with the sense that something has come to an end. In this sense it perhaps participates in a wider feeling of fatigue, that the cultural resources at our disposal are insufficient to address the current situation. This situation presents itself as one of either impending catastrophe or long-term decline and corresponds to the already-underway normalization of Canada as a junior member of the world's dominant nations. There is not much sense any more that the embedded structural inequalities of the past can be criticized and confronted in a manner that would motivate renewal. Within such a mood of dejection and even despair the activity of criticism itself runs the danger of promoting cynicism by showing the ideals of the past as always already implicated in power structures and thereby contributing to the very impasse that it would diagnose. In order to refuse this repackaging as cynicism, critique must admit to its secret alliance with hope, as naïve and precarious as hope may seem at the moment. It may be impossible to speak this hope positively but it must be

acknowledged to lurk within the negation of the negation.[2] I will speak of dispossession as historical fact and literary remembrance to confront the continuing dispossession that must be negated in any speech about justice. The hope for justice may well appear to us hedged and tentative, its implementation unclear and even impossible, its demand too high for redemption. But thought without hope for justice would retreat from its public responsibility—which is to tell the truth apart from pragmatic compromise.

There is an ancient figure of thought that describes the idea of criticism through the metaphor of distance. We need to "get some distance," we say, or "move beyond" or "get outside," in order not to be overwhelmed by the effects of proximity and involvement. As McLuhan famously encapsulated it, fish know nothing of water.[3] Distance from involvement allows criticism. The notion that travel broadens the mind stems from a similar proposition: that encounter with the strange ways of others allows one to see the ways of one's own people as simply one way of doing things and not the only way or the only properly human way. As Xenophanes of Colophon is reputed to have said, if horses had gods, they would look like horses, and the gods of cattle would look like cattle.[4] Through distance, I can understand that the human form of human gods is just a deformation due to the particularities of humans and is not the necessary form of gods as such. Travel is a good remedy for narcissism.

The humanizing task of literature also fits into this figure of distance: stories which show that the different ways of other people are not evidence of a lack of humanity, but rather of a different way of being human, open us to a different attitude to our own practices and beliefs. Martha Nussbaum's recent defence of the humanities repeats this classic figure under the name "narrative imagination," which focuses on "what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the

emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have."[5] Critical distance depends upon prising apart particularity and universality, such that one's own particular practices are no longer confused with universal and necessary forms and other particular forms become equally possible exemplars of universality. This prising apart opens a discursive space that makes the figure of criticism as distance possible.

Without for a moment suggesting that one can do without this original distancing, or even that its enlightening potential is exhausted, I want to suggest that it has come upon a limit which has something to do with the uniqueness of our own place in space and time. To give some force to this suggestion, I will explore another metaphor for thought, one that suggests we need to "get inside" and "live within" we might say, or inhabit the particularity of a form of life. The danger of the metaphor of distance is that it may seem as if nearness or particularity is itself error. However, if we read our stories for what they show of inhabitation, their particularity may not discount them from universality but be precisely the clue that turns them toward universalization. Inhabitation, I want to suggest, is a leading and founding metaphor for the need and desire of our time. If the fish were in our place, perhaps what it might most need to know would be water. Or, for ourselves, what we most need to know *here* and *now* is air, water, food, tools—the nearness and particularity of a way of life that may be sustained. If there is something to this, inhabitation further suggests that there is an unacknowledged symbiosis between universality understood through distance and the dispossession of peoples that disrupts and prevents inhabitation—in other words, that the discursive space constructed through prising apart particularity and universality is implicated in contemporary homelessness. I take it as sufficiently established that universality can be neither discarded nor ignored without producing an incoherent discourse. Put in rhetorical language, no discourse can be ordered without a God-term. The suspicion that universality in the form of

distance has reinforced dispossession thus means that a recovery of inhabitation projects another form of universality that would incorporate the hope that I hesitantly mentioned at first. What I want to say here will not focus on inhabitation directly but on the continuing dispossession that makes inhabitation a goal for thought, writing and criticism—not so much on justice as its systematic absence.

2. English Canadian Culture

The dream of tory origins
Is full of lies and blanks,
Though what remains when it is gone,
To prove that we're not Yanks?

From "When I Went Up to Rosedale" by Dennis Lee[6]

We have been living through a historical period in which the concept of identity has been a major preoccupation in English Canada. The historical period that is now ending can be dated from after World War II—let us say when the Canadian Citizenship Act was passed in 1946. This act referred to Canadians as British subjects and allowed immigrants who were not already British subjects to undertake the Oath of Allegiance for Purposes of Citizenship that made reference to the current monarch. Only in 1977 was it clarified that the reference to the Queen was in her capacity as Queen of Canada, not that of Great Britain, and the term "British subject" replaced by "Commonwealth citizen." However, this official history is just the tip of the iceberg: Canada was ceasing to be a British Dominion *in the eyes of its citizens*, and the question arose as to who we were. The period from 1946 to, let's say, 2002—when the first Canadian troops were deployed in Afghanistan— was characterized by a progressive retreat from British to Commonwealth and then Canadian citizenship and a consequent withdrawal of previously established referents for identity which led

to the necessity to give some new content to the idea of being Canadian. Using 2002 to date, if not the end of this period, then at least the beginning of its end, means to suggest that Canada is becoming a normal nation whose international activities represent neither more nor less than the self-interest of its dominant class and which is as self-satisfied in its official identity as any other nation.

The attempt to articulate an English-Canadian identity required a retreat from larger English-speaking identities into which we were drawn. The increasing distance from Britain meant an increasing pull toward the United States. The notion of a distinct identity required a defence of its "particularity" as against the universal claims of the American empire.[7] Thus, the reversal of the figure of criticism was built into the situation that produced an anxiety about identity. The fundamental question was the relation between the particularity of our own form of life and human universality. In a situation in which the metaphor of distance was insufficient, there was the beginning of a turn toward inhabitation, though it took place exclusively in the form of belonging to a *national* community.[8]

Alongside the rich discourse about identity, an intractable issue blocked resolution or definition of English Canadian identity. There is no political body that represents English Canada. Neither the Federal government, nor the provinces, nor any other form of political representation—which explains why cultural forms, both popular and intellectual, have played a major role in this discourse. English Canada tends to disappear 'up' into Canada itself or 'down' into the various regional, ethnic, etc. groups that make it up. The slide between English Canada and other identities, up or down, means that its social identity is caught in what I call a "constitutive paradox." Since it cannot function as a fixed container, the various elements within English Canada come to stand

for English Canada itself. Multiculturalism has most often played this role: English Canada may seem to be no more than the many different groups that comprise it.

The discourse of the identity of English Canada from 1946 to 2002 had three main components.[9] First, it contained a communitarian component that goes back to the settlement of many areas by ethnic communities, the Loyalist rejection of American individualism which was combined with its defence of monarchy, and, as many have argued, the human solidarity brought forth by the rigours of a harsh climate. This component goes a long way toward explaining the greater social welfare policies that have predominated here in comparison to those of our neighbour to the south. Second, there has always been a plurality of linguistic, ethnic, and religious communities so that one community could never adequately represent the whole, a fact that asserted itself in the debates that led up to the Multiculturalism Act of 1988. Reflection on the relation of identity and diversity in this spirit has been a dominant theme in English Canadian culture. The third component is more controversial but also, in my own view, more important since it structured the very possibility of the discourse itself as a withdrawal from larger English-speaking collectivities. There was a critique of empire rooted in the historical dominance of Canada by French, British, and American empires and the consequent popular attempt to find independence in far-flung settlements. Critique of empire extended to recognition of how power structured perception and thought as well as political economy.

These three components comprised a discourse of English Canadian culture in which identity was the over-riding, ordering theme. This discourse has not yet disappeared but it is clear that its end has already begun. Signs of this end include: abandonment of the communitarian component through increasing acceptance of the liberal individualism dominant in other English-speaking polities; reduction of the large-scale questions about plural identities and forms of life in

the multiculturalism debate to an official policy—a policy which has itself come under harsh criticism;[10] abandonment of Canada's international peacekeeping role for partisan participation in conflicts. We are beginning to see a newly confident Canada with which English Canada largely identifies and for which the question of our identity both at home and internationally is not a source of anxiety. We are replacing doubt with an unreflective confidence that parades itself as self-knowledge precisely by not asking any difficult questions.[11]

At times I fear that I am almost alone in noticing that this is the last act of a tragedy. A tragedy not only because it is an outcome eminently to be regretted, but because the outcome stems from an internal failure sufficiently to criticize the individualism and capitalism of the society within which it was articulated. When Gad Horowitz said that English Canada was still "looking for its Levesque"[12] no one sufficiently appreciated that it was of the nature of this social formation to project a goal that it could never possess without throwing aside the history of compromise and "muddling through" that had made it what it was—that is to say, ceasing to be itself. What the beginning of the end allows us to see is that the notion of a national identity and community in English Canada cannot play a coordinating and integrating role because it is no longer absent. Its absence made it the locus of a desire that provided the glue with which the three components of the discourse could be compacted and therefore gave it its public impact.[13] Perhaps now pulling on the controversial thread of critique of empire in the English Canadian discourse about identity may allow a renewal of critical thought whose continuity with our history does not fall into the evasions that have led to the current ending. The turn toward particularity in the period of identity-anxiety stopped too soon at the nation-state and now needs to be pushed toward inhabitation in a more radical sense.

3. Clearances

> *Did we come for nothing? We thought we were summoned, the aging head-waiters, the minor singers, the second-rate priests. But we couldn't escape into these self-descriptions, nor lose ourselves in the atlas of coming and going.*

From *Book of Mercy* by Leonard Cohen[14]

When I read the short story "Clearances" by Alisdair MacLeod I trembled at the scale of his accomplishment, his amazing capacity to distil centuries of suffering and bring it into the present day, combined with a simplicity and terseness of prose.[15] For years I had dreamed of putting the experience of the Clearances into a political-philosophical reflection. To anyone with a Scottish background, the term Clearances evokes a mixture of nostalgia and rage, and of other unnamed emotions that have come down through centuries. For others, of course, the event probably needs explanation. The last great rebellion of Highland Scotland against the incursion of England and the already subjugated Lowlands ended in 1745 with the defeat at Culloden.[16] After that the clan-system of the Highlands was destroyed by both gradual destitution and violent shocks. The chiefs were turned into property-holders, often absentee ones, and the general population who served no role in the southern-dominated capitalist system were cleared to make room for sheep.

MacLeod's story tells of a descendent of these people who leaves Cape Breton only once in his life to fight in the Second World War. On leave in England for one week, he takes a trip to the north-west of Scotland. There he encounters a shepherd speaking the Gaelic who becomes his friend. Noting both the Canadian uniform and the Gaelic, the shepherd says "You are from Canada? You are from the Clearances?" Notice that the "you" in this address expresses an identity between the descendent and the ancestor across time though the historical event. His absence in Scotland is expressed through a reference back in time that renders him still in place. His place is

rendered through the memory of dispossession. Notice also that he is a shepherd, that he has survived by coming to terms with the sheep that replaced the people. The language still survives to link these two people across two divided destinies that, as long as memory survives, can perhaps struggle to remain, or become, one.

The shepherd goes on to ask him "is it possible that in Canada you can own and keep your land?" While at this point he answers in the affirmative, at the end of the story, back in Cape Breton, his son urges him to go along with an offer to sell his land to American tourists for a summer residence, an urging which he experiences as "a family betrayal." The tourist had said "not many people here" to which he replied "a lot of them gone to the States. A lot of the younger people gone to Halifax or southern Ontario." Empty land, that is to say, land *emptied* of the people who worked there and inhabited it. The way that all of America was emptied, we should not forget, of other peoples that inhabited it. As the tourist says, "nice and quiet." The son's betrayal is neither un-motivated nor mean. It is urged by the need to make a living and the desire to pass on a future to his children. The story ends without a decision.

Can he keep his own land? He answered "yes" with the dream that so many of the displaced from the Old World placed in the New, but it is doubtful that he will be able to retain his land and even more doubtful that it will pass to his descendents. The land is now worth more as an empty view of the ocean than as a place where humans mixed their labour with the land and risked their lives on the sea to survive. The first time sheep were worth more than the people. Now it is the view. The first time it was the force of the landowner that expelled them. Now it is the "free market" economy that forces the son to look elsewhere to care for his family. Will the son, this time, be able to evade the fate of his ancestors? Will the land be more than a means for money-making? Will the people be able properly to inhabit their land?

The bare bones of this story do not do justice to its compressed and allusive depth. MacLeod has managed to express that the Clearances continue, that one must still leave behind what one loves due to the need to survive, that we do not simply enter into the future but are cut off from the past, and thus that the future looms terribly as a betrayal of the past. A family betrayal. This time the son, the disloyal future; last time, the father, the chief of a clan turned into a landowner who evicted his tenant relations. Thus the mythology of Culloden among Scots to this day, the site of the final defeat of the Highland Scots rebellion that at its peak had threatened to invade London and, one says with trepidation, was held back as much by the unthinkableness of this possibility of confronting the centre of empire as by the balance of arms. John Prebble is the popular historian of this moment and its consequences.

> At Culloden, and during the military occupation of the glens, the British government first defeated a tribal uprising and then destroyed the society that had made it possible. The exploitation of the country during the next hundred years was within the same plan of development – new economies introduced for the greater wealth of the few, and the unproductive obstacle of a native population removed or reduced. In the beginning the men who introduced the change were of the same blood, tongue and family as the people. They used the advantages given them by the old society to profit from the new, but in the end they were gone with their clans. The Lowlander has inherited the hills, and the tartan is a shroud.[17]

From this point, the Scots were incorporated into the empire, not least as troops for its expansion and defence against the rebellions of other peoples who were losing their lands and way of life. This tragedy dogs the Scots thereafter: having lost their own land and way of life, many of them participated in the military adventures that forced the same on other people. "Highland soldiers were the first of Britain's colonial levies, called to arms to police their own hills and then to fight in the Crown's imperial wars. Until they were disciplined and regimented like any English battalion of the line, until their peculiar identity had become a harmless military caricature, they

were treated with suspicion and distrust."[18] It is this suspicion to which Alisdair MacLeod refers

when he uses General Wolfe's words to describe the Highland troops on the Plains of Abraham as

the lynch-pin of his novel *No Great Mischief*—"They are hardy, intrepid, accustomed to a rough

country, and no great mischief if they fall."[19] The double-sidedness can be neither resolved through

a choice nor bridged by a dialectic: dispossession leads to emigration, exile and nostalgia but also

to despair, capitulation and collaboration.

But not always. Consider the case of Angus MacDonald, who had been with Montrose until

the Glencoe Massacre (1692) in the aftermath of the Jacobite Uprising of 1689. Afterward, his

descendent, named Angus P. McDonald, found his way to America where he married into the Nez

Perce tribe. Based on his Highland experiences, Angus admired their similar attachment to the

land as the embodiment of community when he met them through his work for the Hudson's Bay

Company in the 1840s. James Hunter has told the story:

> [T]he part of the world where Angus McDonald was born in 1816 was among the
> first to be subject to disruption of the sort which Angus was afterwards to witness
> in the American West. The destruction of the Lordship of the Isles; the Glencoe
> massacre; clearance and eviction of the sort which occurred in the Strath of
> Kildonan: these events were to affect Highlanders in a way that was analogous to
> the impact on Native Americans of occurrences like the Nez Perce War. … Both
> on the Flathead Reservation and in the Scottish Highlands, for example, people
> whose language and traditions have long been under threat are presently making
> strenuous efforts to ensure that these key aspects of their collective identities are
> safeguarded and regenerated.[20]

Both for many of the peoples who populated America due to the ravaging of their land, culture,

and tradition in the Old World, as well as for those peoples upon whom the same process was

inflicted in the New, any discussion of culture now must include an account of dispossession that

would explain their polemical relation to the current order. Indeed, any account of culture that

intends to go beyond the merely apologetic to understand that which has made our era what it is needs such a concept of dispossession.

Such, I believe, is the intention of Alistair MacLeod's short story. Its achievement in 20 pages I find simply staggering. For anyone whose national and family history is caught up in the Clearances, for anyone with even a slight knowledge of what it has meant, MacLeod's story makes a connection between historical epochs magisterial in its implications. It refers to the historical clearances that we must not forget, but even more it situates our Canada, now, as the site of renewed clearances. It demands a deeper penetration into what happens with the buying and selling of land, to what is hidden by the current cant over the supposedly free market, to the anxiety of identity without the possibility of inhabitation.

The power of a well-crafted narrative articulates such a demand to a reader's experience. Such a story demands a reader who will fill in its compressed allusion with personal and family depth. Yet, it seems clear that not all, perhaps even not many, readers will fill this bill. It demands a reader who in a sense already understands what the story is saying before it is read. The story participates in a history, articulates that history and transmits it, makes it present, but it is not that history. It alludes to, but does not tell, the whole story. Its huge ambition works because of this compression, but the compression demands a reader who can de-compress. What does the story say to one for whom this whole history is unknown or, at best, a parochial concern of a too self-involved people?

4. Clearances and English Canadian Culture

> *not willing another empire but history's pulse measured with another hand, as continents roll over in their sleep*
>
> From "Inventory" by Dionne Brand[21]

A story is about particular people—it narrates an event—yet every good story wants to say something beyond that. Other peoples have suffered their Clearances too. Indeed, they are too numerous to list, let alone tell. All of those other stories could help us make sense of the continuing clearance, of the betrayal of the past by the future, and of the future by the past, of the cut in time from which emigration appears as the only solution and empire provides the continuity that makes these events into a single history.

Let me consider briefly just one other. In *Disappearing Moon Café*, Sky Lee brackets her story of the Wong family by Wong Gwei Chang's mission to retrieve the bones of the dead railway workers for the Benevolent Associations in Vancouver. The allusion to Canada's national dream, and its cost in backbreaking work, loneliness, and death, alerts the reader that telling the story of the Wong family is an exercise in recovering bones and fulfilling one's duty to the ancestors that bears an unsettling relation to the national state. The writer, Kae, understands that "I am the resolution to this story." She remarks that her friend "has a dual personality" to which Hermia responds "maybe all free women do."[22] If the one who articulates the Wong family history of incest, secrecy, and suppression of women becomes free, she does so only at the cost of a duality that implicates her in the secrecy and suppression. Gwei Chang, the seeker of bones, reflects at the end of his life that "it wasn't the white hysteria that frightened him as much as what chinamen had allowed themselves to become in the face of it—pitiful men, with no end for their self-pity in sight.

All the more pitiful because they once had divine authority, if only over their downtrodden women."[23]

Kae's story tells, as it must, of the white hysteria, the dispersed bones produced by the railway, but also of pitiful Chinamen and, above all, the suffering of women—a suffering perpetrated by women upon women, by mother-in-law upon daughter-in-law, in the name of the male line—much as the name of empire forms the context within which English Canadian culture produces an anxiety of identity.

The suppression of women from time out of mind in the name of the male line cannot neatly be separated from the oppression of women by women just as the clearance of the Highlands cannot be separated from the role of Highland troops in robbing other nations of their lands. If there ever was an original justice—of a freedom of women untouched by their role in suppression or a Gaelic-speaking Highland inhabitation untouched by participation in imperial aggression—it is not for us. The inheritors of dispossession know that survival means implication in the mechanisms of continuing dispossession. Justice must be the rebellion against this implication in empire even while knowing that it is inevitable. Angus MacDonald saw analogies to Highland inhabitation in the tribal society of Native Americans. Kae will write the story of free women even while portraying the role of women in the suppression of women. Such justice cannot be a rebellion of the innocent, but of those who confront empire and in the same moment rise against their own implication in that empire. A negation of the negation to be sure, but one that does not yield a positive Hegelian enthusiasm for the result of history. One that is haunted by a nostalgia for a lost and unrecoverable prior and which goes into the future shadowed by the partiality of any justice that can be brought forth after dispossession. A justice crossed by tragedy.

> To see one woman disintegrate is tragic, but to watch an entire house fall—that has the makings of a great Chinese tragedy. I know I've had to turn my face away many times. In front of me, there is nothing to speak of except torpid text and a throbbing cursor on a black-and-white computer screen—electric shadows—but even this is too evocative of the old pain. I am afraid to look intently. I might turn to stone, petrified by the accumulated weight and unrelenting pressure of so many generations of rage.[24]

The temptation, one that will never be erased because it is the source of ideology in its reassuring partiality, is to tell only the stories that fit in to the world as it has come to be. That turns away from the nostalgia, the secrecy, the old pain, in the name of a sleek, well-oiled key that will open the lock to a successful future. Myrna Kostash addresses the writer of such apologetic stories:

> But you do not think that all stories must be told. It is the only way out of the myth, you say—this leave-taking without story or significance. It is the only freedom. But I say, what about those who never did leave a trace, whom history never inscribed? For whom myth is not the untrustworthy grandiloquence of story, as you would have it, but the modest trace elements of people's secrets held in common? I look at your "freedom" from secrets and see the sly get-away of a single man whose story is already accounted for anyway. After all, you belong to The Word.[25]

Canada now, and its culture, is the place of both The Word and the modest trace of secrets, to borrow Kostash's phrasing. There is an optimistic implication with empire that selects and moulds its stories carefully to slide ideologically into the well-oiled future. As Dionne Brand has written, reflecting that both torturers and victims have become invisible here, "Who the hell are you? That's a dangerous question. And this is a dangerous city. You could be anybody here. That is what first took me when I walked among people on the streets. Then one morning I sat on the subway train and I heard a laughter that reminded me of when I was little, and right away I knew it would be easy to disappear here."[26]

One can disappear into the indistinction of forgetting that official culture proposes, or one can ask about who one is, in which case one must confront one's anxious and unsettling implication

in empire's success that wills itself to tell all, that risks being turned to stone by the immense weight of turning against the tide of history. Between these two alternatives one must choose. Culture remains polemical.

5. Locative Thought

> *history tells such*
> *beautiful lies*
>
> *& if*
> *& if*

From "five takes for a poem on family" by Roy Miki[27]

One thing should be clear by now: that a philosophy and cultural theory without a concept of clearance would be an apology for the continuation of structures of power that derive from empire. Thus, it would degenerate into ideology. I have argued in *Identity and Justice* and attempted to sustain here in a different fashion that the secret of Canada is the unofficial dream of self-rule by the dispossessed.[28] It is kept secret through the perpetuation of the lie that the empire, then the nation-state, sets the neutral rules whereby its parts interact, a lie whose ideological expression is the notion that self-other relations in Canada have achieved "tolerance, restraint and mutual respect."[29] This analysis implies a critique of official culture which shows that its tendency is to cover up its opposite in a land-based ethic, to substitute historical continuity for the break represented through inhabitation of the land.[30]

Empire is the dominance of the way of life of a people by an external power. We may define dispossession as being pushed out of one's place by an external power that makes impossible the continuation of the patterns of work and culture that have sustained life until that

historical moment. Inhabitation, the negation of this negation, is the inverse. It is the sustenance of the life of a people that is expressed in work and culture through the continuity of time. After dispossession, such inhabitation becomes both the object of nostalgia for a pre-historic condition and that of desire for a future state. Inhabitation is the name for a mode of existence without empire. Thus, it may become the locus for hope.

I give the name "locative thought" to that thought which seeks inhabitation. Location in English when used as a noun often means simply "place" or "site," but it can also be used as a verb to mean "locating" or "being located" which refers to the locative tense in Latin (OED). In this active sense location involves placing in relation to other places. Inhabitation replaces the metaphor of distance with one of proximity, though its contrast with dispossession excludes the possibility of a pure and unbroken proximity as such. Proximity is the form of nostalgia and desire of belonging, through work and culture, in a place. We have in Canada the example of peoples whose thinking is in place. James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson states that aboriginal knowledge "reflects the complexity of a state of being within a certain ecology" and goes on to explain that "experience is the way to determine personal gifts and patterns in ecology. Experiencing the realms is a personal necessity and forges an intimate relationship with the world."[31] Such thinking would be, in the terms that I have suggested here, the active component in inhabitation.

I have been saying that the figure of criticism has reversed toward inhabitation and that this reversal is rooted in the beginning of the end of English Canadian culture's age of anxiety. Within that culture and time stories were told that hearkened back to earlier instituting moments of dispossession and illustrated the continuing dispossession that cut the culture off from its goals. But locative thought is not inhabitation as such; it is thought in which the figure of criticism has reversed from distance toward inhabitation. Locative thought is the thinking of a people seeking

its place and therefore of a people that has not yet found its place. A people that has undergone dispossession. In our case this is not a single clearance but a plurality which encounters fellow stories not in the site of the original dispossession but in the site after immigration structured by the hope, or dream, that one can own and keep one's own land. The irony is intended. The hope of keeping one's own land occurs in the place where dispossession has been visited upon the original inhabitants.

In seeking inhabitation, one of our key tasks is to recognize the inhabitation of others. It would be tempting to say that the plurality of stories of dispossession can be totalized into a universal concept of not-dispossession, emancipation through inhabitation, or justice. Regarding the horizon of our age, which is manifested in nostalgia and desire, it is not possible to say whether inhabitation in this universal sense is a political project capable of realization. But without such a horizon, the projects we imagine will not speak truthfully to our condition, but will degenerate into the apology and ideology of official culture. So we must leave the place of inhabitation indeterminate between a political vision of the good life and a philosophical image of justice. Locative thought needs hope and seeks it in "the modest trace elements of people's secrets held in common,"[32] as Myrna Kostash said, even though the place of this hope remains indeterminate— for we are not in place but on the way.

Notes

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[1] Al Purdy, "The Last Picture in the World" in *Beyond Remembering: The Collected Poems of Al Purdy* (Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 2000) p. 580.

[2] While this phrasing seems to imply a Hegelian resolution, I have sketched the ground of a phenomenological account that doesn't imply an "identity of identity and difference" in "Phenomenology as Critique of Institutions: Movements, Authentic Sociality and Nothingness" *PhaenEx*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring-Summer 2006. Available at http://www.phaenex.uwindsor.ca/ojs/leddy/index.php/phaenex/article/view/36/114. The concept of infinity in that work is being identified here with hope.

[3] Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *War and Peace in the Global Village* (New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1968) p. 175.

[4] According to Clement of Alexandria. See Clement, *Miscellanies* V.110 and VII.22.

[5] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) pp. 95-6.

[6] Dennis Lee, "When I Went Up to Rosedale" in *The Gods* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979) p. 17.

[7] The classic formulation of this defence of particularity in Canada is of course by George Grant, for example: "The belief in Canada's continued existence has always appealed against universalism. It appealed to particularity against the wider loyalty to the continent. If universalism is the most 'valid modern trend,' then is it not right for Canadians to welcome our integration into the empire?" *Lament for a Nation* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970) p. 85.

[8] See Ian Angus, "Locality and Universalization: Where is Canadian Studies?" Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 35, No. 3, Fall 2000. Special issue on "Locating Canadian Cultures in the Twenty-First Century." The substance of this argument was incorporated into *Identity and Justice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008) pp. 20-6.

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[9] I am drawing here on my two main discussions of this issue without presenting the evidence on which it is based. See Ian Angus, *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality and Wilderness* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1997) chapter 2 and *Identity and Justice*, pp. 13-23, 78-82.

[10] The Globe and Mail has recently argued that "multiculturalism should be struck from the national vocabulary. [Canadian values] shouldn't be lost in an endless discussion about the accommodation of differences." As if the recognition of differences implies the absence of a common discourse!—in which case where would such recognition take place? See "Editorial: Strike multiculturalism from the national vocabulary," *Globe and Mail*, Friday, Oct. 08, 2010. Available at: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/multiculturalism/editorial-strike- multiculturalism-from-the-national-vocabulary/article1748958/

[11] It is this cultural attitude that both reflects and reinforces the fact that "Canada is an imperialist country—not a superpower, but a power that nevertheless benefits from and actively participates in the global system of domination in which the wealth and resources of the Third World are systematically plundered by capital of the Global North." Todd Gordon, *Imperialist Canada* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010) p. 9. It should be pointed out however that this formulation—which summarizes the book's argument and therefore one assumes aims at precision—obscures the conceptualization of imperialism by simultaneously invoking the Cold War era designation of the imperialized nations as the "Third World" and the Willy Brandt derived evasion through the displacement North-South. Neither of these encapsulate the fundamental relations of imperialism. Moreover, Gordon's assertion that this contemporary situation invalidates the historical analyses of dependency theory (pp. 15-22) fails to take into

account the significant changes set into place by international capitalism's recent neo-liberal regime and simply re-asserts in an a historical fashion the prior analysis of Marxists who failed to analyze the specificity of the capitalist class in Canada. It is, of course, quite consistent to accept the historical validity of the dependency theory, its continuing relevance as a significant current of the identity of English Canada (1946-2002), and yet note its passing (at least in the sense of national dependency) in the current stage. My analysis in *A Border Within* (pp. 27-47) follows this route.

[12] Gad Horowitz, "Part III: A Symposium on Rene Levesque," *Canadian Dimension*, Vol. 5, January- March 1968, p. 21; "Tories, Socialists and the Demise of Canada," in *Canadian Dimension*, Vol. 2, May- June 1965, p. 15; and "Quebec and Canadian Nationalism: Two Views," *Canadian Forum*, Vol. 50, January 1971, p 357. I have presented an appreciation of the important role of Gad Horowitz in thinking English Canada in "The Political Culture of English Canada" in Peter Kulchyski and Shannon Bell (eds.) *Contemporary Critical Theory in Canada: Essays in Honour of Gad Horowitz* (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

[13] See Ian Angus, "Here and Now: A New Rationale for Canadian Studies?" in Christl Verduyn and Jane Koustas (eds.) *Canadian Studies: The State of the Art* (Toronto: Fernwood Press, forthcoming).

[14] Leonard Cohen, *Book of Mercy* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984) no. 17.

[15] Alistair MacLeod, "Clearances" in *Island: The Collected Stories* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2000) pp. 413-31.

[16] This explanation should account for the quick reference to Culloden in *Identity and Justice* (p. 84) in explaining how the context of empire structures self-other relations and also, perhaps, that my dream of a philosophical-political reflection on the Clearances is partially, though secretly, redeemed in that text.

[17] John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances* (London: Penguin Books, 1963) p. 304, last page. The last sentence is a separate paragraph. "It is worth remembering, too, that while the rest of Scotland was permitting the expulsion of its Highland people it was also forming that romantic attachment to kilt and tartan that scarcely compensates for the disappearance of the race to whom such things were once a commonplace reality. The chiefs remain, in Edinburgh and London, but the people are gone." Ibid, Foreword, p. 8.

[18] John Prebble, *Mutiny: Highland Regiments in Revolt, 17431804* (London: Secker and Warburg: 1975) p. 20.

[19] Alisdair MacLeod, *No Great Mischief* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999) p. 237.

[20] James Hunter, *Glencoe and the Indians* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 1996) p. 189.

[21] Dionne Brand, *Inventory* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2006) p. 11.

[22] Sky Lee, *Disappearing Moon Café* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1990) pp. 281-2.

[23] Ibid, p. 302.

[24] Ibid, p. 241.

[25] Myrna Kostash, *The Doomed Bridegroom: A Memoir* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1998) p. 145.

[26] Dionne Brand, *What We All Long For* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2005) p. 309.

[27] Roy Miki, "five takes for a poem on family" in *saving face: poems selected 1976-1988* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1991) p. 37.

[28] Ian Angus, *Identity and Justice*, pp. 83-6.

[29] G.B. Madison, "Nationality and Universality" in *Is There a Canadian Philosophy?* p. 16. It is no less ideological if one claims that we are "really" already a métis nation held back only by imperial models and ideas, so that one can claim betrayal by an intellectual class instead of confronting systematic dispossession and inequality. John Raulston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008) pp. 106-7 and passim.

[30] For this analysis, see Ian Angus, *A Border Within*, pp. 111-8.

[31] James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson, "Ayupachi: Empowering Aboriginal Thought" in Marie Battiste (ed.), *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009) pp. 264-5. See also Marie Battiste and James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson, *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: A Global Challenge* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2000).

[32] Myrna Kostash, *The Doomed Bridegroom*, p. 145.