

COMMON GROUND AND THE CITY
ASSUMED COMMUNITY IN VANCOUVER FICTION AND THEATRE

by

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Abstract

This dissertation offers a new approach to an enduring question in literary studies: how do certain genres mediate an experience of “imagined community”? In studies of Canadian literature, texts are frequently analyzed for how they represent place—and how they evoke national, regional, local, or transnational communities by depicting characters’ lives in place. This project shares that interest in place, but rather than asking how place is represented, it asks what audiences are addressed when fiction and theatre performances refer to specific places. Shifting focus onto these works’ address to particular imagined audiences allows me to consider how they mediate their actual audiences’ relationships to specific places and to other local and non-local populations.

Taking novels, short stories, and plays set in metropolitan Vancouver as a case study, I analyze narrative address using the tools of linguistic pragmatics, in particular theories of audience design, relevance, and common ground. I then adapt these ideas to the analysis of live performance in conventional theatres.

I find a variety of different modes of address implicit in how these works style their references to the city and its landmarks. All of the plays and some of the narratives address audiences who share their knowledge of certain parts of the city. They offer insight into what parts of a city residents imagine sharing with their anonymous fellow city-dwellers, on what social basis they share these extended neighbourhoods, and what are the limits of this “common ground.” Other narrators address audiences for whom the city is unfamiliar territory. Their narratives illuminate the social contexts that connect people across spatial divides and the various interests that, in the narrators’ opinion, distant audiences might have in being introduced to Vancouver. While the written

narratives address audiences who have a specific amount of knowledge of Vancouver but might themselves be anywhere, the plays potentially produce a “strong” form of common ground by bringing their audience together at a particular site. I argue that this experience constructs what Arjun Appadurai calls “locality,” thus offering insight into what locality might feel like in a modern Canadian city.

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Dedication

To my families, in Ontario and on the West Coast

Introduction: Common Ground and the City

One of the defining features of the current moment of modernity, as anthropologist Arjun Appadurai describes it, is the magnitude of the flow of texts, images and other information away from the places where they are composed: across space, across borders, and even around the globe, into the hands of audiences elsewhere. But, as Appadurai points out, only the extraordinary velocity and volume of this flow, as mediated by electronic technologies, is new (3). Indeed, written texts' ability to travel, and thus the likelihood of their being read at a distance from their places of composition, has surely influenced how they have been received and interpreted ever since the media by which they were transmitted became portable.

Likewise, our considerable contemporary knowledge and imaginative awareness of places elsewhere—even of places that we have never experienced firsthand—is not new. Today, the frequent movement of people away from their familiar localities, for the sake of refuge or work or leisure or war, combines with the distribution of images and texts about places elsewhere across electronic as well as physical-trade networks. Our complicated awareness of places near and far currently “impel[s] (and sometimes compel[s]) the work of the imagination,” as we work to map our localities and to orient ourselves within them and in relation to more distant places (Appadurai 4). (Appadurai published his book on cultural difference in the era of globalization at the close of the twentieth century; the moment he describes is still current, I believe, at the beginning of the twenty-first.) But it has also long been true that “neither images nor viewers”—nor texts nor readers—“fit into circuits or audiences that are easily bound within local, national, or regional spaces” (4).

Taking the history of settlement in Vancouver as a temporal gauge for this movement of texts and readers across spatial boundaries, I note, for example, that the Coast Salish peoples circulated and exchanged geographical knowledge and local stories in their movements up and down the Pacific coast and along the Fraser River valley for centuries before European contact. In the eighteenth century, Captain George Vancouver and other explorers and traders returned from Salish territory to Europe with maps, information, and (no doubt) tall tales about the West Coast landscape, climate, and aboriginal peoples. In the nineteenth century, those Chinese railway labourers and gold-rush prospectors fortunate enough to return safely to China after living and working in British Columbia took with them knowledge and stories of the province and its early cities, adding to the information they had already written into letters home. Recently, these early migrations, and these early varieties of traveling texts about Vancouver, have been remembered and re-imagined in certain twentieth- and twenty-first century novels written and set in Vancouver—texts that are themselves widely circulated beyond the city because they are published, sold, and taught across Canada and sometimes abroad (for example, George Bowering’s *Burning Water* and SKY Lee’s *Disappearing Moon Café*).

I am evoking the mobility of story, and audiences encountering unfamiliar places through text and performance, because the imaginative work that audiences do in this circumstance is no less remarkable for being commonplace. Depending on where we live and what geographies we know, we may have the occasional experience of reading or watching something set in places with which we are very familiar. But for many of us this experience is rare. As readers and as theatre-goers, we tend to be practiced in an impressive art: the art of imaginatively accommodating references to countries, counties,

rivers and mountains, towns and cities, streets and landmarks, parks, buildings, institutions, bridges, transportation lines and neighbourhoods, all of which are unfamiliar or only known to us only through representations.¹ Willingly, even unconsciously, going along with (cf. Searle *Speech* 89) references to places that are just a little beyond us, so to speak, we sketch imaginative new maps for ourselves, only bothering to consult authoritative sources to confirm the accuracy of our imagined maps if we wish to.²

It may be a defining feature of fictional genres that they offer themselves “universally” to anyone who can read them, by virtue of being “fictions” and thus one step outside of immediate social reality, and by being published texts, indiscriminately available for consumption. Likewise, it may be a defining feature of mainstream, commercial theatre performance that anyone who can afford a ticket may join its audience (although the “universality” of access to theatre performance is in practice more limited). Amy Devitt describes “a common quality” of many literary texts: they are “read by multiple audiences at different times and places, apart from” their moments and places of composition and first reception (180). One “function of at least some literary genres,” she writes (182), is “to universalize” (183): “to be used beyond their composer’s space and time” (182).

But I think that such a generic universality does not make any less remarkable readers’ and theatre audiences’ feeling of being licensed to make imaginative sense of what they read, any more than does our long history of practice at doing so. This sense of license is remarkable because novels, short stories and plays are not indiscriminate in their address. To start with, they are not published, marketed, distributed, or performed everywhere or in every language. They do not all remain perpetually in print or in

performance. Furthermore, the paratextual material that frames these literary texts and performances and offers them to the public at large prepares a “threshold” (Genette 1, 2) that, in practice, is more inviting to some than others of those who happen upon it. When texts travel across borders or linger in libraries and archives after they disappear from bookstore shelves, they retain the traces of their response to an initial situation of composition and address (cf. Bakhtin “Speech Genres” 98)—an initial situation that may seem to exclude some readers.

Plays in performance, of course, do not travel or linger the same way that printed material does. A play is re-created anew, with each production. Producing companies sometimes adapt play scripts to their own local and temporal circumstances, in some cases changing the setting from a distant to a nearby location, so that traces of the distance between their performance and the play’s first place and time of production are obscured. And theatre audiences are co-creators of the performances they attend (S Bennett 85). Thus, even when a producing company has not adapted the setting to the performance locale, the audience-members’ interpretive work may allow them to imaginatively re-make the play’s address, inserting themselves into the position of intended audience. Indeed, reader-response criticism has claimed the same thing of readers’ interpretive work, arguing that individual readers “write” texts (e.g. Barthes 147, Fish 171, Iser xii), thus, perhaps, re-creating for themselves the circumstances of each text’s address.

I argue, however, that in the case of both texts and performances, traces of an address to a particular audience are stubbornly persistent. Even plays may “translate” poorly for audiences with different horizons of cultural expectations than those for whom

the performance was designed, as Susan Bennett points out (200).³ If novels, short stories, and plays are among the literary genres that offer themselves “universally,” in Devitt’s terms, in that they permit audiences anywhere, at any time, to make sense of them as they will, they nevertheless do not offer themselves equivalently to all audiences. Novels, short stories, and plays are “filled with *dialogic overtones*” that link them responsively to the social languages of the place, time, and socio-cultural circumstances of their composition, as Mikhail M. Bakhtin argued of all utterances (“Speech Genres” 92, emphasis in original).⁴ Moreover, their paratextual frames are designed to appeal more to certain potential audiences than to others. And finally—here I arrive at the point that is most central to the argument of this dissertation—the narrative style in a novel or a short story implies a specific address to a particular audience. Likewise, the dynamic presentation of a play in live performance implicitly specifies an audience to whom the play is primarily addressed, although the circumstances of this address are certainly different in live performance than they are in a novel or short story.

This point, that the address in texts and performances is necessarily specific rather than universal, has been made elsewhere.⁵ I re-introduce it here, in the context of the modern circumstance outlined by Appadurai, where texts and play scripts are among the other media circulating well beyond their initial contexts of composition, publication, and performance, because I want to consider the implications of this specificity of address for our senses of place, as these are mediated by literary texts and by plays in performance. In particular, I want to consider how this specificity of address affects our experience of place as a *social* terrain: we relate to places near and far not just as solitary individuals but as subjects drawn into relationship with other people, by means of our relation to the

places we share and do not share with them. Novels, short stories, and plays all contribute to shaping our awareness of these relationships.

One of the contributions I make, in this dissertation, is to direct attention to specific address in texts and performances recognizably set in a particular place. I show that not only are such texts set somewhere that few of their eventual readers and audience-members may be likely to be familiar with, but they narrate and perform that place in ways that address (and thereby construct) a specific audience's relationship to it. What travels with these texts and performances, then, are not simple representations of place but representations of place that are addressed. In other words, readers and theatre-audiences must somehow imaginatively accommodate not only references to countries, counties, rivers and mountains, towns and cities, streets and landmarks that are perhaps unfamiliar to them or only known only through other representations, but references that come stamped with an address to an audience that has a particular relation to that place.⁶ In this dissertation, I analyze references to sites within the metropolitan region of Vancouver, British Columbia. While this city offers a valuable case study, my analytical method could be applied effectively to urban or rural places anywhere.

Critical contexts for this work

By directing attention to specific address in texts and performances recognizably set in particular places, I offer a new way of assessing how literary texts and theatre performances are involved in constructing and negotiating social relations established on the basis of place. Novels and plays are often theorized as being among the media (or, in Benedict Anderson's words, the "forms of imagining" [24]) that afford audiences an

imaginative awareness of their relationships with other people either nearby or far away. We might think of readers and theatre audiences as coming into awareness of these relationships via literature in one of three general ways. I consider these general ways of thinking to be three basic theoretical frameworks that support much early and contemporary critical thinking about literature and theatre as the media of these relationships.

In this section of the Introduction I outline these general theories in more detail, in order to highlight what I think is an important difference between what I am doing here and what has been done so far. As I do so, I touch primarily on ideas that have been important in scholarly conversations about urban Canadian literature and theatre.

Vancouver fiction and theatre being my case study, theories of how texts and plays with urban settings mediate relations between fellow citizens and more far-flung communities are self-evidently relevant. Theories of nation—and particularly of how novels and plays construct national community—are perhaps less so. Indeed, as I show in Chapters Two and Three, novels, short stories and plays set in Vancouver rarely assume a specifically national audience, so “Canadian literature” is not an unproblematic frame for this case study. Traditional discussions of Canadian literature have not selected urban settings as the ground for specifically national experiences, preferring rural settings as tropes for a Canadian ethos and communal life (cf. Edwards and Ivison 197). This perception has finally shifted, as Justin D. Edwards and Douglas Ivison argue in *Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities* (6), but at the same time much recent literary criticism has shifted attention away from the nation, to emphasize diasporic, transnational, and cosmopolitan “imagined communities” (Edwards and Ivison 205).

Nevertheless, I situate my work in relation to criticism of urban Canadian literature and theatre. Since Vancouver is Canada's third-largest city, it does claim attention as a national population centre of some political weight. Also, although the idea of a nation-wide reading audience/publishing market is a fiction, it has historically influenced the ways books are marketed and talked about in Canada, as the example of McClelland and Stewart's New Canadian Library series illustrates. (The series evidently sought a nation-wide *academic* audience [Friskney 26, 33, 40]; schools and universities across the country may indeed be one of the sites where a nation-wide audience is best approximated.) And the idea of a Canadian readership for a Canadian literature continues to propel discussion in the popular media (cf. CBC's "Canada Reads" and Noah Richler's *This is My Country, What's Yours?*) as well as in academic teaching and writing. The idea of a national audience for Canadian work may be even more tenuous for theatre, given a historical emphasis on dispersed regional theatres. But some important Vancouver-based plays do get produced across the country (or at least in Toronto) with the idea that they make a strong claim on national audiences.⁷ Meanwhile, Canadian literary criticism has emphasized *place* as the grounds of Canadian national identity "[e]ver since Northrop Frye posed his metaphysical question 'where is here?'" (Edwards and Ivison 4). Thus any text set within national borders may be received as responsive to Canadian experiences, given Canadian literary criticism's longstanding interest in discovering "the Canadian-ness of the literature written in this country" (Surette 17). Despite that I rarely observe Vancouver literature and theatre addressing a national audience, then, the idea of national reception is worth bearing in mind. Recognizing the

possibility of a self-consciously national reception for these texts and performances highlights their tendency not to address it.⁸

I mentioned three general frameworks for thinking about how literary texts and theatre performances allow their audiences to imagine relationships with others on the basis of place. The first of these frameworks is based on the idea that readers or audience-members might *identify with* a community constructed in the novel or play and thus imagine themselves connected by social bonds of similarity or shared circumstances to people who inhabit the novel or play's setting. Prototypical examples of this idea are early twentieth-century theories of how literature might mediate national senses of community. Early anthologists of Canadian literature may not have emphasized setting *per se*, but, according to Dermot McCarthy in "Early Canadian Literary Histories and the Function of a Canon," they insisted on literature's power to communicate the collective "spirit" of the nation's people. And in the anthologists' view, this spirit was principally inspired by Canadian *place*: "the 'spirit of place' or 'spirit of the people [were] for all intents and purposes, one and the same" (McCarthy 32; cf. also Surette 23). By communicating this national spirit "to the people, for the people" (McCarthy 42), the literary works would bring together Canadians from across the country.

The readers whom the anthologists imagined identifying with this spirit were apparently supposed to recognize the national "place," in the singular, as being coherent and unified. From later perspectives, literary texts would have to encourage identification despite actual geographical diversity, in order to unite a national community. Nation would be constructed by readers who could identify with characters living in distant places. Thus, for example, Morton L. Ross commented in 1979 that an

idea of national identification had great bearing on whether a novel would find a “place within a Canadian canon”:

If the novel succeeds in conveying what it was to live in a significant section of the country at a significant time in the nation’s history, however gritty the sensation, then [goes the argument] it will contribute to that common, although vicarious experience which creates a group, in this case a Canadian, identity.

(Ross 201)

So long as a novel is set in a “significant” section of the country, distant readers’ vicarious identifications with characters living there will contribute to a collective identity.

Recent critical writing on nation has resisted the notion that audiences might identify with a spatialized national community in any simple way. But it seems to me that these ideas remain current—even if they are frequently assigned the role of outmoded theories that continue to provoke debate. For example, in framing Canadian writing set in urban centres as representative of “the lived experience of most Canadians,” Ivison and Edwards challenge tendencies in

the public mythology of Canada and critical production on Canadian literature and culture, which has, until recently, largely focused on rural and wilderness spaces and small towns. (6)

Canadians from across the country were once supposed to identify with representations of rural life and hence with a national cultural community, Ivison and Edwards suggest, however distant and different those presumedly “significant” rural settings (and their wider regional contexts) were from their individual lived realities. A similar critique of

earlier theories of spatial identification is offered by other contributors to Edwards and Ivison's book. Paul Milton recounts, for example, that so far as he can recall, none of the "Canadian literature" he read in high school in the 1970s or later as an undergraduate student depicted experiences (or a community) with which he could identify—because, with their rural or urban-centre settings, the novels he read offered no resemblance to the suburbs he had grown up in:

I came to the conclusion that I hadn't grown up in Canada after all. My suburban life was not a factor in Canadian literature, contemporary or otherwise. 'Where is here,' you ask? 'Someplace else,' I would respond. (166)

Even in this account of how literature set in Canada did not allow him to identify with the nation—because, to start with, teachable canons of national literature are not diverse enough to depict all the different experiences of a diverse nation's citizens—Milton implies that if the novels he read *had* represented suburban settings and lifestyles with which he could identify, those texts might have been capable of mediating for him a sense of national community. In quoting Frye's famous question ("Where is here?") and thus following Frye in diverting the question of collective identity towards a question of collective *place* (Frye 220), Milton makes what Ivison and Edwards identify as a consistent theoretical move in studies of Canadian literature. Critics have focused on place as an important coordinate of identity in Canada, they argue, even when recent work "has shown that using Canadian literature to connect 'a sense of place' to a 'sense of self' is not an easy project" (4). "As readers and writers in Canada," they write, "we are obsessed by this idea" of place (Edwards and Ivison 197). I would emphasize that place has not just been an important, if complicated, coordinate of individual identity, in

Canadian literary criticism. Representations of place have also been studied for their (in)ability to unite dispersed citizens in national community.

Region has frequently been proposed as an alternate frame to nation, one more likely to inspire communal identification in Canada (cf. Fiamengo 241, Ricou “Region” 948, Wylie et al. ix): an idea that literary texts could allow citizens to identify with their fellow-nationals far removed from them, thus stretching their sense of shared national community across “vast distances, natural barriers, diverse patterns of settlement, and locally specific histories” (Fiamengo 241) was bound to be problematic and unsatisfying, in a Canadian context, in part precisely because of the geographic distances and diversity Janice Fiamengo identifies.⁹ The general idea of how literature might serve as a medium for identification with a regional community underpinning regionalist proposals is similar to the idea of national identification I outlined in the previous paragraphs. In this case, presumably, regional readers are supposed to recognize the setting of the novel or play as part of the same regional space they inhabit and hence come to identify with the people depicted (cf. Fiamengo 243, Wylie et al. ix).

As critical writing such as Edwards and Ivison’s has begun to recognize cities and metropolitan regions as sites of “the lived experience of most Canadians,” novels with urban settings have in turn come to be interrogated for their potential ability to mediate social relationships between fellow citizens. Cities, like nations and broader ecological and topographical regions, are internally diverse and divided spaces with multi-layered histories and hazy, permeable boundaries; they are places shared by all of their citizens only by way of generalizing sweeps of the imagination (cf. Ash and Thrift 1, Fiamengo 256, Pile 54-55). But critics seem more willing to consider the possibility that reading

could allow one to recognize one's relations to other citizens in the case of cities than in the case of regions or nations, perhaps because even large metropolitan areas in Canada are nonetheless smaller and denser than regions.

Peter Dickinson, for instance, writes about a pedagogical experiment in what he calls "resident reading," where he and a class of University of British Columbia students in Vancouver read texts set in the city in which they were residents. They approached the texts as

portraits of the collective self, of how the individual gradually comes to terms with—and by no means happily or easily—his or her affiliation with and participation in a larger community (be that community structured around ethnicity, race, gender, family, work/artistry, sexuality, etc.). (79)

But while reading these texts as *depicting* the uneasy affiliations of community, Dickinson and his students also attempted to consider their own affiliations with the various localized communities depicted. Dickinson theorizes these relationships between the resident readers and their fellow citizens as

facilitated by the specifically *urban* environment of Vancouver, whose overlapping spatial configurations (geographical, historical, architectural) insist on proximity rather than distance and compel an interrelationship rather than a disconnection between the bodies that inhabit the city.

(79-80, emphasis in original)

Here it is the city's density that might compel interrelationship. But in Dickinson's notion of resident reading, literary texts also work to mediate these affiliations: "The texts under consideration thus became the means of this interface, [...] unpacking the

complex social, political, and cultural relations between the overlapping groups and communities that occupy this environment” (80).¹⁰ Dickinson does not propose that resident readers simply identify with other residents because they share a setting: he reads these texts precisely as preventing simplistic identifications by elaborating the complexities of social relations in shared urban space. But nonetheless his theory of reading resembles the first of what I called three general frameworks for thinking about how literary texts allow their audiences to imagine their relationships with others on the basis of place.

If this first general framework has been part of how theatre scholars have considered plays in performance to mediate their audiences’ national or regional or local-urban identifications, it has apparently not been a big part.¹¹ In some respects the terms of this thinking have been different in scholarship about Canadian theatre than in Canadian literature criticism because, in the former, those debating the idea of a national theatre in Canada have been less concerned with the possibility of audiences in one part of the country identifying with characters in distant settings. A national theatre was understood to entail a critical mass and a necessary quality of Canadian-based theatrical production (Salter): enough Canadian playwrights writing good plays earning enough professional productions on Canadian stages. In practice, as Jerry Wasserman describes it, this Canadian theatre took clearest shape in the “decentralized” form of a cross-country chain of flagship “regional” theatres, all of which were supposed to be responsive to “the distinctive needs of their [respective] communities” (“Introduction” 14, 15).¹² Theatre production is in some ways such a decidedly localized practice that, when plays are written that represent specific settings, they are most likely to be produced first in the

regional vicinity of that setting.¹³ In such circumstances they are perhaps more likely to produce local or regional rather than national-scale identifications.

When these plays tour or receive later productions elsewhere, the opportunity perhaps arises for audiences to identify as fellow-nationals with the characters in their distant settings, but the possibility of this identification depends on how the play's setting is staged. Local rather than national identifications remain most likely, I presume, if the new production company adapts the play's original setting to represent instead the new vicinity of performance, as playwrights such as Sky Gilbert (407) and Brad Fraser have encouraged companies to do with their scripts. Edwards and Ivison suggest that urban settings are particularly transferable, at least when they are framed as modern or postmodern spaces of disorientation and emotional "blankness" (200); Fraser's *Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love* is set in Edmonton but "could be set in any North American city, a fact that Denys Arcand recognized when he set the film version of Fraser's play in Montreal." An off-Broadway production recognized this transferability when they set it in New York City (Edwards and Ivison 201); so did a recent production by Twenty-Something Theatre when they set it in Vancouver. To continue the play with Frye's formula, we might say that *there* is here, in these instances, but it is no longer there.

If the later production does not change the play's setting to its own locale, but brings one setting to another the way novels do when they travel, several possibilities exist. *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* exemplifies one possibility: when this play got its second and most famous production in Ottawa, it was received as showing Canadians to themselves: although the *there* depicted was distant, it was apparently received as

continuous with *here*, precisely because it was part of Canada. The play's setting in "the city," which may faintly be discerned to be based on Vancouver, was easily enough imagined as contiguous with Ottawa. But *Ecstasy* seems to me to have been somewhat unusual in its ability to suggest the continuity of otherwise distant spaces with each other within a national frame. Another possibility is that the play's distant setting be perceived as a distant elsewhere, as *not* here. Joan MacLeod's plays *Amigo's Blue Guitar* and *2000* are both set on the British Columbia coast, just outside or inside the Vancouver city limits, but both premiered in Ontario. From MacLeod's perspective, Ontario audiences for these plays found these West Coast settings "exotic" (qtd. in L Johnson 40): somewhere distinctly other and fascinating because different.

MacLeod's sense of the in-Canada exotic brings me to the second general idea about how literary texts and plays set in a specific place might allow their audiences to imagine their social relationship to people living in that place: the idea that, by apprehending their *difference* from people depicted as living in the text or play's setting, readers and theatre audiences perceive themselves as divided from those others in a way that spatializes their difference: those people's place is distant from my own, they decide. This idea of spatialized difference recalls Edward Said's analysis of European perceptions of the Orient, although the perceptions Said analyzed have a longer history and greater ramifications than those I gesture to. Orientalism is a spatialized field of dubious and imaginatively projected cultural "knowledge" (Said 19), a Western idea of the Oriental other predicated on the "imaginative geography" of a "line [...] drawn between two continents" (21). If some Ontario audiences of MacLeod's plays seem to receive the represented West Coast as exotic, they may be said to perceive themselves as

socially divided from the characters in these plays because of their sense of their local geographical difference and distance from the Gulf Islands and the Coast Mountains. In this understanding, social disconnection is coupled with geographical distance.¹⁴

This general idea underpins some understandings of regional literatures in Canada and regionalist literary criticism. According to W. H. New, the regional rhetorical position is the voice of the nation's internal margins, a position of relative disempowerment that need not necessarily be geographically distant from the centre. "In this sense the truly regional voice is one that declares an internal political alternative," New argues ("Beyond" 17). But geographical otherness has nonetheless been important to both serious theories of regional literature and regional identifications in Canada and saucy repartee in the mainstream media. Depending on the regional theory, in literary studies, focus may be on either the reception or the production of this difference. On the one hand, readers from elsewhere in Canada read the region's geography, and therefore its society, as distant and socially distinct (cf. Wyile 85; Wyile and Lynes 6); on the other, regional writers construct their hitherto overlooked regions for outside readers as distinct but present and newly visible (cf. Ricou "Region" 950)—or even as consumable commodities (Davey 12-13). Meanwhile, this idea of spatialized social division underpins the longstanding regional grumble that Canadians elsewhere (especially powerful publishers, prize-givers, and critics located in so-called central Canada) underappreciate literature set somewhere distinctly other, such as the Maritimes or the Prairies or the West Coast, because these adjudicators therefore receive their stories as irrelevant, perceiving their own social difference from the people of those far regions (Chong). Writers in central Canada, meanwhile, have been heard to claim the reverse (Marchand).

I turn now to the third framework, the one within which my own approach most obviously belongs, and the one that returns me to Appadurai's insight about how much we know and how many images we have seen of places distant from wherever we are now, in our mobile, media-barraged lives. The central idea here is that readers and theatre audience-members join the various "discursive communities" of a certain setting. In my use of the term here, discursive communities are imagined groups of people whose shared, partial knowledges of the setting, interpretive perspectives on it, and degrees of access to and personal intimacy with it position them together; what they share also differentiates their position from that of other discursive communities surrounding that same setting.¹⁵ The first two general ideas understood readers and theatre audiences as identifying with or differentiating themselves from communities depicted as living in particular settings. By default, they pictured readers, audiences, and the communities depicted in the text or play as all situated in particular places. Readers/audiences over here; setting of the text or play over there: even when the reader or theatre audience-member decides that those two places are identical or continuous with one another, the text or play still travels between setting and audience, intermediating between them and drawing them into a relationship of identity or difference.

While reading a text and attending a play worked relatively similarly within those first two frameworks, in this third framework there is an important difference between them. In this case, readers of novels or short stories are not necessarily situated anywhere: they are not rooted in a particular place. They may not necessarily have ever set foot there. But readers may *know* something about the place in question, in the very loosest sense of "know"—that is, they may be aware of it, have some more or less limited

knowledge of it, harbour some ideas or guesses about it, or have some associations with it.¹⁶ (Or they may not!) And this sense of knowing (or not knowing) the place is compounded with a sense of how they came to know it or know of it—whether from long, personal, physical intimacy with it, from repeated hearsay, from deep reading or fervent movie-watching, or, perhaps, from a haze of brief, scattered encounters with it in the media or other discourse, pointillist-dot experiences that over time arrange themselves into a sketchy outline.¹⁷ Each reader’s personalized “encyclopedia” (Clark and Marshall 54) of what I’ve called “knowledge,” then, may be said to be felt as rather a sense of relative *familiarity* (as in Prince 233). Readers are not locals or even *located*, in this framework; they might be reading from anywhere. But they are people with eclectic, personalized senses of familiarity with all sorts of places. I think of theatre audiences as the same as these readers, in most respects. But theatre audiences in attendance at a play are located for that moment of attendance, however briefly. They may not be locals, although it is more likely than not that they are, in certain theatres. But they have arrived at the theatre for the event of the play and therefore can be counted on to have some immediate, sensory and personalized familiarity with the location of the theatre. This matters when the play is set in the vicinity of the theatre, as I discuss in Chapter Three.

Encountering the setting of the literary text or the play as it is represented on the page or the stage, the individual reader or the individual theatre audience-member may have a solitary experience of comparing the setting as it appears there with his or her own memory file for that setting. *Ah! I know the very street*, one might muse; another, *Mmm I believe I’ve heard of this town. In a song lyric, perhaps?* But this is never only a solitary experience. It comes with the pressing awareness that one’s own particular relationship

to the setting differentiates one from others who relate to it rather differently: people who are in other discursive communities, with respect to the place in question. These others, brought into view by the text or the play, may perhaps take the imagined shape of the author, the real-life counterparts of the characters depicted, other readers, the playwright and producing company, or other members of the theatre audience. *But those others don't know the street as I do!*, one realizes. And meanwhile this experience of recognizing one's own particular relationship to the setting represented also situates one in yet another discursive community (or, perhaps more accurately, at the point of conjunction of several overlapping discursive communities [cf. Hutcheon 92]). *Now they, on the other hand, would know the street too!*, one realizes, although this sense of what is shared may be fainter and less certain than one's recognition of what is not. When reading or theatre-going makes us aware of our own interpretive positions with respect to a certain place, it also makes us aware of our positions relative to others; this is the important insight that this framework allows.

Many of the various, carefully delineated theories of diaspora, transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism that underpin recent analyses of novels and plays set in Canadian cities might be understood as working within this general framework.¹⁸ As they relate to my project, these are theories that try to understand the complicated sociality of city-dwellers' relationships to places in and outside Canada.¹⁹ If they are not in general especially concerned with how literary texts and plays mediate the sociality of those relationships for their audiences, they are nonetheless interested in how texts and plays *represent* such relationships, thus offering their reading or theatre-going audiences vocabularies for understanding their own relations.

The *literary* criticism in this vein, in particular, is usually not directly interested in readers' self-recognition as belonging to certain discourse communities about a certain place and not belonging to certain others. This criticism considers how diasporic, transnational, or cosmopolitan subjects—usually the characters depicted in novels, but often, implicitly, the writers as well—compose new discourses of spatial relations such as “belonging in” and “(un)familiarity with” a particular place. A brief review of two articles about novels set in Toronto will have to suffice, here, to illustrate this criticism. In “‘Streets are the dwelling place of the collective’: Public Space and Cosmopolitan Citizenship in Dionne Brand’s *What We All Long For*,” Emily Johansen discusses how the “second-generation characters” in Brand’s novel, children of “migrating diasporic characters” (48) who moved to Toronto from Vietnam, Nova Scotia, and Jamaica, use various media to articulate discourses that assert their own belonging in the public spaces of Toronto. They perform bicycle flâneries that inscribe their presence onto public attention (Johansen 56), paint graffiti art that “resist[s] the colonizing hegemony of the city’s white bourgeois élite” (61), and express “exuberant cosmopolitan citizenship” by at least temporarily embracing national allegiances that they have not inherited in celebrating Korea’s World Cup win together in the streets (58). Quite rightly, I think, Johansen treats these characters’ discourses as at least partly addressed to an audience of hegemonic white Torontonians—their performances “force” white élites to “recogni[ze] their experience of Toronto” (55)—although, as she points out, most of the novel’s second-generation characters are not interested in entering into relationship with white Torontonians themselves. They want instead to claim their relationships to the white city’s spaces (58). In my terms, this resistance is nonetheless a kind of social

relationship, a relation of mutual rejection perhaps, and the performances and discourses these characters articulate are the media that assert the triangulation of this alienated relationship between themselves, white, affluent Torontonians, and the spaces they differently inhabit together. Elsewhere, I discuss how Brand's novel itself works as a medium of comparable but slightly different relationships, its general address to an audience who apparently knows the city's geography well occasionally shifting gear and rejecting their knowing purchase on it, speaking suddenly as if the narrator and her addressees are from quite different Toronto discourse communities (Banting "Social").

Brand's novel uses a vocabulary denoting national identities to indicate the cultural differences complicating social life in Toronto—"In this city there are Bulgarian mechanics, there are Eritrean accountants, Colombian café owners, Latvian book publishers [...]" (Brand 5), for example. But the social geography of primary interest to both the novel and its central characters is the bounded urban space of "this city." When Johansen identifies the second-generation characters' friendships and allegiances as expressing what she calls "'territorialized cosmopolitan' subjectivities," she is not invoking a trans-spatial idea of cosmopolitanism, such as that theorized by Kwame Anthony Appiah ("Cosmopolitan Reading"). Instead, she is stressing that their relationships-across-difference are located and performed in a single place: they express subjectivities with multiple affiliations and across axes of gender, ethnicity, class and sexuality which are not uprooted or free-floating but are principally and firmly located in the physicality of [in this case] Toronto. (Johansen 49)

But if Toronto and other major metropolitan centres are cosmopolitan places because the world's cultures commingle there (cf. Ball 185), they are also frequently

theorized, rather differently, as the sites of cosmopolitan identifications because their residents are involved in social relationships with people in other places, too. In “Duelling and Dwelling in Toronto and London: Transnational Urbanism in Catherine Bush’s *The Rules of Engagement*,” John Clement Ball suggests that London, England, is precisely such a site, although he uses a vocabulary of transnationalism rather than cosmopolitanism.²⁰ While living as an expatriate in London, the Canadian protagonist of Bush’s novel comes to recognize her own social and political relations to people elsewhere, including Toronto, her abandoned home, by means of an accumulated “imaginative awareness and understanding” (Ball 192). Having traveled, done historical research, and fallen in love “with a racial and national ‘other’” (187), the protagonist develops for herself a personalized discourse, or a “mental map” (188), that “figures [London] most importantly as an international contact zone” (196)—a space, in other words, by way of which she is brought into relationship with people elsewhere (189). Ball does not comment on how Bush’s novel might serve to mediate a similar sort of mental mapping for its readers.

Perhaps because audiences are so conspicuously present in the theatre, scholarship on Canadian transnational or diasporic theatre is somewhat more interested in how plays prompt audiences’ self-recognition as belonging to certain discourse communities surrounding a place than literary critics are in how novels do the same.²¹ Once again, I will just touch on two recent articles as examples. In “Diaspora and the Theatre of the Nation,” Aparna Dharwadker compares the work of the Montréal-based, South Asian Canadian theatre company Teesri Duniya to that of the largely India-based theatre companies that tour plays in the United States. She argues that Teesri Duniya’s plays

construct a diasporic Indian-Canadian subjectivity, one that complicates “a foundational ‘Indianness’ by the fact of distance” and by engaging “the unique cultural-political and discursive contexts of Canadian multiculturalism” (316). Set in Montréal and examining “the pervasive ‘experience of minority’” shared by many different groups in Canada (310), *Teesri Duniya*’s resident plays are different from those of the traveling “theatre of non-residence,” as she terms the Indian touring plays in the United States (317), because the latter, as “imports immersed in the culture of home, [...] affirm the ‘Indianness’ of audiences in the diaspora” (323). Dharwadker does not directly address the question of what discursive communities the audiences of *Teesri Duniya*’s plays might inhabit. But her discussion of the touring plays suggests that they rely on and “affirm” their audiences’ belonging to communities that are deeply familiar with and attached to India, even while not residing there.²² These audiences relate to the characters in India as their fellow-nationals; the plays mediate a relationship of affiliation that draws across international space. By implication, perhaps, then, *Teesri Duniya*’s plays articulate discourses of complicated belonging that mediate relationships specifically located in Montréal, since these plays “deal with ‘here’ Canada, and not with ‘there,’ halfway across the world” (Uma Parameswaran qtd. in Dharwadker 305).

Dharwadker reads these different kinds of diasporic theatre as primarily engaging audiences whose foremost attachments are to each play’s specific geographical setting and locally-embedded societies (Montreal, in the case of *Teesri Duniya*, and India, in the case of the touring companies). In “Globalisation’s Marginalia: Anglo-Canadian Identity and the Plays of Brad Fraser,” Roberta Mock examines a different scenario: plays set in Canada that engage different discursive communities when they are staged in

different locations. “[Brad] Fraser’s mature plays tend to be set in specific Canadian urban environments and all contain references that will only be understood by Canadians (or those who have lived in Canada),” Mock asserts (92). But they have “international appeal” (86), despite that audiences elsewhere are left outside one of the play’s discursive communities, living outside of Canada and therefore having missed Canadian television (92) and remaining unfamiliar with details such as Canadian postal codes (86). Fraser’s plays address other discursive communities, to which these non-Canadian audiences do belong, by using “transnational strategies of subversion [and] drawing on international postmodern vocabularies of queer and feminist cultural politics” (87). Obscure Canadian references “d[o not] need subtitles on non-Canadian stages, because [...] the meaning of the words are of less importance here than the parodic strategy of their performance” (92).²³ The central difference between the plays and audiences Dharwadker and Mock discuss may be the different degrees of geographical embeddedness of the cultures represented and critiqued onstage: the Indian-diaspora plays engage political problematics that are embedded in national frameworks and hence geographies (respectively Canadian and Indian); Fraser’s plays engage queer politics and parody in a globalized urban modernity (Mock 92) that is not necessarily located in a Canadian geography. Accordingly, Dharwadker’s and Mock’s analyses respectively treat and do not treat audiences as drawn into specifically spatialized relationships with the other members of the discursive communities they join while they are watching the play.

My own work, in this dissertation, introduces to literary criticism an attention, of the kind exemplified by theatre scholars such as Dharwadker and Mock, to how novels, short stories and plays might serve to mediate the sociality of relationships to place.

Rather than focusing on how the complicated social relations of cross-spatial affiliation or territorialized cosmopolitanism are *represented* in texts and plays set in Vancouver, I look at how these and other relationships are mediated by those texts and plays. I am therefore not immediately interested in whether readers and theatre-audiences might identify with characters or perceive them as other, or even whether readers might recognize the settings constructed on the page as continuous with their own locations or not. (In the case of theatre, however, I do investigate in how audience-members might be brought to recognize similar continuities.) Generally, I am interested in how readers and audiences might perceive their position inside or outside discursive communities that know the setting well. More crucially, the move I make is to consider how readers' and audiences' recognition of their own insider/outsider positioning might be affected by the fact that references to specific places in these texts come "stamped," as I put it earlier, with an address to a particular audience with a specific relationship to that place. This move is my contribution.

Vancouver and its audiences

One of my motivations in pursuing this project has been to remind us of the remarkable feat that I described above, of readers and theatre-goers easily accommodating references to places they do not know, despite the fact that these texts do not always address them or give them much help in doing so. I cannot do much more here than simply acknowledge this feat and how frequently we perform it. My project does, however, take up some of its implications by way of considering as a special case

the circumstance where a reader does recognize places he or she knows well when they are referred to in a novel, short story, or play.

Another motivation has been my awareness that some places are more extensively depicted and written about than others. Literary settings, then, are not all created equal. Cities are more likely to be represented as specific, recognizable sites than are rural towns or counties, for instance. Cities are dense with people who might choose to represent them, and they host the offices of major media companies that may broadcast their stories, news, and images widely.²⁴ Hence, to some degree, the larger and older the city, and the more pronounced its investments in media and cultural industries, the greater will be its footprint on the map of internationally recognizable literary settings, so to speak. But other factors may influence a city's literary footprint as well. For instance, the narrator of Michael Slade's novel *Headhunter* ranks the "physical setting" of Vancouver among the world's six most impressive city sites, implying as he does so a correspondence between impressive physical geography and impact as a literary setting:

It is common knowledge [...] that for physical setting there are only six great cities in the world. Rio de Janeiro, Sydney, Cape Town, Hong Kong and San Francisco: these are five of them. Vancouver is the sixth one. (25)²⁵

Slade's declaration here, however, turns on a joke about "common knowledge" that coyly admits that Vancouver, among others its equal in topographical greatness, is not widely known or widely remembered—even though its site makes it so potentially great a setting.

A capital city's centralization of political activity and decisive power also establishes it on certain maps. In his influential book, *Imagined Communities*, Anderson

discusses references to “a house on Anloague Street,” in Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, in José Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere* (Anderson 27). Anderson implies that Filipino-national readers are precisely the audience presumed to recognize the house referred to in Rizal’s novel, thus suggesting a link between the preeminence and centralizing force of a capital city in national citizens’ imaginations and the likelihood of that city’s geography being represented as recognizable in nationalist literature.²⁶ But one of the factors that influences the size of any city’s literary footprint is its particular national context. In Canada the national capital is less populous and therefore, perhaps, apparently less storied as a specific geography than the industrial and financial centres Toronto, Montreal, and even Vancouver.²⁷ In Canada, moreover, even the larger cities were for a while overlooked as literary settings that might invite a national readership’s recognition and identification, despite these cities’ relatively prominent footprints in media coverage and their relative power, as centres of publishing and the academic production of knowledge, to influence what representations of Canadian life are disseminated, discussed and canonized (Edwards and Ivison 197). They are no longer ignored, as settings, thanks to the work of scholars such as Edwards and Ivison and the contributors to their book, *Downtown Canada*. But we cannot fall back on assumptions, like the one Anderson implies, about texts and plays set in these cities appealing to a specifically national audience.

Michael Turner, a Vancouver-based writer who has set several of his works deliberately in Vancouver (e.g. *Kingsway*, *The Pornographer’s Poem*), has decided to make the setting of his most recent novel indefinite. “None of the subjects are named, and neither is the city where they live,” writes journalist Alexander Varty about Turner’s

new book. He quotes Turner as explaining, “I wanted my book to make sense if it were being read in Vancouver or Cape Town or Karachi or Buenos Aires.” Turner implies that particularized settings make sense only, or especially, to particular audiences.

It is hard not to read in Turner’s comment a desire to escape the perceived parochialism of Vancouver as a setting. Another Vancouver-based novelist, Kevin Chong, has complained about such limitations in the popular Vancouver newsmagazine *The Georgia Straight*: “Living in a city that’s neither big nor small, Vancouver writers, in some respects, have the worst of both worlds,” Chong writes. In Chong’s opinion, Vancouver is at once too big to live in affordably and too small and insignificant to provide its writers with powerful publishing contacts or a setting that whets readers’ appetites. Vancouver writers, he claims, cannot “write about our hometown in the same way a London or Paris writer can casually name-drop neighbourhoods to a cosmopolitan (or at least aspirational) readership” (Chong “Writers”).²⁸

Chong’s argument is no longer entirely true, in my estimation. In Chapter Two I discuss novels that appear to presume a worldly appetite for a Vancouver setting and take the liberty of “name-dropping” certain landmarks as if they are indeed widely recognizable to an international audience. But Vancouver is a productive site for my investigation precisely because it is even yet in an uncertain position between those “world cities” which are widely mediated and well enough established as literary settings to command international name-recognition, and those “provincial” centres that might be presumed to resonate with only regional audiences. Vancouver is currently balanced at what David Whitson calls “the periphery of the centre,” as a site for the settings of novels, short stories or plays. It is a big, diverse city, internationally known in some

skiing, urban planning, and tourism circles, but not equally as widely known or as rich in cultural cachet as are London or Paris, as Chong complains, or even Toronto or Montreal. And it is a Canadian city. Hence Vancouver's local writing and theatre has to compete for the attention even of Canadian audiences against the more established culture industries and literary settings of the United States and England, as has long and famously been the case in Canada, even while it has the advantage of association with a national literature that has been notably successful recently in international literary prize competitions (Sugars 80).

Whitson's phrase, "the periphery of the centre," actually refers to Canada (1215), not Vancouver, and to Canadian cities' relative international prominence as possible hosts for major sporting events, rather than their appeal as possible settings for novels or plays.

Canada is not a peripheral country by most standards. However, since the 1960s, Canadian cities have sought to change the somewhat provincial image they have historically had, and they have used mega-events such as the Olympic Games [...] to reposition themselves on the world stage. (Whitson 1215)

Vancouver's peripheral relation to the centre of the "world stage" resembles Canada's own as described here. I drafted this Introduction on the eve of the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver, an event which organizers and city officials hoped would attract international attention to the city and register its major landmarks firmly on an affluent, consumer consciousness worldwide. (Whether or not it succeeded in any lasting way is, I believe, still a matter of some debate.) The recent Vancouver novels whose narrators confidently assume for themselves an international audience have already taken a similar

step of *producing* a receptive position for an audience that recognizes this city as an appealing, plausible, somewhat familiar setting for a novel. They have done so without the powerful financial and political machinery behind an Olympic event; indeed, the force of their narrative assumptions is no more powerful than an attempted speech act awaiting receptive uptake. When these novels' references to recognizable Vancouver landmarks reach actual readers, they contend with those readers' diverse, idiosyncratic amounts of knowledge of the city. Poised now on the periphery of the centre and becoming more readily available as a certain kind of literary setting, in some writers' and publishers' minds, the city has nevertheless had its history of being read as too unknown for an author to use certain rhetorical moves to establish a setting.

For example, reading the following review of an early Vancouver novel in a 1919 issue of *The Canadian Bookman*, it is hard to imagine that its criticisms would be put quite the same way, if the setting were established in the same manner but the references were to a higher-profile city. It is worth quoting at length from this review:

English Bay, Vancouver, is beyond all doubt the world's ideal spot for love-making in a canoe; but the reader who has not seen it will hardly imagine it from Robert Allison Hood's description of its charms at sundown:

The shimmering tints of crimson and violet and yellow and gold; the opalescent splendors as the radiance gradually dies away, the dark blues and purples of the hills outlined against the sky; the flickering lights of the fishing boats away out near the horizon; and then, landward, the beach full of people, and behind, the town all cheery with its street lamps and its countless gleaming windows.

All of these things are common to several thousand other bays on the world's surface, and strangely fail to evoke the characteristic quality of English Bay. Nor does the enumeration of such names as 'Second Beach,' 'Ferguson Point,' 'Stanley Park,' 'Point Atkinson' do any more for us, though to the writer those terms are doubtless loaded with poetic significance, derived from his personal experiences. ("A Vancouver Novel")²⁹

No doubt Hood's novel is "amateur[ishly]" written, as the review concludes; in the quoted passage, the narrator's jubilant impressionism does evoke a generalized (and colour-saturated) bay landscape rather than an unmistakably characteristic representation of English Bay. But the reviewer's assumptions seem to indicate an understanding of how literary settings relate to reading audiences that would require novels set in unknown cities to perform a careful introduction. The reviewer assumes the modern circumstance in which readers who do not know a setting from "personal experience" are an important constituency, a group for whom the narrative ought to "do" things, including reveal to them the setting's characteristic qualities. And he assumes, rightly, I think, that place names may be replete with significance, for those who know the landmarks they refer to, but empty of this evocative power for those who do not. A novel of the same amateur quality might be set in London, England, and use overly general nouns (like "hills and "bay" here) and uncommunicative proper nouns to the same effect as in this passage, but I suspect that a reviewer for the *Canadian Bookman* would not have complained with the same confidence about their failure to evoke the setting in that case. He might presume that his reading audience would already know enough about London to accommodate the

landmarks' proper names; indeed, he might feel that to admit his own lack of knowledge would be embarrassing.

Vancouver has been one of those settings that would seem to place the burden on narrators to explain and describe, to introduce it to audiences who, more likely than not, have never heard much about it and have no previously-whetted appetite for more stories from its (hitherto) unheralded avenues. To some degree it still is such a setting, despite its pretensions to the world stage. What is remarkable, however, is that while certain novels and short stories set in Vancouver do introduce the city carefully to their audiences, others do not. Perhaps even more remarkably, none of the plays do. This is the writers' and playwrights' feat, complementary to readers' impressive imaginative accommodations: they compose texts and playscripts that play inventively with setting and address, imagining as they do so new audiences and new social relationships to the city that vary widely in their gradations of proximity, intimacy, and sharedness. While most of these creatively imagined audiences and relations might be roughly matched to ideas like neighbourhood, city, region, diasporic or transnational community, or even, in rare cases, nation, they exceed and complicate each of these as well.

To further appreciate how different cities' more and less prominent footprints "on the map" of internationally recognizable literary settings may be experienced by readers—and how they may be playfully acknowledged by texts set in Canada—consider bestselling author William Gibson's 2007 novel *Spook Country*. Both the publishing context and the content of this lively, clever novel illustrate the contemporary realities that Appadurai identifies as widespread circulation of texts and audiences. Gibson's novel was published simultaneously in the United States and in Canada. He was born in

South Carolina but has lived in Vancouver for many years. He has evidently traveled widely, and his novels have “been set in “San Francisco, Tokyo, London, Los Angeles and the eastern seaboard of the U.S” (Link 11). Two of the central characters in *Spook Country* are American, but another is a Cuban-Chinese illegal migrant who speaks Russian, and one of the Americans is a free-lance journalist on assignment for a mysterious transnational magazine called *Node*, a “European version of *Wired*,” which is produced by “Belgian money, via Dublin” and staff in London, England (Gibson 2).

Spook Country is set mostly in Los Angeles and New York City. I have never been to L.A., and my memories of a single trip to New York are distant and fuzzy, but I know enough about these cities from other novels, as well as from songs, movies, television shows, and the news, to feel a certain sense of recognition when I come across references to the Sunset Strip, Tower Records, Fifth Avenue, Canal Street, or the East Village. (Edward W. Soja argues that “Los Angeles broadcasts its self-imagery so widely” that countless people who have never been there know the city in precisely the way I do [223]; indeed, because L.A. is so thoroughly mediated as well as so spatially decentred and complicated, the city can hardly be “known” except through such mediations [Soja 223-223].) I have admittedly never heard of the New York City locations mentioned in passages like the following:

Coming back from the Sunrise Market on Broome, just before they closed, Tito stopped to look in the windows of Yohji Yamamoto, on Grand Street. (25)

But even here I feel free to improvise for myself a sense of these locations and what they might signify, drawing on the words’ connotations and my growing knowledge of this novel’s setting. Nevertheless, this passage’s multiple and interlinked references to places

I do not know make me strain a little to accommodate the unfamiliar without supportive explanation, even as they give me the pleasurable experience of encountering something exotically unknown. What would Tito be seeing, in the windows of this enterprise called Yohji Yamamoto, I wonder?³⁰

Spook Country deliberately plays with the reality that some settings are not so well known to certain audiences as others. The “spook country” of the title is the United States of America, presumably, for most of the novel’s characters are spies, illegal immigrants, members of underground organizations, and black-market profiteers, most of them living in the United States. But towards the end of the novel a group of them escapes pursuit by crossing the border to Canada, and they take pleasurable refuge in a newly secure anonymity here that seems to frame Canada as a perfect new “underground” world—another spook country. When the characters arrive in Vancouver, Gibson’s narrator describes the city from the perspective of people completely unfamiliar with it and seeing it for the first time. The characters perceive it through lenses shaped by media and by their knowledge of other places.

The city had been very quiet, as they drove in. Deserted. Scarcely a pedestrian. Strangely clean, lacking in texture, like video games before they’d learned to dirty up the corners. (254)

This place [was... c]loser to Costa Mesa than San Bernardino, say, at least in this part of town. It did remind him more of California than he would have expected it to, though maybe that was this sunshine, more San Francisco than Los Angeles. [...] He looked back and saw an island or peninsula, nothing there but trees, out of which emerged a tall suspension bridge, like the Oakland Bay. (260-261)

In the latter passage, a character named Milgrim registers his first impressions of Vancouver, and Gibson's narrative frames two of the most famous and frequently referenced landmarks in the city's literature—Stanley Park and the Lion's Gate Bridge—as unfamiliar and vaguely perceived new territory. Milgrim cannot see, and does not know, whether the Park is “an island or peninsula.” The city's apparent emptiness of people and detail, from these outsiders' perspective, constructs it as a docile wilderness on the far side of a forty-ninth parallel frontier.

My reading perspective is that of someone who knows Vancouver well enough to take pleasure in my superior local knowledge when I see that Milgrim has no familiar bearings here. To me, it feels like Gibson is making an inside joke for the benefit of a knowing Vancouverite audience, one who would enjoy overhearing the outsider characters' naïve perceptions of the city and receive the indirect compliment of having parts of their city likened to California, as here, or to Copenhagen (271). But I am also aware of myself as in a minority, among those widely-distributed readers among whom *Spook Country* will circulate. Los Angeles and New York City are common knowledge to a majority of the novel's readers to a degree that Vancouver is not, I presume. And Gibson's novel seems to make the same presumption, using the city's status as relatively unknown territory it to introduce the novel's primary audience as a docile wilderness. Vancouver is named, in the novel, so Gibson's use of his city of residence as a literary setting does not efface it the way that the American film industry often does.

(“Vancouver is North America's third-largest film and TV production centre after Los Angeles and New York,” and, as Douglas Coupland puts it, “To be blunt, many Vancouverites feel damn pumpy about the fact that we never get to be our own city in any

of these movies” [6].)³¹ In general, cities may be more likely than less populated areas to be named as themselves when they are framed as literary settings, but some cities are perhaps more likely than others to be named as if they are already well-known, in certain international contexts of publishing and distribution.

If the global map of literary settings is thus differentiated, so is the experience of being a reading audience for representations of specific places. Reading *Spook Country*, I am aware of being an “insider,” in one respect, because I have the advantage of superior local knowledge over the border-crossing characters and the novel’s more distant reading audiences. But in the meantime I am also aware of my less secure knowledge of L.A. and New York City, the geographies of which are so comfortably taken for granted in this novel. I am aware, too, of my position outside of communities with the particular geographic consciousness demonstrated by Milgrim and the novel’s other American characters—an audience that the novel’s narrator seems to be addressing primarily. In addition, paratextual information that the novel’s publisher is American and its author has an international reputation makes me especially aware of reading audiences whose limited geographical knowledge of Vancouver contrasts with my own relatively intimate knowledge of the city; because of this information, I think of the international border as the line separating me from that novel’s other audiences.

But my description of apprehending my *inter*-national difference from American readers, in the case of *Spook Country*, does not account for the potential complexity of how knowledge about city settings is distributed, or of how awareness of this informs our experiences of any given novel set in a particular city. Perhaps no pair of readers ever quite shares precisely the same geographical knowledge and perspective, let alone any set

of national citizens. And some New Yorkers know Vancouver more intimately than I do, no doubt. A specifically inter-national differentiation of readerships is only an important context for a small sub-set of the novels and short stories set in Vancouver.³² In part, this complexity arises from the social composition of the modern city, whose spaces and citizens are multiply and diversely linked to other localities, regions, and nations as much as to their neighbours and to the nation in which they are embedded, as urban theorists and literary critics alike have argued (cf. Amin and Thrift 3). It also derives, of course, from the movement and mediation Appadurai identifies. And it reflects the complicated social geography of Canada: a nation that, with its population dispersed in pockets and across multiple time zones, illuminates the problems both with Anderson's implied argument that (all) national citizens would be likely to know the nation's cities well and his construction of the nation as a field of "homogenous, empty time" (24). Indeed, in the case of certain Vancouver texts and plays, *intra*-national differences between specifically Canadian readers more and less familiar with Vancouver form a more important context than inter-national ones. Yet others address audiences who have no particular relation to the nation at all, either as insiders or outsiders.

My approach to setting and audience: introducing "common ground"

In this dissertation, I discuss how novels, short stories and plays each address a divided audience. The primary dividing line in question is usually not an inter- or intra-national dividing line but one much more unique to the social geography imagined by the particular text or play. I identify how the narrative address in novels and short stories and the dynamics of performance in live theatre specify which audiences are included (and

which others are excluded) by the narrator or the performance. I introduce a method for reading the specific inclusions and exclusions of narrative address in novels and short stories in Chapter One, and I modify and extend that method for the purposes of interpreting live theatre performance in Chapter Three.

These specificities of address complicate what otherwise might have been a simple differentiation of a given text or performance's actual readers and audiences into those who are familiar with the setting and those who are not. Both those who are familiar with it and those who are not encounter a third audience, one imagined by the text or performance's expectations and address. This third group is an audience that has precisely the degree of familiarity with the setting that the text or performance is addressing. Sometimes that address will, marvelously, seem to be designed for just the very person who is reading or attending the theatre: it will introduce the setting as if to someone who has as little (or as much) familiarity with it as the reader or audience-member actually does. But most often the text or the play will address itself to an audience from which the actual reader or theatre audience-member feels, consciously or not, his or her own slight or great difference.

In our colloquial uses of the term, "common ground" is a metaphor: it means a domain of knowledge, experience, or perspective that people share with one another, not an actual expanse of terrain that people occupy together. Common ground means essentially the same thing in linguistic pragmatics, the discipline from which I draw the definition I work with here.³³ As Herbert H. Clark defines it, common ground is "the sum of [the] mutual knowledge, mutual beliefs, and mutual suppositions" held by a particular pair or group of people (3). While an investigation of literary or theatre

pragmatics might explore a wide variety of domains of mutual knowledge, I am taking up the literal implications of the metaphor “common *ground*,” in this dissertation, by focusing on references to specific places in narrative language in fiction and in theatrical performance. How much of the particular Vancouver geographies that the narrators or performances know do they assume their audiences know too? How much or what part of Vancouver is common ground for this narrator or performance and its intended audience, and what sort of relationship is that portion of Vancouver thus implicated in? What can this tell us about the city as a social space, as it is mediated by these texts and plays?

Technical definitions of common ground, such as Clark’s, differ from our colloquial understanding of the term in just how reciprocally aware they understand the pair of people who share common ground to be of one another and their shared knowledge. When Clark defines common ground as the sum of two people’s “mutual” knowledge, he means something like the sum of things that *both* of these two people are certain they *both* know. Clark and Marshall offer an image of two people simultaneously, attentively, looking at a candle and looking at one another as an “example par excellence” of people sharing mutual knowledge of a particular candle (38): they are supremely aware, together, of their knowledge of one another and the candle. This mutuality of awareness is more rarified than simple “shared” knowledge of the candle, because it is reflexive and fully reciprocal.

Clark and Marshall’s image of the couple with the candle illustrates mutual knowledge as a triangulated relationship, and in this respect it serves as the model for the particular three-way relationships between texts or performances, their assumed

audiences, and the places they establish as their settings that I explore in my own discussion of common ground. (Other critical projects might use Clark and Marshall's image of a triangulated relationship to investigate how texts and performances and their audiences are positioned in relation to particular histories, for example, or cultural knowledges, rather than settings.) The circumstance of narrative language in novels and short stories is quite different than a face-to-face conversation between two embodied, individual people. As I outline in Chapter 1, when narrators assume that they share mutual knowledge of a specific landmark with the particular audience they are addressing, they generally do so on the basis of an assumption of "community membership" (Clark and Marshall 36-38). That is, narrators assume that they and their intended audiences mutually belong to the community of people who know that landmark. Or, more properly, the ways narrators refer to landmarks in these instances, and the kinds of relationship we might imagine existing between the narrators and the audiences they address, recall the way that people speak to one another when they mutually acknowledge each other to be part of the same community. Even in the case of the theatre I discuss in Chapter 3, where the live performance and its audience do face each other in physical space, the circumstances of reference are not as simple as those described in Clark and Marshall's example of physical copresence. The "candle," so to speak, is not exactly present in the theatre along with the performers and the audience, in these plays, since I discuss conventional rather than site-specific theatre. There, too, community membership is the basis on which common ground is presumed shared. What makes the results of my analysis interesting, I believe, is that the "communities" in question in the case of these novels, short stories and plays, are at once so various and so

difficult to describe using terms such as nation, region, locality, city, or neighbourhood, or even transnational, diasporic, or cosmopolitan—let alone “universal.”

In pursuing this research, I am investigating one of the implications of an argument that all language is essentially social. That argument has been convincingly made by Bakhtin, who wrote in “The Problem of Speech Genres” that all utterances, from the simplest rejoinder in spoken conversation to the most sophisticated novel (62), are constituted by their shared “quality of being directed to someone, [their] *addressivity*” (95, emphasis in original). The same argument is also a central tenet of linguistic pragmatics. In literary texts and in the theatre, as in all other circumstances, language and performance are *social*: they mediate between parties, constructing and negotiating their relationships to each other. The style of narrative address, in fiction, constructs a certain relationship between the narrating subject position and its implied audience (cf. Sperber and Wilson 217); likewise, the dynamics of performance in plays implies a certain relationship between the play’s producers and performers and its audience. This implicit address is additional to the “dialogic overtones” that link narrative language responsively to other utterances in circulation at the place, time, and socio-cultural circumstance of its composition. It is social in the sense of being inter-personal—“directed to *someone*,” or some audience, that is, as well as other utterances (emphasis added). Plays are performed more directly for whoever is in attendance, we might say, than novels or short stories are narrated for whoever happens to finally read them. Nonetheless those theatre audiences actually in attendance at a given performance do encounter the play’s implicit assumptions about who they are. The play assumes a certain relationship to its audience, and the individual people in attendance at the play

privately negotiate that assumption, accommodating it to themselves or refusing it, as the case may be.

Investigating the implications of this language-is-social argument, I observe that when texts and performances refer to specific places in establishing their settings, they construct and negotiate what amounts to a triangulated relationship between themselves, their assumed audiences, and these places. Perhaps a narrator is very familiar with a certain setting but his audience is not, for instance. Or perhaps they are both quite close to and intimately familiar with it, their relative positions with respect to it overlapping to some uncertain degree. In each case, the narrative language establishes a social relationship based on the difference or similarity of two positions relative to a given place. From the argument that language and performance are social emerges an argument that language and performance *about place* are social: we negotiate our relationships with one another in part through our claims to relative familiarity and unfamiliarity with certain places.

Common *ground*, in my literal sense, is where our social lives intersect with place: it is the demarcation of what places, near and far, we consider ourselves to share with a particular person or community. And its limits mark out the edges of this relationship: the boundaries, in other words, of the terrain we can jointly claim knowledge of, recognize, or speak about. Crucially for my work here, linguistics pragmatics points out that our assumptions about the extent and limits of the various “grounds” we share with one another show up in our spoken and written language. We do not speak or write without making decisions about who our audience is and, more particularly, how much they know about our subject matter. As Sperber and Wilson

(217) and others have shown, decisions about mutual knowledge inform our spoken or written style. Thus, when we speak about place, our spoken and written language mediates our relationship to our audiences, and this relationship is indexed to local and distant geographies.

Pragmatics theorists do disagree about whether people interacting face to face can really achieve the near-perfect coordination of meaning and near-total awareness of each other suggested by ideas like mutual knowledge.³⁴ At best, perhaps, people in conversation have the *potential* to mutually recognize their common ground (cf. Sperber and Wilson 45), and its precise boundaries are almost unknowable. This uncertainty makes all the more wonderful people's everyday ability to make workable sense of each other's utterances. That people achieve such coordination, estimating on the fly what cognitive grounds they hold mutually with one another, is attributable to people's impressive social attunement and (in pragmatics theory) to the chemistry of intimate, real-time, co-present interaction. While I recognize that true mutuality is a rarefied experience, then, especially when we move away from candlelit face-to-face copresence into the realms of reading and theatre-going, I nonetheless find the idea of mutually assured, fully reciprocal common ground a useful one to keep in mind. It suggests something about the social stakes of what readers and theatre audiences do when they imaginatively accommodate references to places far outside of any grounds they might reasonably expect to share—let alone mutually know—with the narrator or performance. As readers and theatre audiences in such cases, we are audaciously, sometimes wonderfully, inserting ourselves into a particular misfit relationship with those places and those people.

Chapter One: Tracing Address in Narrative Language

This city hovers above the forty-third parallel; that's illusory of course. Winters on the other hand, there's nothing vague about them. Winters here are inevitable, sometimes unforgiving. Two years ago, they had to bring the army in to dig the city out from under the snow. [...] Spring this year couldn't come too soon—and it didn't. It took its time—melting at its own pace, over running ice-blocked sewer drains, swelling the Humber River and the Don River stretching to the lake. The sound of the city was of trickling water.

Have you ever smelled this city at the beginning of spring?
(Brand 1)

An approach to narrative language

Throughout this chapter I use the metaphor of a circle of narrative address to illustrate what I understand to be the sociality of narrative language in novels and short stories. “Circle of address” recalls a small audience grouped around a storyteller, present with her in the moment of her telling; it evokes the embrace of a story recounted for you, personally, in tones and in a style calibrated precisely to your relationship with the teller and your knowledge of and interest in the subject matter. For me, the idea of a circle of address has come to indicate, as well, the envelope of reciprocal attention that we create around ourselves when we are in rapt private conversation in the middle of a crowded place. In person, the embrace of inclusion in an address can be constricting or hurtful if its calibrations are off; one can feel spoken down to, shamed, ignored, secretly superior. The circle no longer fits properly, so to speak, and we slip from it—or are expelled. Meanwhile, when the story is told in public, there are always other audiences outside the circle; if they are attending to the story their experience of its telling may have social effects for them, too. Translating the social situation of live storytelling or conversation to an analysis of address in novels or short stories, over the course of this chapter, I begin

with the circle itself and then move out to consider those standing outside. It is there that I place readers.

My analytical vocabulary allows me to identify the specific audience addressed by a given narrative. Or, rather, it allows me to identify the particular relationship to the narrative subject matter assumed by the narrator for her audience. The audience addressed by a novel or short story is rarely identifiable as an easily labeled social group. Instead, the audience is whoever relates to the narrator's subject matter in precisely the way she anticipates: this audience's social position is uniquely contingent on the narrator's address. When the subject matter in question is a particular place, as it is in my epigraph for instance, the style of the narrator's language implies certain things about how she supposes her audience relates to that place: how much or how little they know about it, from what socio-economic position they approach it, what attitudes they hold towards it. When the narrator of Dionne Brand's novel *What We All Long For*, which was excerpted as my epigraph to this chapter, asks whether "you" have ever smelled this city at the beginning of spring, she leaves open multiple possibilities: the audience she is addressing might have smelled this city; it might not have; she has not decided. But her narrative language elsewhere in this passage presumes, at least, that her audience is receptive to being told things about this city that she knows so well. *Winters here are unforgiving. The sound of the city, this spring, was of trickling water.* Consciously or not, any individual reader of this narrative encounters his difference from her implied audience in the slight (or great) difference between his own relationship to the place described and the one assumed for her audience by her narrative.

My approach reveals in narrative language about place a set of relationships, some of them implicit in the narrative style, others potentially imaginatively projected by the individual reader. As philosophers Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson observe, all aspects of style indicate a speaker's assumptions about his or her addressee and about the relationship between them. "Style is the relationship," they write. Much of what they argue of spoken language holds for narrative language in novels and short stories as well.

From the style of a communication it is possible to infer such things as what the speaker [or narrator] takes to be the hearer's cognitive capacities and level of attention, how much help or guidance she is prepared to give him in processing her utterance, the degree of complicity between them, their emotional closeness or distance. (217)

As Sperber and Wilson's observations indicate, the relations projected by narrative language and imagined by readers are *social*, in the sense of being inter-personal. To expand on Sperber and Wilson's point, these relations are characterized by degrees of intimacy, inclusiveness, attitude, power differentials, spatial/temporal distance, and precisely delimited terrains of common ground.

Narrative language does not just imply the audience's relation to the setting of her story; it implies things about the relative positions, with respect to that setting, of both narrator and audience. Hence, narrative language implies their relationship to each other, vis-à-vis that setting: who is closer to, or more intimate with, the setting; how much of it they share as common ground; where their shared knowledge ends. Narrative "address," to paraphrase M. M. Bakhtin, is a social-seeming orientation to another subject's responsive understanding ("Discourse" 280). Meanwhile, the individual reader may

become aware of his own relationship to both the narrator and her implied audience. Depending on his respective knowledge of Toronto, the city Brand's narrator refers to, and his imaginative ability to accommodate himself to the narrative style, the individual reader may feel himself almost enveloped by the narrative address—or he may feel that he has been overlooked or left out, as if he were standing outside the circle. He may even imagine other audiences of readers looking on, from their respective positions in the shadows.

As I mentioned in my Introduction, my approach and my analytical vocabulary are principally drawn from linguistic pragmatics. Paradigmatically, pragmatics attends to how speakers a) index their language to the physical and temporal context of their speaking and b) design their language to manage their relationships to their particular intended addressees and to their subject matter. In pragmatics theory, spoken language is analyzed as being meaningful within the single and unique physical, social, and cognitive context—the single “arena of language use,” to use Herbert H. Clark's phrase (xi)—in which it is produced. The classic pragmatics arena, face-to-face interaction, is immediate, in-the-moment, and intimately personal (even when the interacting people are strangers). Spoken language is “anchored” not only in the ongoing physical and social context (Goffman 500) but in the particular bodies, memories, and personalities of the people present at the conversation. It involves meaningful eye contact (Clark 33) and body language (Sperber and Wilson 49). It responds to the preceding language of its immediate addressees and anticipates their reactions in thought and language (Clark and Marshall 48; Bakhtin “Problem” 94). And it reflects speakers' senses of their relationship to the people facing them.

The verbal text of a conversation would be meaningless if it were removed from its original context of speech and reception, according to some pragmatics-oriented theorists (e.g. Toolan). The verbal and stylistic indices that originally anchored such a text to its context (such as pronouns, temporal markers, or signs of empathy, motive, or response) would be cut off from their moorings and set meaninglessly adrift. But pragmatics notes that even in these verbal signs' severed and aimless attempts to point at contextual features that are no longer present, they gesture to the fact that they had once been part of a physical, temporal, and social context of speech.

Like spoken, conversational language, narrative language in novels and short stories seems to gesture at a social context and a temporal moment of address. But it has not been cut off from an original context. Rather, it projects its own context, where narrator and audience are copresent in the time and sometimes the space of what Gérard Genette calls the "narrating instance" (213). Roland Barthes wrote: "It is well known that in linguistic communication *I* and *you* are absolutely presupposed one by the other; likewise, there can be no story without a narrator and without an audience" (qtd. in Banfield 68). Narrator and implied audience appear, inseparably, as the coupled subjectivities in a storytelling relationship projected by the single line of the narrative text. The qualities of address and sociality decipherable in narrative language may be complicated, indirect, ambiguous, or multiple, and hence in some texts narrative language may be interpreted more easily as unpinned from any unique, bounded subjectivity than as articulated by a personified narrator.³⁵ As they appear in literary texts, narrating and addressed subjectivities sometimes resolve into sharply differentiated "personalities," but

sometimes they are diffuse or shifting positions, too complicated and disembodied to be properly called persons.

Nevertheless, I find it productive to continue to discuss them in terms suggestive of bounded subjecthood (as “narrator” and “audience”) because doing so allows me to emphasize the inter-subjective, relational qualities of narrative language’s address and sociality. The complicated subjectivity of narrative modes such as free indirect narration only adds to the richness of literary address and fuels my interest in analyzing the sociality of descriptions of setting.³⁶ Narrative language’s ability to register complicated blends of subjectivities, in ways that spoken conversational language ordinarily cannot, inspires theories of narrative language that present important challenges to my treating such language as addressed (cf. Banfield). But the stylistic similarities between narrative language in novels and short stories and spoken conversational language enable my crossover analysis.

Accommodating pragmatics techniques to textual analysis, I position myself among narratological debates which on one side support Genette’s theorization of a narrative “voice” speaking within a “narrative instance” of storytelling (*Narrative Discourse* 31 etc) and on the other oppose it, arguing that narrative language in literature must, to quote Ann Banfield, be admitted to be “unspeakable” (*Unspeakable Sentences*.) I agree with Banfield that certain modes of narrative address in novels and short stories may be far removed from the kind of language that speakers might address to each other in conversation. But I consider pragmatics tools of spoken language analysis to be applicable to written narrative language, despite this difference, because I assume that readers can and do interpret the social stylistics of narrative language in literature in ways

comparable to how they interpret everyday spoken language—even when things get complicated.³⁷ Among other social aspects of language, readers distinguish degrees of known-ness and sharedness in narrative language according to the same “familiarity scale” that they use in face-to-face conversation (Prince 245).³⁸ I proceed from the assumption, then, that when readers read the inflections of relationship in narrative language, they construct them as if they are marks of address—inflections that indicate that the language is being directed by a narrator to a particular audience.

My analytic vocabulary

I here introduce the analytical vocabularies I draw from pragmatics theory, and indicate how I use them to analyze degrees of sharedness, familiarity, formality, intimacy, distance, and power in the relationship between the narrator of a given novel or short story and his implied audience. In this section of the chapter, I will use the term “audience” to mean that particular audience implied by the style of the narrative language: the specific audience embraced in the circle of the narrative address.

Assumed familiarity

Central to my analysis are stylistic indices of shared or unshared knowledge. When narrators describe a city, for instance, how much knowledge of that city do they assume their audience shares with them? The coarsest index of sharedness is the amount of explanation required: the more knowledge narrator and audience have in common, the less explanation the narrator needs to offer her audience (cf. Sperber and Wilson on “lightness” versus “heaviness” of style 218). Ellen Prince’s taxonomy of given and new information is my primary resource for analyzing stylistic marks of sharedness, because

Prince distinguishes in spoken and written language finely differentiated degrees of what she calls “assumed familiarity.” While Prince uses these strictly to describe speakers’ and writers’ assumptions about how familiar their audiences are with certain objects, I use her terms to describe narrators’ assertions of an assumed degree of sharedness.

According to Prince, speakers treat objects they refer to in a number of ways, depending on whether they assume them to be more or less familiar to their hearer. At one end of the range are items treated as “evoked”—very familiar because already present in the ongoing discourse (“textually evoked”) or the salient physical and social context (“situationally evoked”) (236). At the other end are items, treated as “brand-new,” which are assumed to be entirely unfamiliar (235). Between these poles ranges a “familiarity scale” of descending order: after evoked comes “unused,” a designator that identifies items already known to the hearer but not yet introduced in the conversation (235), followed by “inferable,” which identifies items whose identity might be inferred from things already evoked (236), and “brand-new anchored,” which identifies items assumed to be brand new but anchored linguistically to some given item (236).³⁹ (See Appendix.)

Prince is skeptical of arguments about sharedness, because she sees how difficult it is for speakers and addressees in practice to be certain of what in fact they do and don’t share with each other. She also points out that the term “shared” connotes that speakers’ and addressees’ knowledge bases are symmetrical (232-3). I use Prince’s familiarity scale to trace narrators’ assertions that certain knowledge is asymmetrically shared between themselves and their audiences.

As I interpret them, narrators' treatments of certain objects as more familiar or less familiar make for relational, socially-oriented narrative speech. Narrators usually address their audiences from positions of knowledge. Their telling styles indicate how close to home their tales are intended to fall; that is, their styles indicate how much knowledge their audiences already share with them about the objects of the story (the place where the story happened or the people and things involved, for example). If they pitch their speech high on the familiarity scale, they are asserting that their audiences already share with them plenty of familiarity with the objects they refer to. If they pitch low, they are clearly asserting an asymmetry between their domain of knowledge and that of their audiences: a lack of common ground. For example, the narrator in the passage from *What We All Long For* treats very few of the things she mentions as brand-new to her audience; indeed, she pitches her language reasonably high on the familiarity scale, referring to things that are already evoked for her audience or are, she judges, at least inferable from her audience's general knowledge of cities like this one. Her assumption of shared familiarity helps to account for an apparent warmth and closeness in this narrator's relationship to her audience that persists despite her expansive, explanatory posture's indication that her audience does not know Toronto. Her style suggests, perhaps, a diasporic address back from Toronto to a homeland audience elsewhere, with whom the narrator shares plenty of world knowledge.

Applying Prince's taxonomy to narrative language in novels and short stories, I find that it cannot quite account for one set of references. These are referring phrases, typically composed of a definite article and a common noun, that treat the identity of their referents as inferable—except that they are not actually inferable from anything the

audience has been introduced to so far. For example, the opening sentence of Malcolm Lowry's short story "The Bravest Boat," which I discuss at length in Chapter Two, reads, "It was a day of spindrift and blowing sea-foam, with black clouds presaging rain driven over *the mountains* from the sea by a wild March wind" (13, my italics). Whereas "the sea" is inferable from the narrator's earlier reference to "sea-foam," "the mountains" are not inferable from anything yet introduced. Generally, when referring phrases like this turn up, they contribute to the projection of an implied audience that already knows the referent well. The referring phrases function almost like proper nouns, signaling landmarks that have not yet been mentioned in the narrative but are reliably familiar to the audience nonetheless. Read in its entirety, Lowry's story projects a rather different scenario: its implied audience is quite unfamiliar with the setting. But the narrator judges them to be nimbly capable of accommodating the sudden appearance of mountains. I think of references like "the mountains" as a special category of inferables particularly suited to and characteristic of narrative in fiction, since such inferables require their audiences to quickly invent mountains and other elements of the storyworld.

Grounds for mutual knowledge

I supplement Prince's familiarity scale with Clark and Catherine R. Marshall's vocabulary of "grounds" for mutual knowledge. According to Clark and Marshall, the sources of what Prince calls familiarity are always social. Narrators' assumptions about their audiences' familiarity with a given referent always take into account how much exposure to the referent the narrators believe they share with their audiences.

In Clark and Marshall's analysis, speakers treat the referents as either "mutually known" or not. Speakers use definite referring expressions—for example, noun phrases

beginning with definite or demonstrative articles (*the, that*), proper nouns, pronouns, or indexicals—to refer to those objects which they judge to be mutually known to themselves and their addressees, and they use indefinite referring expressions for things not mutually known. This either/or distinction is not as fine a gauge as Prince’s multi-level familiarity scale, but it explicitly offers the social dimension of sharedness that I interpret as implicit in Prince’s taxonomy. More importantly, Clark and Marshall distinguish between three different sources of mutual knowledge. They also point out that the particular form of a definite reference—pronoun, deictic adverb, definite or demonstrative article, or proper noun—indicates the speaker’s sense of the source, or the “grounds,” of their mutual knowledge (34, 43-7). I cross Prince’s vocabulary with Clark and Marshall’s: if Prince’s familiarity scale is a vertical grade indicating narrator and addressee’s degree of (shared) familiarity with something, Clark and Marshall’s “grounds” are a horizontal index of the social source of their degree of shared familiarity. I consider really mutually shared knowledge of the kind Clark and Marshall imagine to be a new high point on Prince’s scale: a referent utterly familiar to narrator and addressee because they mutually share it.

Clark and Marshall’s three grounds for mutual knowledge are “linguistic copresence,” “physical copresence,” and “community membership”.⁴⁰ *Linguistic copresence* may be grounds for speakers’ assumption that they can use a pronoun to refer to a given object—a landmark, for example. In this case, speakers assume that the landmark is recognizable as the referent of a pronoun because the topic of this landmark is already alive and salient in the ongoing text of the narrative language, and hence mutually known. For instance, when, in the second sentence of my epigraph, the narrator

says, “Winters on the other hand, there’s nothing vague about *them*” (my emphasis), she is assuming that her audience will recognize that her pronoun “them” indicates “Winters,” her salient topic. Other sorts of definite reference may indicate an assumption of linguistic copresence too. Many of the definite references in narrative language seem to assume linguistic copresence. In the storytelling scenario where a narrator gradually introduces his audience to the setting of his tale, elements of the setting landscape will often be introduced at first as new but, thereafter, be referred to as mutually known on the grounds of linguistic copresence. Prince would ascribe these references to the speaker’s assumption that the referent will be familiar to the addressee because it was evoked previously somewhere in the text’s language; Clark and Marshall argue that that previous reference might need to still be humming with the importance and salience that the chemistry of copresence can give in order to be jointly memorable and familiar to both parties (cf. also Chafe 94).

Physical copresence is less likely to be assumed as grounds for mutual knowledge of a referent in narrative language, since narrator and addressee are rarely personified and depicted as present together with each other in a physical context. Where they surface, deictic adverbs and some demonstrative articles indicate narrators’ assumptions that physical copresence with the referent is grounds for mutual knowledge of it. Although my epigraph opens with the phrase “*This city* hovers above the forty-third parallel” (my emphasis), the narrator generally seems to be speaking to a distant audience, not one who is standing there with her in the city. However, in a sense made possible by the disembodied metaphysics of storytelling in novels and short stories, the narrator and her audiences are nonetheless immediately present to each other in the moment of telling

(Genette's "narrating instance"). The speaker seems to expect her audience to be able to identify which city she is speaking about because they well know where she is.

Finally, *community membership* may be grounds for speakers' assumption that they can use a proper noun to refer to a given landmark. Proper nouns indicate speakers' assertions that their audience shares mutual knowledge of the city with them because they know each other to be members together of a given community. When the narrator goes on in the epigraph to mention that the spring runoff swelled "the Humber River and the Don River," she assumes that her audience shares membership with her in a community that knows Toronto's major rivers by name.

Clark and Marshall's "community membership" is an important idea for my project, since I am interested in how different Vancouver sub-communities might be imagined around different sets of shared Vancouver landmarks. A proper-noun reference to the Lion's Gate Bridge assumes that narrator and audience are members of a community of people who know Vancouver—or at least a community of people who know this particular feature of Vancouver. Proper-noun references to the Balmoral Inn (a landmark of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside) or the Yaohan (a Richmond shopping mall selling Asian goods) might, in certain contexts, assume rather different knowledge communities. As I use the term, Clark and Marshall's "community" of those in the know ought to be thought of as open-ended and ad-hoc. It is the set of people assumed to know the particular references at hand, although such knowing may well be imagined to involve and imply other related knowledge as well. This "community," so-called, need not exist in any sense of being self-aware—organized and labeled with its membership notified—before it is called into being by a narrator's reference.

Clark and Marshall argue that “in ordinary conversation people go to some trouble to establish the communities of which they are members just so that their definite references will succeed” (37), presuming that people make references only after establishing membership (“Do you know Vancouver? Ah, well then you know the Lion’s Gate Bridge and the Ovaltine Café...”). But it also happens that people make assumptions of membership without elaborate establishing moves, as for example tourists do when they approach passers-by on a city street to ask directions to “the art gallery” or “the Sea Bus.” In such cases the tourists assume that the passer-by is a citizen in the know, and that their use of definite references will do the work of establishing them as members with the passer-by of a community who knows that such institutions exist. Their reference seeks to create ad-hoc community on the spot and on the fly. Literary texts have the creative capacity to re-invent parts of the city as a common ground for a particular community of knowing insiders (for example, the suburban West Van playground of Douglas Coupland’s gaggles of teenage buddies or the secret Stanley Park settlement of Timothy Taylor’s homeless community). And they may include their audiences in such a community by means of proper nouns and other definite references which assume mutual knowledge.

I adopt Clark and Marshall’s distinctions between the different grounds of mutual knowledge and the forms of definite reference that indicate them. But, depending on the context of the reference in the literary text, I tend to take the forms of definite reference as indications of something less than certainty of mutual knowledge—as guesses at, or hopes of, a shared familiarity and a somewhat reciprocal social awareness.

Ostension and relevance

Style is determined both by what narrators do say and what they do not. I focus my analysis primarily on the narrative language that does appear on the page, but Sperber and Wilson offer me an analytical concept—“ostension”—which applies equally to what is left unsaid. In their theory, *ostensive* behaviour is overtly noticeable behaviour (48-9). Overt noticeability flags for the intended audience the speaker’s deliberate intention that the audience will notice his behaviour. This ostension, Sperber and Wilson argue, assures the audience that the speaker is trying to communicate something, and it offers the speaker’s implicit guarantee that what he is trying to communicate will be relevant to that audience (50). While fictional narrators do not have intentions, marked stylistic features, like tone, diction, or poetic devices, may seem to imply an intentional address. Sperber and Wilson discuss the guarantee of relevance implicit in the ostensive style of “all the figures of style identified by classical rhetoric” (222). And not just positive figures, but ellipsis and other omissions may appear ostensive as well.

Unspoken assumptions

Pragmatics theory offers several powerful analytical tools for indicating assumptions that are implied though not directly said; these tools are important for my project, because common ground is often located precisely in what is left implicit, not needing to be explained. Janet Giltrow’s analysis of Anita Brookner’s novel *Hotel du Lac* identifies three sets of linguistic features which ostensibly signal certain unspoken assumptions. These are:

a) presupposing expressions, which assume rather than assert; b) agentless expressions, which suppress mentions of actors; and c) modality and projection, which assign statements as issuing from contingent conditions. (“Ironies” 215)⁴¹

Giltrow explains that all three types of expression may be read as signaling that the narrator assumes certain tacit knowledge to be common ground between narrator and addressee (220, 227). She adds that the novel’s use of these expressions demonstrates how their ostensive signaling of common ground may be used to other social effects than the happy securing of mutual knowledge. Depending on how they exploit differentials of knowledge between narrator and addressee, they may be used equally effectively to assert relative power.

Speakers who sustain this way of talking can dominate others with calculated assumptions, presuming common ground to be taken for granted. At the same time as talk of this kind shields propositions from contradiction [by presupposing rather than asserting them to be true], it can intimidate listeners into compliance or pretense or silence them in fear of betraying their lack of privileged experience.

(220)

Similarly, the epistemic modal expression “Of course” is, in certain contexts, a “compelling signal” that “registers the speaker’s perception of potential resistance and dominates or disarms that resistance, imposing constraints on the listener to profit the speaker” (Giltrow “Ironies” 227).

I incorporate Giltrow’s explanations of tacitness, domination and disarmament into my analytic vocabulary, along with the pragmatics concepts of *politeness* (Brown and Levinson) and *presupposition* (Levinson) she is working from. They especially help

identify the potential social effects felt by reading audiences that notice their exclusion from the circle of narrative address or feel themselves almost welcomed into it. Since, in my work, narrator and implied audience are both understood to be projections of the same stylistic turns of phrase, an *I* and a *you* “absolutely presupposed one by the other,” as Barthes put it, I do not find examples of narrators who aggressively or otherwise insincerely address themselves to audiences for whom their style is not generously and politely calibrated. However, the difference between what the implied audience apparently knows and what certain readers could possibly know makes room for the social effects Giltrow identifies, and I return to these later in this chapter.

Orientations of address: inter-personality versus a-sociality

I take the word “orientation” from two sources. One of these is Michael Toolan’s discussion of basic human sociality, which he calls “orientedness to other.” Toolan argues that this social orientation inclines people to trust that “others are as concerned as we are to resist and overcome the separateness from others that physical and mental separateness—individuality—entails” (112). Without this orientation, people could not have developed language. Indeed, Toolan points out that, as isolated individuals, we cannot achieve truly mutual certainty of anything: not the meaning of words, nor even the intention of the person facing us in conversation to communicate something to us. Using language, and cooperating in any other way, *always* involves a leap of faith—that is, a

spirit of ‘orientedness to other’: a faith that, because of and in spite of the impossibility of certain knowledge of another’s thoughts and feelings, each

community member is foundationally concerned to surmount that barrier and to assert and act out a sharedness that can never be proved. (112)

Adopting the vocabulary of social “orientedness” from Toolan, I adopt with it his position that mutual knowledge is impossible, but people nevertheless guess at and hope for a shared familiarity and a somewhat reciprocal social awareness. I want to make clear, though, that while with Toolan I think of this orientation as “faith,” I acknowledge that this orientedness to other is as much a feature of “ruthlessly authoritarian social system[s]” as cooperative and nurturing ones (Toolan 112)—an inclination to sociality is not a virtue but merely a pattern of attention.⁴²

While the central arguments of this dissertation are based on the assumption that narrative language can be (and likely often *is*) read as address—read, that is, as inter-personal orientation—some narrative language reads instead as relatively a-social. Indeed, some narrative language declines to project a markedly social address at the very site where I am most interested in reading and analyzing social orientation: at the site of reference to objects in the storyworld, including elements of the setting. My analytical tools prepare me to interpret references pitched high or low on Prince’s familiarity scale as indices of how familiar the narrator judges the audience to be with the referents, but some narrative language seems to pitch its references high or low according to how familiar these objects are to the story’s protagonist, not to the audience.

Wallace Chafe calls this pitch a “*protagonist-oriented* identifiability, as contrasted with the *listener-oriented* identifiability that is operative in conversational language” (284, his italics). Chafe’s terminology here is the second source of my word, “orientation.” Discussing, for example, the narrative language in Ernest Hemingway’s

story “Big Two-Hearted River,” Chafe points out references to objects in the setting of the storyworld that are phrased as if they are “identifiable,” although they could not in fact be identifiable to any addressee. Chafe records that at the beginning of the story the narrator says, “The train went on up the track out of sight.” Chafe comments,

There is evidently no point in asking with whom the knowledge of the train or track was judged to be shared, or who would judge the sharing. What determined [the] identifiability [of these references, and hence their definite expression] was the fact that these ideas were already part of [the protagonist] Nick’s knowledge.

(284)⁴³

Chafe’s “identifiability” is intended as one measure of how speakers’ interpersonal orientation manifests itself in the design of their speech. His definition of identifiability is drawn from an analysis of obviously social, conversational language use, like Prince’s “familiarity”—and, in developing a definition for the term, he includes the speaker’s estimate of shared knowledge.⁴⁴ But when Chafe goes on to analyze narrative language, he proposes that some of its references are not inflected according to a social context of narration. He considers that the inflections of “identifiability” in this language (definite references, for example) have no social significance. They are not calibrated to the speaker’s relationship with his/her addressee, and cannot be read as indications about their relative amounts of knowledge; instead, they represent the protagonist’s developing knowledge of his environment. In the next section, I will discuss the narrative language of Margaret Atwood’s *Cat’s Eye*, a novel that narrates all of its references to Toronto in language that apparently represents the protagonist’s knowledge of the city instead of accommodating an audience’s knowledge of it.

Thus in some instances of narrative language, the very inflections that elsewhere suggest an inter-personal orientation suggest instead that the narrator is absorbed in representing the protagonist's consciousness. I say absorbed, here, because in such examples as Hemingway's story the speaking personality is diluted by—absorbed into—representation of the protagonist's consciousness. Narrators' personalities are most sharply evident, in narrative language, when they are overtly addressing themselves to audiences who do not share all their knowledge with them: their personality emerges out of differential, inter-personal dynamics of address. Free indirect narration, like that of Hemingway's narrator in the story Chafe analyzes, turns the narrator's attention inward to the storyworld and thus away from the audience.

Other techniques of fictional storytelling may likewise read as a-social rather than overtly inter-personal in their protagonist-oriented patterns of reference. Indeed, in his book *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel*, Robert Alter argues that the narrative techniques developed by early twentieth-century novelists, for the purpose of representing new realities of human experience in big, modern cities, were intended to represent individual subjective experience. They are not, in other words, explicitly socially-inflected discursive styles. Alter focuses primarily on free indirect narration (which he calls “narrated monologue” [6], thus underlining its a-sociality); he also places implicit emphasis on stream of consciousness narration. These narrative modes, he argues, were designed to express the private, limited, and ultimately quite unshareable subjectivity of the individual (41, 108, 141; but see also 110). They were thus able to capture, among other aspects of modern urban experience, the sense of personal solitariness amidst a crowd (20), and the awareness of being extraordinarily

close to strangers, whose respective subjective experiences are likewise private and solitary.

My methodology is designed to analyze explicit and implicit “marks” of social orientedness in narrative language; if I were to encounter a narrative that read as especially a-social, because its stylistic patterns were so protagonist-oriented as to seem oblivious to any audience, I would tend to leave it alone. But I understand novels and short stories to be types of language use that are social, in the sense of being used interpersonally as well as in the sense of being genres worked in and recognized by a particular society. By virtue of being put into circulation, printed, published works are designed to address readers. Free indirect narration may seem to be absorbed in representing a character’s consciousness, but in doing so it presents that consciousness to someone. As I will argue of *Obasan* later in this chapter, even the most a-social of narrative styles may yet be evidently designed to address a reading audience.⁴⁵

Chafe’s example of protagonist-oriented identifiability is drawn from a story that is not narrated by the protagonist himself, but by a separate narrator. This narrator is so absorbed by his protagonist’s consciousness that he does not have a distinct personality, but is simply a narrating instance. In other fictional narratives, including *Cat’s Eye*, the protagonists are themselves narrators. In such narrative, protagonist-orientation reads like self-absorption.

Self-absorbed speech: the example of *Cat’s Eye*

In Margaret Atwood’s *Cat’s Eye*, the first-person narrator is protagonist Elaine Risley, a narrator whose address reads as at once social and a-social. Her narrative

language is particularly a-social in the protagonist-oriented design of its references to elements of the novel's Toronto setting. Elaine inflects her speech to reflect her own degree of familiarity with the Toronto landmarks she talks about, rather than pitching it to a familiarity scale that would accommodate anyone else. Yet her narration also has qualities of orientation to another. All told, Elaine's narration, a revelation of bruised, watchful subjectivity, is oriented to an audience, but one more proximate than another person could possibly be. Her narrative is like speech addressed to Elaine herself—hence it is a performance of split subjectivity suitable for a character alienated from herself by the self-hatred bullies have taught her. Its self-absorptive intimacy seems to suffocate any possibility of direct communion with others.

Elaine shifts between representing her childhood experiences and her adult ones; she narrates each in the present tense, as if they are both happening presently. When Elaine represents her adult consciousness, her narrative speech describes her experience of exploring Toronto, the city where she grew up, after years in Vancouver. The way she speaks about Toronto demonstrates her changed relationship to it: her alienation from the city's present glitzy, expanded incarnation and her knowing familiarity with its more subdued past form. Her feelings toward the city have not altered—she declares that she hates Toronto and always has (14)—and nor has her sense of its essential personality changed. But her degree of knowledge of its surface forms has lessened. The pattern of her references to features of the Toronto landscape shows her shifting between a recital or rehearsal for herself of her remembered knowledge of the city and an on-the-spot appraisal of its new features, spoken as if she is learning about them for the first time. Her reciting style suggests a powerful, acquired certainty about the Toronto landscape she

remembers. And even her on-the-spot appraisal, although it demonstrates her lack of knowledge of the new city, is confidently assertive:

I've been walking for hours it seems, down *the* hill to *the* downtown, where *the* streetcars no longer run. It's evening, one of *those* gray watercolour washes, like liquid dust, the city comes up with in the fall. The weather at any rate is still familiar.

Now I've reached *the* place where we used to get off the streetcar, stepping into *the* curbside mounds of January slush, into *the* grating wind that cut up from *the* lake between *the* flat-roofed dowdy buildings that were for us the closest things to urbanity. But this part of the city is no longer flat, dowdy, shabby-genteel. Tubular neon in cursive script decorates the restored brick facades, and there's a lot of brass trim, a lot of real estate, a lot of money. Up ahead there are huge oblong towers, all of glass, lit up, like enormous gravestones of cold light. (8-9, my italics)

Here Elaine seems to speak to herself. In the first half of the passage, her references are pitched high on the familiarity scale—they consistently introduce features of the city as unused (that is, not yet mentioned but presumably well known nonetheless), marking this treatment with the series of definite articles I have italicized. The chain of restrictive relative clauses linking the wind to the lake, and these in turn to the buildings, anchors an unused reference in other unused references, compounding the sense that Elaine's knowledge of these Toronto places is part of a personalized web of associations. Besides Elaine herself, perhaps only Cordelia, with whom she acquired this particular geography, would recognize the very place she means. (Elaine's "we," in the fourth

sentence of the passage, refers to herself and Cordelia. But she is not directly addressing Cordelia here.)⁴⁶

Elaine generously layers descriptive attributes onto each object she references, in effect making it possible for someone other than herself or Cordelia to get something out of the passage. But this bystander, listening in, is not addressed; he or she would not be able to locate the place where Elaine is standing “now,” and his or her inability to do so is not accommodated. Meanwhile, while “the place where we used to get off the streetcar” is a feature of a private geography, downtown Toronto towers are not. If anyone were standing with Elaine now on the street corner, looking up ahead towards the towers, he or she would share with Elaine an ability to identify them—they would be situationally evoked, in Prince’s terms, or physically copresent, in Clark and Marshall’s—and Elaine would say something more like, “Look at those huge oblong towers up ahead...” But they are strange new objects to Elaine, and she shares this view of them with no-one. Her intimate self-addressed speech about them demonstrates her estranged relationship to them, introducing the towers and other features of the new Toronto into her speech as new items. In Chafe’s terms, this is protagonist-oriented narrative language.

But in Elaine’s case, a protagonist-oriented familiarity scale combines with a style of address that seems to *tell* her story—although she tells it with such a self-absorbed intimacy of perspective that she often seems to talk to herself. Her narrative style reads as social, as oriented to an other, because Elaine tells of her unfolding experiences in an expository manner, equal parts intimate, informative confiding and schoolish, docile reciting.

Lately I've caught myself humming out loud, or walking along the street with my mouth slightly open, drooling a little. [...] There is no one I would ever tell this to, except Cordelia. But which Cordelia? The one I have conjured up, the one with the rolltop boots and the turned up collar, or the one before, or the one after?

There is never only one, of anyone. (6)

Even when her sentences are interrogative, as in *But which Cordelia?*, Elaine expands on them explanatorily. In other sentences, her expository phrasing seems overtly social and communicative; it extends knowledge to an audience. Many of her sentences begin, as some of these do, with an existential *There*, a grammatical place-filler that shifts the substance of her sentences into the position where we ordinarily expect new information. Thus, Elaine's narrative is structured according to a grammar of telling, a grammar tailored to reveal things that an audience does not yet know. The larger patterns of her narrative, too, are set for *story*-telling: she discloses some details and explains certain facts but deliberately withholds certain others. Apparently, she withholds things for the sake of building suspense, and for the thematic purpose of demonstrating at the expense of her audience what it is like to be the one left out of insider knowledge.⁴⁷

Considered by itself, Elaine's narrative language, with its mixture of protagonist-oriented reference and storytelling exposition, reads like self-absorbed, self-addressed speech. References to Toronto are demonstrations of Elaine's idiosyncratic perspective on the city. However, the novel's narration does seem conscious of another audience, a set of reading others, for whose information Elaine's self-address is performed. As a whole, the novel's narrative address insinuates that this other audience, for whom its assumptions of familiarity are *not* accommodatingly keyed, is intended to recognize itself

as identifying more with Elaine, seeing things more from her perspective, than this audience might have thought possible. To my mind, the references to Toronto in the novel also present the caustic tenor of her opinions about the city to a reading audience expected to have its own opinions about the place. While these demonstrations are, in their protagonist-orientation, apparently careless of outside perspectives, they seem ultimately to assume that certain readers will recognize their own view of the city in Elaine's. These readers' resentment of, or delight in, recognizing their own accord with Elaine's view of Toronto is part of the reception this novel aims to address.

Dissolving the text / context boundary

Up to this point I have been representing address in novels and short stories as a matter of fictional narrators addressing fictional audiences in a fictional social context of narration. But now readers have entered the arena. In this case they enter precisely because of references to real places: it is because Elaine is speaking about Toronto that I imagine the novel looking out the corner of its eye at readers who already have a relationship to the city.

In studies of the pragmatics of literature, references to actual locations have long been central to debates about who is addressed by fictional discourse. At least since philosopher John R. Searle declared that "along with the pretended references to Sherlock Holmes and Watson, there are in *Sherlock Holmes* real references to London and Baker Street and Paddington Station" (*Expression* 72, my italics), pragmatics theorists have been divided on whether proper nouns like "Baker Street" in fiction do indeed refer to the actual locations. Their respective answers to this question differ according to whether

they think that authors address fictional discourse to their readers and therefore refer directly to real places (Martinich and Stroll 9-10; Searle) or whether they think that fictional narrators address their discourse to equally fictional addressees, articulating discourse that cannot refer to real places because it is spoken entirely in a fictional context of address (J Adams; Pagnini; Martinez-Bonati). Taking the latter view in their book-length studies of the pragmatics of fiction and literature, for example, both Jon-K Adams and Marcello Pagnini posit a boundary that envelops a fictional communicative context—a boundary segregating what I call the circle of address from any other audience. Adams argues that the *Sherlock Holmes* narrator refers to fictional places, not real ones. “Sherlock Holmes could not have walked in the same Baker Street that we can walk in today,” he claims (20).

I take philosophers A. P. Martinich and Avrum Stroll’s opposing view that references in fiction may indeed refer to the real world, if readers perceive them to do so. As Martinich and Stroll insist, theory ought to be consistent with the fact that most readers “think that Sherlock Holmes lived on Baker Street in London, and that this street and city are the same ones they can visit” (11). In agreeing with this statement, I am arguing against the idea that there is an impermeable boundary separating fictional contexts of narration from the real world. I am denying what, in *The Pragmatics of Literature*, Marcello Pagnini calls “the autonomy of literature” (106). “Even when the work proposes to ‘mirror’ or ‘imitate’ a real object—let us say ‘describe’ it,” Pagnini argues, that description is part of the “complex of related signs” that is the discursive system of the work (106).

I do not disagree with Pagnini that the reference to a landmark in a fictional work is *also* read as part of the system of the work, as an element in a fictional geography; nor would I deny that references to landmarks in “ordinary” conversations are likewise part of a discursive “complex of related signs.” But I think that at the moment when readers identify the fictional reference as indicating a landmark they recognize from the real world, they integrate what Pagnini calls “the referential plane of literature” with the plane of “ordinary experience” (106), if only momentarily. Readers may re-experience the landmarks of their ordinary worlds by encountering them as part of a fictional geography. But I assume that they perceive no more distinction between the landmarks being spoken about by a fictional narrator and the landmarks of their real world than they would if they overheard the same landmarks being spoken about by strangers sitting beside them on a public bus.

Narratologist David Herman argues that in certain instances the pronoun *you* in fictional discourse “exceeds the frame (or ontological threshold) of a fiction to reach its [reading] audience” (341), thus breaking the boundary between a fictional context of address and extending narrative address to the real readers. But this boundary is not strict to begin with, at least when novels are recognizably set in the real world. In my Introduction I wrote about the variety of people, near and far, who may have a relationship with any given public place, whether they know it from long personal acquaintance or from a distance via mediated representations. I also wrote about novels, short stories, and plays as the sort of public texts that selectively address a particular audience even as they circulate widely, likely reaching audiences who are quite different from the one addressed. In such circumstances, the narrator’s address to a particular

audience in a novel like *Cat's Eye* may be read as articulated in the potential presence of other audiences than its primary audience because the novel puts this address into public circulation. Among these other audiences are people who hold the whole range of possible relationships to the places described in the novel.

I claimed earlier that *Cat's Eye* seems to be conscious of another audience than its primary audience: its descriptions of Toronto are so ostensibly, caustically irreverent that I cannot help but read it as casting a tart, saucy sideways glance at the community of those who might be used to thinking about Toronto differently. I might now say the same thing differently: as a reader who recognizes Toronto, I apprehend the potential presence of an audience other than Elaine's primary, implied audience: a possible reading audience who might find her comments about Toronto personally relevant. The novel's very move of setting the narrative in Toronto prompts me to imagine this audience's presence listening in on the circle of Elaine's narrative address, because Toronto is a city I recognize as a public site that many others know and relate to.

In some novels, I apprehend the potential presence of another audience who might find the narrative personally relevant when the social pattern of the narrative address changes (cf. Banting forthcoming). Address is subtle, complicated, and shifting in novels and short stories; it feints and hints, taking knowledge for granted one moment and then turning aside to explain it the next. Shifts often seem to imply that the narrator is pitching his address to other audiences beyond his primary audience, and I attempt to analyze the complicated audience designs suggested by these shifts using the same analytical tools I use for primary address: mutuality and/or assumed familiarity; formality; intimacy; distance; power; relationality. However little the written address

acknowledges it, at least one audience always exists besides the implied audience—that is, the audience of actual readers—and address in literary writing is complicated and playful, perhaps, precisely because it is destined for reception by someone it can never quite address.

Audience design

Clark and Thomas B. Carlson’s pragmatics-oriented theory of “audience design” offers vocabulary that neatly describes the complicated relations between a narrator and his several audiences. Clark and Carlson argue that, in complicated social situations, speakers design their utterances to simultaneously “say” different things to different people. By so doing, speakers also ultimately design audiences by means of their language: they divide the set of people present in the arena of language use into audiences of addressees, side-participants, bystanders, and eavesdroppers (218; Clark and Schaefer 250). As Clark and Carlson theorize audience design, each audience is in part distinguished from the others by the relative degree to which audience and speaker mutually recognize how the speaker intends to position that audience (222). *Addressees* are those to whom the speaker is ostensibly directing her utterance, and the speaker intends that they will mutually recognize this position with her. In the circle of narrative address at work in novels and short stories, the addressees are the primary audience implied by narrative style. *Side-participants* are likewise intended to mutually recognize, with the speaker, that they are to participate directly and immediately in the speaker’s address, but they are also to recognize that they are not the designated addressees. The mutuality—the intensely shared reciprocal awareness of self and other—with which these immediate audiences are intended to recognize their positions with respect to the speaker

and his/her address makes audience design an extraordinarily powerful social lever. By overtly differentiating between addressees and side-participants, speakers might make their addressees feel positively or negatively singled-out: politely privileged, for example, as in the case where the speaker defers to their special knowledge, or rudely condescended to, as in the case where the speaker turns aside to offer them knowledge she wrongly supposes they lack. Likewise, by having side-participants recognize that they are not the designated addressees, speakers may make them feel either colluded with or brushed aside. In my research for this project I have not encountered narrative language that manages to bifurcate its primary audience into positions of addressee and side-participant, although certain narratives do shift between different primary audiences. I explain Clark and Carlson's theory of audience design at length, here, because it provides such scope for analyzing the social effects of exclusion and inclusion that do arise when we imagine reading audiences attending to the narrative from just outside the circle of address.

Clark and Schaefer argue that common ground is a resource for audience design (257): while speakers intend both addressees and side-participants to fully understand their utterances, speakers may differentiate between the two audiences by assuming themselves to share different grounds in common with the two groups. For example, depending on how speakers manage the subtle social politics of their address, they might make side-participants feel either colluded with or brushed aside by explaining something to an addressee which they feel the side-participants already know—the subtext of the explanation being, for the side-participants, either a winking *Poor Addressee hasn't a*

clue what's going on or a dismissive *It's not important to me that this is all old news to you.*⁴⁸

The social dynamics of address work differently between speaker and *bystanders* or *eavesdroppers* than between speaker and addressees or side-participants (Clark and Carlson 221). Both bystanders and eavesdroppers fit under the umbrella category of “overhearers”; the difference is that the speaker is aware of bystanders but not of eavesdroppers. These latter two audiences are outside of the circle of mutual awareness and knowledge: even if speakers intend bystanders to understand what they are saying, they do not offer bystanders the certainty of a mutual acknowledgement that they are being included in the address. (Thus bystanders cannot insist, for example, that a speaker intended to insult or flatter them, if he manages to do so; the most they can claim is that he did so indirectly and by accident.) Clark and Schaefer point out that speakers may hold attitudes of *disclosure*, *indifference*, or *concealment* toward overhearers (256). These attitudes call for complicated audience designs accommodating addressees’ and side-participants’ degrees of knowledge while managing to inform, or conceal information from, bystanders and/or possible eavesdroppers. The social dynamics between speaker and overhearers are more indirect and diffuse than those between speakers and addressees, because the former dynamics lack the eye-to-eye reciprocal awareness of mutual recognition. But they are potentially powerful nonetheless. Side-participants who are pushed so far to the “side” of a speaker’s address as to verge on being treated as ignored bystanders may feel vaguely excluded from a (possibly) warm circle of copresence and mutual awareness; bystanders who are extensively disclosed to might begin to feel eerily as if they have been interpolated as addressees. And

eavesdroppers who hear themselves blithely talked about are not directly addressed, but they feel the social force of their relationship to the speaker nonetheless!

Thinking of fictional narrative in novels and short stories as designing its audiences, I come again to Adams's and Pagnini's idea of a boundary around fictional storyworlds. Mutual recognition, as Clark and Carlson theorize it, is impossible for narrators and actual readers. Thus readers permanently occupy the position of "overhearers" with respect to fictional narrators' audiences, and the social effects the narrative may have on its readers are not directly personal. Novels and short stories may cast different sets of readers as bystanders or eavesdroppers, and as disclosed to, treated indifferently, or concealed from, but they cannot cast them as their primary audience. Indeed, fictional addressees crop up because of the inevitable difference, however slight it might be, between the audience projected by the narrator's address and the actual person reading that address. A reader imagines the fictional audience just the way a person will look over her shoulder, expecting to find someone else there, when a stranger who has mistaken her for someone else addresses her out of the blue. Nevertheless, the boundary proposed by Adams and Pagnini blurs as readers identify themselves and/or other communities in their social world as among the bystanding or eavesdropping overhearers potentially present in the receptive arena they imagine surrounding the circle of address.

Perhaps the social force of mutuality is, anyway, most sharply felt at the edge of its circle.⁴⁹ Like the side-participant who is edged out or the bystander who is pulled in, readers may be overtaken by a sharp sense of social relationship—exclusion or inclusion, or something in between. They may feel that their shared knowledge is pointedly not

being recognized (when it ought to be), that they are positioned as eavesdroppers when the writer ought to have known that they would be listening in, or even that they are somehow, impossibly, being directly addressed by the narrator. The pragmatics of reading literature is the realm of *nearly* and/or *remotely* mutual relationships, so to speak—the spine-prickling realm of uncertain, guessed-at, glancing, sidelong connection. For even if actual readers may not technically be identical to fictional narrators’ audiences and side-participants, narrators may make very proximate bystanders or very self-conscious eavesdroppers of them. And literary texts’ references to recognizable landmarks are sites where readers may feel copresence and common ground to be *almost* possible in their relationships to other personalities in and around the text, including narrator, audience, and the other potential audiences imaginable at the periphery of narrative address.

Since novels and short stories usually name their writers, as well as seeming to project a narrating persona, we might say that literary texts can prompt readers to imaginatively close the gap between the context in which the writer wrote the text and the distant, separate contexts of their reading. Indeed, when readers decide that a text is making reference to elements in their own, lived worlds—such as landmarks in a place they know—they establish a point of identity between three contexts: their own, the fictional storytelling context inscribed in the text, and the writer’s context. Deciding to recognize the words “Lion’s Gate Bridge” in a literary text as referring to the very bridge they know in Vancouver, for instance, readers construe both fictional narrator and actual writer as referring to that bridge. At this point of linkage between the three contexts, these readers apprehend the storytelling address inscribed in the text as articulated in their

own respective lived worlds. For them the social context of literary storytelling overflows the boundaries of the fictional storyworld. It comes to include not only the narrator, the fictional audience, and the reader herself, but also the writer, who composed the narrator's narrative reference to the landmark. The reader now knows that the landmark is part of the writer's lived world.⁵⁰

Thus, because of the newly imagined connection between the reader's social, geographical context and the writer's, writer and reader are put indirectly into social relationship with each other by means of the text-as-utterance. The text's address may come to seem newly, sharply, personally relevant to the reader, as if the writer had designed its effects, whatever these might be (education, entertainment, social commentary, the establishing or foreclosing of common ground...), to hinge on their personal relevance to the reader. For some Torontonians or people who know Toronto well, for example, Elaine's irreverence in *Cat's Eye* may read as if Atwood had composed it especially to gall them or to make them laugh. The text's address becomes a "social action" not in the sense of the performance of a classic speech act—like informing, asking, commenting, etc.—but in the sense of an inter-personal social "move" made by the writer, between herself and the reader. This move may have multiple dimensions of precisely the kind I attempt to trace at the level of details of the text's language, such as, for example, an assertion of relative power; an inclusive enfolding into a group of "insiders" or an exclusion from it; an assumption of intimacy or estrangement; of identity or difference; and/or an acknowledgement, denial, or delimiting of common ground.⁵¹

In Chapter Two, where I review the variety of different primary audiences addressed by novels and short stories ostensibly set in Vancouver, I will not take the step of commenting on the possibility of readers imagining writers making social moves with their texts, partly because I can only ever speculate about what readers might imagine. In the final section of this chapter, however, I offer a reading of the powerful social moves that might be attributed to the writer of a particular novel. The moves I describe depend, in this case, on the individual reader recognizing the Canadian institutions and the Vancouver landmarks referred to in the text as part of his own social world. Exactly where we might locate the writer of a novel or short story in the increasingly complicated social scene of a circle of narrative address depends on the rhetorical maneuvers of the particular text: perhaps in some cases the narrator glances up suddenly, in the person of the writer as it were, to look the bystanding readers in the eye. In the case of a novel like Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, I imagine the figure of the writer suddenly appearing behind the scene of the circle as a conductor animating the storytelling, rather like the "implied author" described by Wayne Booth "as stage manager [or] as puppeteer." She is not like Booth's third image for this figure, "an indifferent God" (151), because her appearance on the scene is as one directly engaged in the sociality of her audience design.

Recognizable landmarks and audience design: the example of *Obasan*

Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* challenges my interpretive approach. The narrative is absorbed in the protagonist's consciousness, but its style occasionally sends a flickering glance outwards; meanwhile, Kogawa presents a narrator's pose of private self-reflection

while ultimately composing a public appeal to a particular readership. I argue that style and narrative address vitally affect how a novel or short story presents itself to its reading audiences, but this novel illustrates how complicated a narrative's interface with its readers may be. Nevertheless, analyzing the audience-designing effects of place references does allow me to sort out some of the novel's complex rhetoric. *Obasan's* primary social move is to present itself publicly to non-Japanese Canadians, asking them to admit the injustice of internment and to recognize that Japanese-Canadians "come from" Canada just as they do (Kogawa 226); a secondary social move is to make self-conscious overhearers of non-Japanese Vancouverites. But this rhetorical purpose hinges on a primary address to quite a different audience.

The primary narrative address is itself difficult to characterize. Like that in *Cat's Eye*, *Obasan's* narrative style is at once other-oriented and private: at once addressed to someone "other" than the self, an outsider, and seemingly addressed to the self, or addressed within a circle of familial and perhaps racial identifications. Considering the novel's status as a public text that offers itself to readers, I think that the tension between these two simultaneous qualities finally may be resolved by deciding that the novel reads as an authorial staging, for certain reading "others," of a woman's private self-address. But the tension in the narrative language's fictional address subtly complicates even this account of audience design. What follows is my description of the narrative address and its complicated interaction with the whole novel's self-presentation to readers. (In referring here to the "whole text," I am thinking of Bakhtin's concept of "addressivity," in which the literary text enters the social world as one entire utterance, oriented to a particular audience as managed by its genre as well as its style ["Problem" 62; see

footnote 13].) I comment in particular on how certain social effects of the novel's audience design come into effect *if* readers recognize the novel's references to Canadian institutions and specific Vancouver landmarks as part of their social world.

The complicated character of narrative address in *Obasan* matches the novel's thematic tension between silent acceptance and public outcry. Most of the fictional narrator, Naomi's, family members have chosen to be silent about the pain of internment—Naomi's uncle declares it “not very Japanese-like” to speak out (Kogawa 40). However, her aunt Emily is determined to speak publicly about their history of suffering: “All her life,” Naomi tells her audience, “Aunt Emily toiled to tell of the lives of the Nisei in Canada in her effort to make familiar, to make knowable, the treacherous yellow peril that lived in the minds of the racially prejudiced” (40). Naomi is torn between the two impulses (to be silent, to tell); she recalls with gratitude her mother's “Japanese” unwillingness to probe and expose her childhood experiences of pain and confusion (59), but she is gradually convinced by Emily's insistence on drawing pain out into expression.

When she can bear to recall it, fictional narrator Naomi *tells* the story of her family's internment, speaking as if to an audience who does not already know the story. She patterns given and new information in a way that projects an address to someone unfamiliar with her life experiences. Her “telling” style pins new attributes onto given items in familiar, informative phrase structures, leading her audience gently into knowledge, as in “The house was large and beautiful,” for example, in the following passage:

All right, Aunt Emily, all right! The house then—the house, if I must remember it today, was large and beautiful. It's still there on West 64th Avenue in Vancouver. [...] I looked it up once [...] It used to have *a hedge* and *rose bushes* and *flowers* and *cactus plants* lining the sidewalk [...] If I search the caverns of my mind, I come to a collage of images—*sombre paintings*, *a fireplace* and *a mantel clock* with *a heavy key* like a small metal bird that fits into my palm.

The living room is the darkest room, the walls of dark wood lit with dim lights. On the floor is *a deep blue Indian rug* with *a complex border* of multi-coloured designs and *a ribbon of rectangles* and roads that can be traversed like a maze by Stephen's toy train. (50, my italics)

In this passage, where she begins to think back to her childhood and recall the losses her family suffered, Naomi introduces intimately-known features of her childhood home (indicated in italics) as if they are new to her audience.

But her narration is nevertheless privately spoken. When it addresses someone explicitly, it apostrophizes an absent family member—as it does Emily here (cf. also 194), or her mother (240-1). Naomi's desire for peace and privacy makes her resist the compulsion to tell, and her narrative process is tortured by the pain of recollection; for these reasons, perhaps, Naomi's narrative language suggests an audience who is, as in *Cat's Eye*, so close to the narrator that she could hardly be an "other," and is instead like a version of the narrator's self. As Laurie Ricou points out, "we might read" the fictional narrator's narrative "as a woman's journal" (*Arbutus* 72); indeed, her first chapter begins with a diary-like record of the time and date of writing. Also, Naomi embeds into her narrative a thirty-page excerpt from her Aunt Emily's journal—an excerpt which is

formally a series of informative letters to her sister (Naomi's mother), letters that will never be delivered. These undelivered letters, whose declared address to Naomi's mother gradually dissolves into a series of diary entries (cf. 101-3), model a style of confessional, informative address that ultimately tells (no-one but) the narrator herself what she already knows. Naomi's narration reads like another such layer of informative, explanatory, private speech. So where her account of her childhood household's furnishings takes the narrative form of explanatory telling, it poses as a recital for a private audience: a tiny circle of address arranged only for one.

Private telling is thematically asserted by the intensely personal focus of Naomi's narration and stylistically underlined by her use of the present tense to narrate both her childhood experiences and her adult ones. She slips quietly between times, for example, at the paragraph break in the passage quoted earlier. Like Elaine in *Cat's Eye*, Naomi narrates a personal process of remembering and re-learning. She gradually revisits her own buried past and re-learns her family's history, reconsidering it in the light of what Emily teaches her about their involvement in a collective Japanese-Canadian history of internment, acceptance, and finally resistance. She narrates both her childhood experiences and her adult ones in the present tense, as if she is (re-)experiencing the two times in tandem. The present-tense narration suggests a narrator absorbed in her own ongoing experience, not in a public address. And the explicit purpose of this narration, the painful, deliberate remembering of things she otherwise cannot bear to recall, frames this fictional address as a private one—especially when its purpose is declared as an apostrophe to an absent family member.

Private address is particularly evident, but also particularly complicated, in Naomi's references to public Vancouver landmarks. Naomi's remembering, re-learning mode requires that she retrace her life experience, and when she comes to Vancouver landmarks she narrates them in such a way that things that were familiar to her at the remembered time are phrased as givens, and things that were then unfamiliar to her are phrased as new. (This is different than her stylistic treatment of the furnishings of her childhood home, such as *somber paintings* and *a mantle clock*; those she referred to with indefinite references, phrasing them as new information, although she herself knew them intimately as a child.) Naomi's general pattern of referring to the Vancouver landmarks she remembers implies that the landmarks are also perfectly well known to her audience—and, in the context of the dominant style of the narration, this pattern suggests a private address. I am tempted to claim, instead, that it suggests an address to *other* people who share exactly Naomi's knowledge of Vancouver geography: this interpretation would be most consistent with my pragmatics assumptions of other-orientation. But while it may sometimes feel eerily like an address to people with exactly overlapping knowledge for readers who do happen to share that Vancouver geography with her, I cannot think that these samples of narrative language clearly project such an address, given that they are embedded in the context of Naomi's intimate, self-absorbed narration. In general, Naomi's narrative style does not indicate common ground shared with unfamiliar others; it rather seems to recall to herself her own knowledge of familial ground.

Naomi has not been back to Vancouver since being relocated, as a child, to the British Columbia interior and then again to Alberta, although she has since learned from

Emily about Vancouver sites in the political geography of Japanese-Canadian internment. Her narrative language reflects her personal knowledge of the city, which is combined from her circumscribed, childhood experience of urban space—a domestic interior, a backyard and neighbouring house, and a disconnected set of public locations (familiar oases she remembers having enjoyed with family members)—and her learned adult knowledge. The narration in which Naomi re-experiences her childhood reads like a recital (to herself) of the things she knew at the time; among these givens familiar to her childhood self are several Vancouver neighbourhoods, streets, and landmarks:

- 1) Stephen is in grade three at David Lloyd George School. (70)
- 2) When Grandpa Nakane walks, [...] his right arm dangles loose [...] close to his knees like some of the monkeys at Stanley Park. (71)
- 3) Grandpa Nakane at Sick Bay? Where, I wonder, is that? And why is it a cause of distress? Is Sick Bay near English Bay or Horseshoe Bay? When we go to Stanley Park we sometimes drive by English Bay. Past English Bay are other beaches, Second and Third Beach where I once went to buy potato chips and got lost. Grandpa Nakane came ambling out of the crowd that day and took my hand in his strong one without saying a word and I fed him my potato chips one by one as if he were one of the animals at the zoo. If Grandpa Nakane is at the beach now, could he be lost the way I was? Should we not go to find him? (74)
- 4) Obasan told me Grandma and Grandpa went to visit friends and their old boat shop on Saltspring Island as they do every year. They have still not come back to their house in New Westminster. (74)

In these excerpts, Naomi does not seem to be informing an outsider audience. She names places (the school, Stanley Park, English Bay, etc.) using their proper names without further introduction, as if indicating that her audience—that is, herself—shares these places with her as common ground. Her phrasing *is* explanatory and informative (“Past English Bay are other beaches, Second and Third Beach”). But especially in excerpt (3) it reads like a recital—a child’s repetition, to herself, of the things she knows—and a retracing of known, familiar geography in her silent mental search for a place to put the unknown place, “Sick Bay.” Naomi narrates this passage as a re-articulation of what she was thinking silently as she eavesdropped on her adult family members talking; it did not then and does not now get said aloud.

My interpretation of these passages as recollected experiences narrated by Naomi to herself is also informed by how they compare to passages from another segment of the book: the embedded passage from Emily’s journal of letters to Naomi’s mother. The following excerpts are from Naomi’s sample of Emily’s journal. They are not narrative—that is, they are not addressed by the novel’s narrator—so they help establish Naomi as absorbed, as introverted, by her re-learning process rather than as extroverted into speech by it. According to Naomi, she *reads* the journal language rather than speaking it. The embedded journal passage also serves as another example of language which inflects its references to Vancouver to indicate the narrator’s assumption that they are common ground for narrator and audience and does so as part of a private address. I have added all of the following emphases. They indicate marks of assumed sharedness: mentions of streets and buildings by proper name and definite reference.

- 5) A torch was thrown into a rooming-house and some plate-glass windows were broken in *the west end*—things like that. (80)
- 6) Business on *Powell Street* is up slightly since most of us who usually go to *the big department stores like Woodwards* don't any more. (82)
- 7) The government has requisitioned *the Livestock Building at Hastings Park*, and *the Women's Building*, to house 2,000 'Japs pending removal.' (88)
- 8) [...] the confinees in *the Hastings Park Pool* [...] we'll all be chucked into *Hastings Park* [...] I'm afraid that those kept in *the Hastings Park* will be held as hostages [...] This morning Dad got out of bed and went to *the Pool* bunkhouse for men (*the former Women's Building*). (90-96)
- 9) The bulletins posted on *Powell Street* aren't available to most people. (93)
- 10) The other day there were a lot of people lined up on *Heather Street* to register at the RCMP headquarters and so frightened by what was going on [...](100)
- 11) ["the kids," Naomi and her brother, are] spending the night in *the church hall* at *Kitsilano*. I'm going over there too [...]. (110)

When Naomi opens Emily's journal, she is confronted by the sense of eavesdropping on a private conversation: "I feel like a burglar as I read," she says, "breaking into a private house" (79). But she reminds herself that Emily has now sent the journal to her, re-directing its original address. In effect, as Emily educates her niece, she extends her diary to a wider readership. By contrast to Emily's other efforts at making public the wrongs suffered by Japanese-Canadians, however, this extension of the diary's address still keeps Emily's personal history within the family, so to speak. In this respect it reinforces the general privacy of language use in this novel.

However, Emily's journal is also one of the places in *Obasan* where the fiction of a private, personal address wears thin. The text's language seems to respond here to the writer's designs for the presentation of her whole novel to readers, as well as to the designs of Emily's intimate address. While the fiction of an epistolary diary is maintained by Emily's familiarly-styled reference to places she knows to be common ground shared with her sister, it is weakened by these references' occasional slips into over-explanation. "The big department stores *like Woodward's*," for example, is unnecessarily specific for a sister who knows the city well and even more so for the self who is the diary's primary audience. It suggests that the narrative has designs on another audience; an audience, say, of overhearing readers who know Woodward's, to whom Kogawa wants to disclose the information that "most of us" patronize that particular department store. Emily's reference to Woodward's in excerpt (6) might be read as indicating the writer's intention to introduce the news that Vancouver's Japanese frequented stores beyond of Powell Street's "Japantown." "The church hall at Kitsilano" has a similar effect. If, by re-directing her diary's address to Naomi, Emily intends to teach her niece how, as Japanese-Canadians, their acquaintances were forced into a terribly constricted geography, then by staging this address Kogawa seems to intend to teach readers who recognize Woodward's and Kitsilano's places in the social geography of Vancouver just how settled and widely distributed Japanese families were in the city.

Like Emily's diary, Naomi's narration swerves occasionally into over-explanation of Vancouver place references. Excerpts (1) to (4) tempted me, earlier, to interpret them as other-oriented precisely because their familiarity-assuming proper nouns were so formally and completely set forward. "Stephen is in grade three at David Lloyd George

School” is stylistically appropriate to a child’s recital to herself of what things she knows, but, for those bystanding audiences who recognize that school, its deliberateness also ostensibly invites their recognition.

Naomi narrates perhaps half of the novel from her adult perspective, the other half as if she is re-experiencing her young life. When speaking as an adult she occasionally styles her references as if deliberately for an audience outside her intimate circle. In this case, the outsider is someone who does not recognize Vancouver landmarks. Of the following excerpts, only (13) suggests an assumption that the places referred to—parts of Vancouver Naomi knew as a child—are known to her audience:

- 12) I can imagine that my grandmother said much the same thing [“Too old”] those dark days in 1942, as she rocked in her stall at the Vancouver Hastings Park prison. (17)
- 13) There were all the picnics at Kitsilano, and the concerts at Stanley Park. And the Christmas concert in the church at Third Avenue when tiny Stephen sang a solo. (20)
- 14) The house in which we live is in Marpole, a comfortable residential district of Vancouver. It is more splendid than any house I have lived in since. (49)⁵²
- 15) Sick Bay, I learned eventually, was not a beach at all. And the place they called the Pool was not a pool of water, but a prison at the exhibition grounds called Hastings Park in Vancouver. Men, women, and children outside Vancouver, from the ‘protected area’—a hundred-mile strip along the coast—were herded into the grounds and kept there like animals until they were

shipped off to road-work camps and concentration camps in the interior of the province. (77)

Excerpt (12) stretches an apparent assumption of Vancouver common ground (a definite reference and a proper name) into a more explanatory phrase. Compared to the shorthand references to “Hastings Park” and “the Pool” in excerpt (8) from Emily’s journal, the lengthy, formal precision of Naomi’s reference here to “the Vancouver Hastings Park prison” belies its design for an audience who shares her knowledge of a particular geography of Vancouver. And excerpts (14) and (15) are plainly explanatory, glossing familiar references (“Marpole,” “the place they called the Pool,” “the ‘protected area’”) with indefinite references (*a* district, *a* prison, *a* strip of coastline) that gently introduce the audience to new knowledge.

Swerves into explanation tend to reflect Naomi’s process of re-learning, and may be read still as a recital to herself of learned knowledge. But these glosses pick up the narrative rhythm of other glosses in Naomi’s narration (childhood and adult), which are usually translations into English of Japanese words:

16) ‘Kawaiso,’ she says under her breath. The word is used whenever there is hurt and a need for tenderness. [...] ‘Kawai,’ I whisper to Obasan, meaning that the baby is cute. (113)

Glosses indicate design for two audiences: a primary one, who will not be alienated by the narrator’s immediate treatment of something (a Vancouver landmark or a Japanese word) as well known, and a secondary one, whose lesser knowledge needs to be accommodated after the fact with a follow-up explanation. These unconcealed nods to a secondary audience that does not know Hastings Park’s prison and does not speak

Japanese complicate Naomi's address, puncturing the apparent privacy of its speech with moments of obvious orientation to an other. I read the explanatory glossing in passages like (15) as showing Kogawa's awareness that there are others beyond Naomi herself for whom this revelation about "Sick Bay" is relevant and engaging (horrifying!) information.

Unusually, *Obasan* includes details that suggest that its intended, secondary audience of bystanding readers has a particular political profile. Non-Japanese Canadian readers are deliberately disclosed to and ushered towards the circle of address by Kogawa's audience design. (I specify "non-Japanese" because of the narrative glossing of Japanese words.) This set of details includes Naomi's references to Canadian institutions and policies and the dialogism established between Kogawa's novel and the government documents, official letters, news reports, and popular slogans that are woven into the text.⁵³ Readers may perceive *Obasan* as responding to public statements precisely when they recognize elements of their own social contexts so pointedly being referred to in the novel. That is, if an individual Canadian reader decides to identify the storyworld in *Obasan* with his own lived world, he galvanizes what Bakhtin would call the novel's addressivity. He imaginatively draws himself so close to the circle of address that he becomes a recognized part of its rhetorical situation. He constructs Kogawa as deliberately disclosing to him, no longer just as an anonymous *reader* free to engage with the story or not, but as a *Canadian* for whom the history of internment is indeed personally relevant.

The novel's references to Vancouver landmarks, in turn, offer additional relevance for readers who recognize them. Like the Canada references, when readers

recognize these Vancouver landmarks as part of their social world, these references bring to life a particular social dimension of the text's audience design. But the Vancouver references do so differently. They do not design "Vancouverites" as a sub-set particularly disclosed to among Canadian audiences. Rather, the novel's references to Vancouver landmarks make self-conscious eavesdroppers of people who identify its landmarks as part of their lived reality (perhaps especially those among them without Japanese heritage). It makes them eavesdroppers by *not* addressing them as an audience that shares these landmarks with Naomi and Kogawa, all the while staging the landmarks as a common ground for Naomi and her private audience.

The majority of Naomi's references to Vancouver locations make readers who know Vancouver aware that Naomi's fictional audience is someone close to her, with whom she shares parts of the city as a common ground. This address demands nothing of them personally. Naomi will never know that they know Vancouver too. But they may nevertheless feel an eavesdropper's sense of coming undetected upon a private conversation that is personally relevant to them. (To dramatize: *Naomi and her close-knit family share memories of time spent together in Kitsilano, in Stanley Park (20). I know those places too, I share them with these characters, but of course they couldn't know that...*) Meanwhile, considering that Kogawa would know that, among her audience of Canadian readers, some readers would have a specially close knowledge of the city, I think that these readers' knowledge of Vancouver landmarks may then make them especially self-conscious as eavesdroppers. The conversation they have secretly happened upon is relevant to them personally; it is almost as if Kogawa must in fact know that they are there, listening in, even if she gives no sign of awareness.

An explanatory passage like (15) exemplifies Vancouverites' position as especially self-conscious eavesdroppers. Here is (15) again:

17) Sick Bay, I learned eventually, was not a beach at all. And the place they called the Pool was not a pool of water, but a prison at the exhibition grounds called Hastings Park in Vancouver. Men, women, and children outside Vancouver, from the 'protected area'—a hundred-mile strip along the coast—were herded into the grounds and kept there like animals until they were shipped off to road-work camps and concentration camps in the interior of the province. (77)

This passage urges Canadian readers to construct a geography of internment that did exist during the war, and offers them landmarks that continue to exist as reference points for that construction. The reference-point landmarks are “Vancouver,” “the coast,” and “the province”—not points that require an intimate familiarity with the city of the kind, for example, that Emily's journal demonstrates with its unglossed references to “Powell Street” and “Hastings Park.”⁵⁴ Recognizing those landmarks as indeed parts of their lived experience (even if only as points on a map), Canadian readers recognize that the narrative address has conjoined with their reality, and Kogawa is addressing them *as Canadian readers* with a certain knowledge of place, for whom the story has become personally relevant, rather than anonymously *as readers*. But readers who know Vancouver well recognize those landmarks as more intimately part of their respective lived experience than that of Canadians in general; thus they note that Kogawa is not addressing them as a special group. Their eavesdropping position is a self-conscious one, however, because she might have addressed them—and *what if she actually knows they*

are there, listening in? The landscape she is referring to is far more personally relevant to them than to the general Canadian audience she is addressing. Perhaps these readers feel rather like Naomi does when she begins reading Emily's journal. It is not addressed to her, but it is personally relevant nonetheless:

Should I be reading this? Why not? Why else would she send it here? [...] I feel like a burglar as I read, breaking into a private house only to discover it's my childhood house filled with corners and rooms I've never seen. (79)

The effect of this social move of non-acknowledgement is a gentle exclusion, of those who identify with the Vancouver she refers to, from any group of people with special proximity to the events. Meanwhile, Naomi's fictional address to her private audience assumes certain very central and popular Vancouver locations—Stanley Park, English Bay, Kitsilano, Powell Street—as a common ground shared between them. Positioned outside of this private sharing of spaces they know, and excluded from any special shared proximity to the characters and events of the novel, readers who recognize Kogawa's Vancouver are spared the sense of being accused of any extra guilt inherent in their proximity. But they are also denied the sense that they share with the characters this terrain of childhood innocence and adult pain.

Chapter Two: Vancouver Common Grounds and the Edges of Fiction

In the park of the seaport the giant trees swayed, and taller than any were the tragic Seven Sisters, a constellation of seven noble red cedars that had grown there for hundreds of years, but were now dying, blasted, with bare peeled tops and stricken boughs. (They were dying rather than live longer near civilization. Yet though everyone had forgotten they were called after the Pleiades and thought they were named with civic pride after the seven daughters of a butcher, who seventy years before when the growing city was named Gaspool had all danced together in a shop window, nobody had the heart to cut them down.) (Lowry 13)

In Malcolm Lowry's short story "The Bravest Boat," Vancouver is not common ground. Lowry's narrator assumes a primary audience for whom Vancouver—or Enochvilleport, as he names his fictional version of the city—is unknown territory, a place off the map of specific and shared place-knowledge. He introduces his audience to the city, building it for them as a vivid place, as fresh and as-yet-unimagined to them as it is thoroughly known to him. He positions it relative to landmarks and geographies they know, gradually placing it in the Pacific Northwest (16), near the American border (13, 15), and north of Cape Flattery (19), and hypothesizing that his audience might have thought its park "quite like some American parks [...] save for the Union Jack" flying there and the appearance of a posse of the RCMP (16). In the passage quoted here the narrator starts building the city by describing the park, introducing his audience to the Seven Sisters and to the legendary butcher from the city's early history. Although he begins by phrasing his references to features of the park as if they were inferable from knowledge already shared with his audience—general knowledge about parks and seaports and giant trees—his narrative language gradually reveals that the specific identities of these trees, this park and this growing seaport city are unknown to them. He treats these features' identities as new information.⁵⁵ He continues to do so with other Vancouver landmarks throughout

the story, as he builds the setting outward from the trees to the city downtown and its surrounds, introducing his audience to new items—to “the stretch of water below known as Lost Lagoon” (14), to “dilapidated half-skyscrapers” and other buildings populating the city centre (16), and to “a harbour more spectacular than Rio de Janeiro and San Francisco put together” (17).⁵⁶

Lowry’s narrator and his audience do share some general knowledge about the world outside of Vancouver, and their shared knowledge partly constitutes their relationship to one another. They both know of Rio de Janeiro and San Francisco as spectacular sites, for example. And the narrator assumes enough concordance in their world-views and sensibilities to allow him occasionally to use an abstracted second-person pronoun to focalize the narrative perceptions—a “you” that hypothetically unites speaker and audience. Describing the city centre with rage and distaste, mentioning the religious buildings, he narrates the appearance of

dwarfed spires belonging to frame facades with blackened rose windows, queer grimed onion-shaped domes, and even Chinese pagodas, so that first you thought you were in the Orient, then Turkey or Russia, though finally, but for the fact that some of these were churches, you would be sure you were in hell [...] (17)

The narrator presumes the intimacy and shared general knowledge of community membership in his relationship with his audience, but their common ground stops at the American border. The brave boat in the story makes a twelve-year-long and wandering journey to travel the distance between Fearnought Bay, U.S.A. and Enochvilleport, Canada—“that voyage of only some three score miles as the crow flies” (22-3)—and that same distance represents a gap in the common ground shared by Lowry’s narrator and his

audience. When the narrator addresses them from the far side of this borderland divide, he speaks to them from unknown territory.

The limits of narrator and audience's shared world-view, and the audience's lack of knowledge about Vancouver, make up the social context in which the narrator tells his story. (The dramatic difference between this narrator's geographical knowledge and his audience's characterizes Lowry's story as what I will be calling a *city-building* narrative, in contrast to a *place-sharing* or *edge-setting* narrative.) In "The Bravest Boat," the lack of common ground is part of this narrator's motivation to tell his audience a story that builds for them such a vivid and allegorized setting. Enochvilleport's position beyond the far edge of his audience's knowledge makes it for them an open field of as-yet-unimagined possibilities. The narrator's own deep knowledge of the place and his fully developed feelings about it motivate him as well.⁵⁷ And his storytelling about this unknown place claims relevance for his audience, in Sperber and Wilson's sense, when he links the new information he offers them to the knowledge they already share in common. The narrator and his audience's already shared appreciation for the moral and aesthetic contrast between park and city allows him to sustain the scene-setting description for pages, positioning his sympathetic central characters deliberately on the side of goodness ("for nearly all people are good who walk in parks" [15]) within a charged scene. He implies to his audience that even in distant Enochvilleport—even, that is, in Canada, where the mixed influences of Britain and America make a laughable picture out of "the posse of Royal Canadian Mounted Policemen mounted royally upon the cushions of an American Chevrolet" (16)—the ugly forces of modernization and international cultural exchange threaten goodness. But here goodness is to be found,

albeit barely, on the very verges of a city park that in “its beauty [is] probably unique” (16).

Storytelling that builds the city out of unknown space, for an audience that is not already familiar with it, is just one of the narrative modes in which novels and short stories set in Vancouver handle their references to the city. I refer to this mode as *city building*. Later in this chapter I will discuss city building in other texts, including writing by Ethel Wilson and Timothy Taylor, which also introduce Vancouver to an audience from elsewhere: Wilson’s to an English audience and Taylor’s to a North American one. The Vancouvers built in these other texts are not, like Lowry’s Enochvilleport, explicitly fictional places, although they are all versions in fiction of the real Vancouver that these writers knew, respectively, in the early 1940s and 1950s and at the turn of the twentieth century.

Of the several ways in which narratives handle references to a real city, city building is perhaps the one most congruent with the qualities of *fiction* telling. Fictions are what storytellers create when they recount worlds and events removed from the real world (cf. Herman on the distinct space-time coordinates of the “storyworld” 14) or when their accounts are not responsible to reality (cf. J Adams 21).⁵⁸ (Such a definition of fiction remains current even despite fiction’s longstanding freedom to reference recognizable real-world locations or historical characters.) Narrators of city-building narratives develop settings that are new to their audience. Thus the writers seem to offer their stories to the reader-from-elsewhere, instead of especially trying to reach an audience with more particular, local knowledge. Reading audiences who really do know the city are positioned as eavesdroppers. Like *Obasan*, these narratives tend to ignore

these knowing audiences (except when, as in *Stanley Park*, they omit to explain a reserved few landmarks, or otherwise acknowledge that there are some things about the setting that cannot be explained to an outsider, thus preserving some privilege for the knowing locals listening in). In this narrative mode, a setting's prior obscurity (as construed by the narrator) confers authority on the storyteller, giving her room to make a story of the city without being crowded or held accountable for faithful representation. As Lowry's construction of Enochvilleport exemplifies, as well, this narrative mode allows a writer to confer a particular value on the city, presenting it as newsworthy and relevant even for those with no prior relationship to it.⁵⁹ "The Bravest Boat" incorporates Vancouver into Lowry's exploration of moral and aesthetic opposites and showcases it as a prime example of their vivid contrast; other city-building narratives set up the city as a frontier space allowing one to consider new social alignments or a metropolitan centre providing a classy new vocabulary of taste.

Before discussing city-building in other Vancouver texts, I will discuss two other major ways in which narrators handle references to the city. I refer to the first of these as *place-sharing*. Place-sharing narrators, who appear in Shani Mootoo's "Out on Main Street," Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*, and Douglas Coupland's *Girlfriend in a Coma*, among other works, refer to their Vancouver settings as if the city, or at least the particular terrain within it where their narrative takes place, is common ground shared with their audience and a basis for community membership with them. In the second mode, which I refer to as *edge-setting*, narrators share a certain extent of city terrain with their audience but markedly not all of it. In Bowering's short story "Two Glasses of Remy" and William Gibson's "The Winter Market," for example, narrative demarcates

an edge between shared and unshared ground. Narration in these stories is motivated by a desire to invite the audience to venture over that edge, to meet the narrators in a part of the shared city that the audience had not yet imagined.

In place-sharing and edge-setting narratives, narrator and audience already share some literal ground in common when the storytelling begins: they jointly know at least part of the story's setting.⁶⁰ By referring to that ground, the narrative language indicates their located social relationship, emphasizing that the storytelling context is defined in part by a shared experience of place in these cases. In city-building narratives, narrator and audience likely share some more general worldview or wider knowledge—such as their cosmopolitan familiarity with Rio de Janeiro and San Francisco in “The Bravest Boat”—but the narrative focus steps them off their shared map, when it takes them to Vancouver. Indeed, the principal differences between these three narrative modes arise at the point where the narrative steps off the shared map. In all three of these modes, fiction-telling mixes with reference to and reconstructions of a recognizable social world: starting from known territory, each story reveals new characters, histories, and places that overhearing readers may receive as freely invented. But city-building narratives unfurl their Vancouver settings as part of the story to be told. Edge-setting narratives are similar, although they start from closer to home, so to speak; they excavate hitherto unknown places within the larger frame of the shared city, and reveal their stories in the process. Place-sharing narratives tell a story about what happened *here*, on already common ground; typically, they pointedly reveal private lives, domestic spaces, and personal histories otherwise invisible in the anonymously shared public spaces of a city. These modes differ, then, in the pragmatics of their work with setting and, accordingly, in

how they position themselves socially with respect to reading audiences who are less and more familiar with the setting.

For the remainder of this chapter, I focus on what place-sharing, edge-setting, and city-building narratives set in Vancouver can show us about how a city is experienced as social space and how novels and short stories mediate that experience for their readerships. When I mentioned earlier these narrative modes' difference from a basic social context of *fiction* telling—in which narrators unfurl an unknown setting removed from the real social world known by their audiences—I did so not because novels and short stories set in Vancouver are much different from texts set elsewhere in their handling of references to recognizable place (although Vancouver's situation at “the periphery of the centre” puts certain pressures on these texts' setting-work).⁶¹ Rather, I mentioned it because of the question these texts' departure from the basic “fiction” paradigm seems to pose: what real-life social relationship to the settings of these stories are the narrators claiming for their audiences?

The implied audience's relation to the setting, and how this relationship affects narration, has not been much discussed in scholarly or popular analyses of novels and short stories. By contrast, reviewers have noticed temporally-specific storytelling contexts in some fiction. Coupland's novels, for instance, make many references to of-the-moment icons of Western popular culture. His novels have been repeatedly read as written out of an international and specifically contemporary moment (cf. T Adams, Daley, Jefferson), despite their decidedly local setting. I contend that it is worth noting that novels and short stories' circles of address usually are *positioned* somewhere with respect to the stories' settings—even if only vaguely, as in the “Bravest Boat” narrator's

address to an audience across the border. Existing theories of narrative address in fiction are not designed to notice this positioning, influenced as they are by the idea that an unlocatable reader is the primary audience of any written narrative.⁶²

Cities and narrative

Urban theorists and cultural critics have long emphasized anonymity and alienation as the defining experiences of modern social life in cities. Confronted by the size and diversity of the modern metropolis, the solitary citizen feels alone and separate in the anonymous crowd.⁶³ In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams identifies in a Wordsworth poem

the first expression of what has since become a dominant experience of the city. [...] Wordsworth saw *strangeness, a loss of connection*, not at first in social but in perceptual ways: a failure of identity in the crowd of others which worked back to a loss of identity in the self, and then, in these ways, to *a loss of society* itself, its overcoming and replacement by a procession of images [...] No experience has been more central in the subsequent literature of the city. (150, my emphasis)

As Richard Lehan observes in *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*, intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries “on both sides of the Atlantic saw the city give rise to a radical individualism” (xv) and anonymity replace community (4). Accordingly, in *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel*, Robert Alter argues that the great late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century urban novelists (from Flaubert to Dickens, Woolf and Joyce) developed new narrative techniques capable of expressing the new experiences of modern urban life, and

Alter characterizes these as increasingly enclosed in the individual's solitary subjective perspective. In Alter's view, the "distinctive character of urban existence" came to be found in "anonymous individuals, their real nature disguised, encountering one another in a noisy crowd, appetites sharpened and nerves frayed in a dense swirl of provocative and dischordant stimuli" (32). The individual's experience of the city, as that experience is embodied by the experimental prose style of a writer like Flaubert, is too private and too fragmented to be communicated to another mind, Alter argues. Hence he reads Flaubert's prose style, especially the writer's development of a free indirect style of narration, as illustrating "the isolation of person from person and individual from community" in the modernist metropolis (19). As I have explained in Chapter 1, I persist in reading even free indirect narration as addressed, as uttered in the social context of a narrator-audience relationship. In my view, narrative is an attempt to relate, and to relate something, to an other. Hence narrative is a medium by which the isolated urbanite can attempt to make social connection out of his or her experiences of city life.

One conception of city living does frame individual city-dwellers as sharing place. In this view, the individual subject anonymously and impersonally shares a physically unspecific public realm with an indefinite population of others. In *Imagined Cities*, Alter sees in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* an image of this sort of imaginative, unspecific experience of sharedness. Although he maintains, based on his reading of canonical city fictions, that "the great modern city [...] is not a place of community" (115), he argues that

For Clarissa the pulsating presence of the world—'this, here, now, in front of her'—has the power to break through the barriers of private consciousness that

constantly registers and constructs the world [...] so she entertains the idea, straddling fantasy and existential revelation, of being part of everything around her, even ‘part of people she had never met.’ (110-115)

Alter reads in *Mrs. Dalloway* an experience not of shared place but of shared presence. Woolf’s narrative language, he says, manages to convey that for Clarissa, private empathetic consciousness may serve as medium for her, as a city-dweller, to imagine herself sharing presence with the diverse people around her. But I would offer that city-dwellers may also imagine this shared presence as *located*—as precisely an experience of shared space—in part by perceiving themselves surrounded by an open set of citizens who also make their lives within the boundaries of the city. Meanwhile, some urban theorists have argued that city-dwellers imagine a kind of vaguely located community membership thanks to the mediating power not of consciousness but of texts. As David Henkin explains in *City Reading: Written Words and Public Spaces in Antebellum New York*, when living in a city began to involve reading all sorts of different texts—street names, advertisements, public announcements, signs of rules and directions—posted on the city’s every physical surface, a new sense emerged of being an anonymous member of a collective population located in those specific streets.⁶⁴

In contrast to the lone, alienated urban subject that many theorists and critics see represented in the urban writing, the various narrative voices in Vancouver fiction instantiate distinctly social experiences of the city. While they range from assuming common ground to introducing unknown territory, these short stories and novels imply social contexts for their narration. They make references to specific parts of the city in such a way as to manifest social relationships of storytelling and address that position

both narrator and audience with respect to the physical terrain of the city. Thus they offer instances of located, urban social relationships which range from intimate and proximal to alienated and distant, but which are certainly not solitary.

Place-sharing narratives

The conception of the individual as an anonymous member of the urban community offers one interesting context for my reading of place-sharing narratives in Vancouver stories. Usually place-sharing narratives assume common ground without assuming at the same time a personal relationship to the audience: mutually shared place (and, often, a certain mutually shared worldview as well) allows a real degree of social intimacy between narrator and audience that is nonetheless impersonal. This impersonal intimacy is, we might say, an urban condition, comparable to city-dwellers' ability to imagine themselves part of an urban public sphere.

Place-sharing narratives set in Vancouver show us a variety of urban common grounds, which tend to take the shape of extended neighbourhoods: sizeable areas of the city that are shared by narrator and audience. While several of these grounds loosely correspond to official Vancouver neighbourhoods, such as Chinatown, or to smaller cities within the metropolitan region, such as North Vancouver, they usually also include high streets and major landmarks from the city's downtown, which lies beyond those official neighbourhoods' borders, and from other outlying parts of the city as well. Place-sharers also tend to share a wide swath of the city's grid of streets at its coarser resolutions, mutually knowing the city's major bridges, streets and intersections by name and relative location if not more intimately. And place-sharing narratives set in Vancouver almost

always assume that the dramatic topography of the city's north-western coastal edge—the high-relief horseshoe formed around Burrard Inlet by the North Shore mountains and the Vancouver peninsula—is mutually well known to the narrator and the audience. For example, Alice Munro's narrator, in the story "What is Remembered," assumes few details of the city to be common ground but instead assumes her audience's knowledge of a broad, regional overview of the city and its surrounding municipalities. The focalizing character in this story lives on Vancouver Island, and the narrator assumes that what knowledge this character has of metropolitan Vancouver is equally well known to her audience. Farther-flung municipalities like Horseshoe Bay and White Rock aside, the well-known neighbourhoods and landmarks in this story cluster tidily around the Burrard Inlet: Bowen Island, West Vancouver, Dunderave, Hollyburn Mountain, Lynn Valley, the Lion's Gate Bridge, Prospect Point, Stanley Park, Kitsilano, UBC. (Even narrators who assume that very little about Vancouver is known to their audience will frequently make exception for the more famous features of this picturesque horseshoe view: the North Shore mountains, the inlet, Stanley Park, and the Lion's Gate Bridge.)⁶⁵ A study of the common grounds assumed in literary texts adds to our understanding of how city-dwellers experience their city as shared space by describing urban common grounds as territories larger than neighbourhoods, territories that are experienced as shared on some other basis than that the sharing community members simply live nearby one another.

By assuming mutual knowledge of certain Vancouver grounds, place-sharing narrators make such knowledge part of the social context of their respective circles of address. If place-sharing narratives offer a survey of some of the kinds of larger-than-neighbourhood urban territories that city-dwellers experience as shared, they also offer

information about relationships that people experience as forming the social basis for such common grounds. In other words, if (as I observe to be the case) Clark and Marshall's "community membership" is the assumed basis for most narrators' assertions of common ground (cf. Chapter One), these narratives illustrate instances of the kinds of community that city-dwellers experience, as well as instances of the sorts of common ground. Assumed community and in-common terrain both vary from narrative to narrative (and, in some cases, from one point to another in a given novel). In most cases, however, the narrators are apparently motivated by the following assumption: that the stories they tell will engage their audience because they share a sympathy of locality, and a sense of personal relevance, invoked by references to their common ground. As members of a community that shares such grounds, their audience will care to hear where the story's events happen. They will care to hear what happened there because they know the place too.⁶⁶ Outside of the narrator-implied audience relationship, it may be true, as Chong asserts, that worldly *reading* audiences are bound to dismiss these texts, not knowing for themselves the Vancouver territory they see treated as common ground in them (Chong "Writers"). But I would prefer to keep open the question of whether, when encountering these narratives, such readers would recognize themselves as lacking in the very sympathy and sense of personal relevance that they witness being assumed as the social context of the storytelling, and whether they experience that lack with displeasure, indifference, boredom, confusion, curiosity, or, perhaps, yearning.

Shani Mootoo's short story "Out on Main Street" reveals that urban common grounds may be diffuse and geographically uneven. In this story the protagonist-narrator and her audience's mutual knowledge gathers together dispersed patches of Vancouver's

terrain. Their shared ground covers the Punjabi Market on south Main Street; downtown Vancouver, several kilometres away from the market; and the unspecified storytelling location, which I read as possibly suburban and certainly ex-centric—that is, as somewhat distant from both of these centres. (It also includes, apparently, some knowledge gleaned from similar life-experiences in distant elsewhere. Although the narrator does not assume that her audience knows Trinidad as she does, her figures of speech assume Caribbean knowledge. For example, commenting that men never notice her when her girlfriend is with her, she says, “with Janet at mih side, I doh have the chance of a penny shave-ice in de hot sun” [50].)

The narrator and audience’s shared map of these dispersed Vancouver places is also unevenly intimate and fine-grained. In fact, neither of the specific Vancouver locations that the narrator mentions is known mutually in any closeness of detail to the narrator and audience, although they jointly know *of* those places. For instance, they share knowledge of the Punjabi Market area of Main Street as a significant location. The story’s opening lines imply that Main Street is a deeply relevant place for this narrator and her audience. The question of going there or not is an obvious and important topic between them, one that motivates the telling of this story. The narrator begins as follows, taking Main Street’s relevance and specific identity for granted as well known:

Janet and me? We does go Main Street to see pretty pretty sari and bangle, and to eat we belly full a burfi and gulub jamoon, but we doh go too often because, yuh see, is dem sweets self what does give people like we a presupposition for untameable hip and thigh. (45)

The rest of her story explains the other reasons she is “real reluctant” to visit Main Street (48). It is an uncomfortable place for her, a kind of touchstone of ethnic and sexual identity. There she experiences with shame her “watered-down Indian” heritage when faced with the “good grade A Indians” who work and shop there (45), and there she feels her lesbian sexuality scorned and threatened. Her audience apparently knows well the character of her “Main Street,” for the narrator does not need to explain which part of the long, diverse Vancouver high street she is referring to.⁶⁷ The narrator judges that her audience will recognize the Punjabi Market stretch of Main Street as obviously her referent, given their common ground; it is the hub of Indian culture in Vancouver. However, despite their mutual knowledge of this particular “Main Street,” the narrator assumes that her audience needs an introduction to one of its prominent restaurants. Accordingly, she describes the restaurant, offering the details as new information:

In large deep-orange Sanscrit-style letters, de sign on de saffron-colour awning above de door read *Kush Valley Sweets*. Underneath it in smaller red letters it had *Desserts Fit for The Gods*. It was a corner building. The front and side was one big glass wall. Inside was big. Big like a gymnasium. (49)⁶⁸

Having been there—having experienced there the ambivalent desires and the complicated shifting allegiances and alienations around ethnic identity and sexual orientation that are the point of her story—the narrator now knows Kush Valley Sweets in intimate detail. Her audience does not know the place, so she must accommodate their lack of knowledge by offering scene-setting information. Mootoo’s place-sharing narrative suggests that urban common grounds can be generalized, coarse-grained understandings of different

parts of a city. People may share knowledge of a place and speak about it as common ground without knowing it intimately.

In “Out on Main Street,” the narrator’s one brief reference to Vancouver’s downtown suggests that she and her audience do not know it intimately either, although they both know of it. In this case, the narrator treats the downtown as if it were known to herself and her audience, but she does not refer to it with the specificity that would indicate close, detailed knowledge. I read her as referring to it with a sense of its distance from herself and her audience—personal, felt distance as well as, perhaps, physical distance.

I tuck mih elbows in as close to mih sides as I could so I wouldn’t look like a strong man next to [Janet], and over to de l-o-n-g glass case jam up with sweets I jiggle and wiggle in mih best imitation a some a dem gay fellas dat I see in downtown Vancouver, de ones who more femme dan even Janet. (50)

Overt performances of markedly gay male sexuality are not as common in some parts of downtown Vancouver as in others. If Mootoo’s narrator wanted to evoke a shared intimacy of downtown place-knowledge, to summon that feeling into her conversation with her audience, she might have said, “some a dem gay fellas dat I see down on Davie,” referring specifically (and in familiar shorthand) to the West End street where men’s performances of gay identity are most at home. But she chooses to generalize distantly instead.

This story’s narration implies for the narrator-audience relationship a close overlap of world knowledge and a diffuse, generalized Vancouver common ground. It also implies a mutual comfort with Indo-Trinidadian-Canadian English and a shared

conversational interest in confessing personal experiences and views (the story ends with, “So tell me, what yuh think ’bout dis nah, girl?” [57]). And this story about an outing on Main Street is relevant, in the social context of this relationship, because the narrator and her audience together find its particular ambivalences and anxieties of ethnic and sexual identity personally compelling. These sympathies are more extensively foregrounded in this narrative than is a sympathy of specific locality: despite the title’s spotlight on a particular place, this narrative is not as interested in the geography of queer experience as “The Bravest Boat” was in a geography of moral and aesthetic contrast. But the few references to the narrator and her audience’s Vancouver common ground do serve to show the sympathy of their orientation towards the Vancouver places, Main Street and downtown, and to map the complexities of identity onto the space of the city. Narrator and audience’s sense of mutual distance from these known places suggests for them, as I have said, a location ex-centric to both centres. In my mind, their location is somewhere to the east of Main, towards the suburbs, where I imaginatively locate large immigrant populations. But in fact it is impossible to place their location on a map of Vancouver.

George Bowering’s short story “Standing on Richards” implies a common ground that precisely maps part of downtown Vancouver. The protagonist-narrator of “Standing on Richards,” whose name is Aubrey, tells his story to an audience who also knows those parts of the city, but he tells them things about a nighttime street life there that he assumes they do not know. Because he shares with his audience a map of this part of the city—although they share no street-level knowledge of its nightlife—Bowering’s narrator’s reference to this common ground invokes a place-based sympathy of interests. For Aubrey and his audience, sharing a common ground interests them in the difference

between their experiences of that place. By comparison, Mootoo's narrator and her audience's primary sympathies are based on their shared interest in personal experiences of racial and sexual identity, not on their shared knowledge of Main Street and downtown Vancouver.

In "Standing on Richards," common ground is a small segment of the city's downtown, extending along Richards Street from its intersections with Drake, Davie, Helmcken, and Nelson to Georgia Street, and stretching from Howe Street on one side of Richards down to False Creek on the other. It is neighbourhood-sized, perhaps, but not known as a neighbourhood in any residential, next-door sense. Aubrey knows this terrain as a network of sidewalks, and by spending time there he has come to know the other people who work those sidewalks:

I don't look like anyone else standing on corners along Richards. You go down to Richards and Nelson, and you get your tall young women in high heels. In the summer you can see the cheeks of their asses [...] A couple blocks in the other direction you'll see the boys and the young men trying to look like boys, around Richards and whatever that street is on the other side of Davie. [...] I do not look in any way like a boy. (2)

While explaining about these groups of people, Aubrey takes the street names for granted as well known by his audience. Even the reference to a street whose name slips his mind assumes common ground, in its casual reliance on his audience to be able to supply the identity of "that street."⁶⁹ His audiences know this terrain well too, but not by having been there with Aubrey. He relies on them knowing this ground from walking it in the daytime, perhaps, or from driving these streets. Those who stand on corners in this story

rely on customers who flow through this area as part of a steady stream of car traffic, and while both street workers and their clients can thus presume shared knowledge of the street grid, they do not have equivalent relationships to the place. Common ground for them would be an acknowledged local field of contact between two quite different social positions and experiences of urban place.

I am tempted to read the social context of this story's narration as just such a street-worker/client encounter, but Aubrey's narration is not designed for face-to-face address to a client. (Face-to-face with his audience, he would not have needed to describe his own physical appearance.) And while Aubrey and his audience's common ground is precisely an acknowledged local field of contact between different experiences of place, their relationship is marked by a class-based sympathy, as well as a place-based one. The narrative's social context is a substantial similarity of perspectives on and experiences of the world, a similarity that stops at the exceptional fact that Aubrey now stands on street corners. The narrator-audience relationship in this story is not based on prior personal acquaintance, nor on extensive shared world-knowledge—Aubrey introduces himself in full, and explains at length things he knows about, including the histories of various Vancouver street names and of Harris Tweed—but their relationship is apparently informal, sympathetic, and between equals. Explaining why he quit being a professor, Aubrey assumes his audience's sympathy, saying “So you can imagine how I felt [...]” (5). Several turns of phrase suggest that he assumes his audience's inside knowledge of universities (4-5); his tone of address might be called collegial. More generally, a shared knowledge of the mainstream, middle-class map of Vancouver is an important part of the social context of this narrative. Bowering's narrator is an odd-ball,

a failed former university professor in out-of-date clothing trying to sell his mind on a street corner, but he is not as ex-centric in his relationship to Vancouver's centres of mainstream culture as is Mootoo's narrator. He knows, for example, about daily life in Vancouver's genteel, middle-class territories. While he is spending time with his first client he asserts that, meanwhile, "On the south side of False Creek young marrieds put their white plastic bags of fresh farm vegetables on the floor and began to consume three-dollar cups of coffee" (13). Nevertheless, Aubrey has ventured, so to speak, away from the mainstream, middle-class experience of the city into social territory unknown to his former university peers. And his audience apparently belongs to that middle-class world; they are unfamiliar with the dark parking lot his first client takes him to. For their sake he refers to it as new: "*a lot* down by the north side of False Creek" (12, my emphasis). Aubrey's narration is motivated by a sense that the new detail and colour he can add to the downtown street grid that is their common ground will be relevant, interesting information.

While "Out on Main Street" and "Standing on Richards" imply contexts of narration defined by sympathies of social position (involving ethnicity, class, gender, and mobility within the city) as well as sympathies of locality, *The Jade Peony* does not: rather, it draws on place-based sympathies to compell attention despite social difference. Choy's novel assumes a common ground that extends substantially beyond the borders of Chinatown and neighbouring Strathcona to take in downtown and east-central Vancouver landmarks—Gastown, Granville Street, St. Paul's Hospital, Stanley Park, the North Shore mountains, King Edward High School, the Ocean View Cemetery, the intersection of Fourth Avenue and Alberta Street, and Hastings Park.⁷⁰ (See Figures 1 and 2. Images

courtesy of Google Maps.) None of the novel's three protagonist-narrators establishes edges for this Vancouver ground. The wider city is apparently so well known to these narrators and their audience that perhaps any part of Vancouver might have been mentioned off-handedly, without introduction. But the common ground that their narration establishes is, more narrowly, an extended neighbourhood, a corridor of central and east Vancouver that dwindles as it stretches northward and eastward, as spoken-of landmarks get thinner on the ground at those extremities.

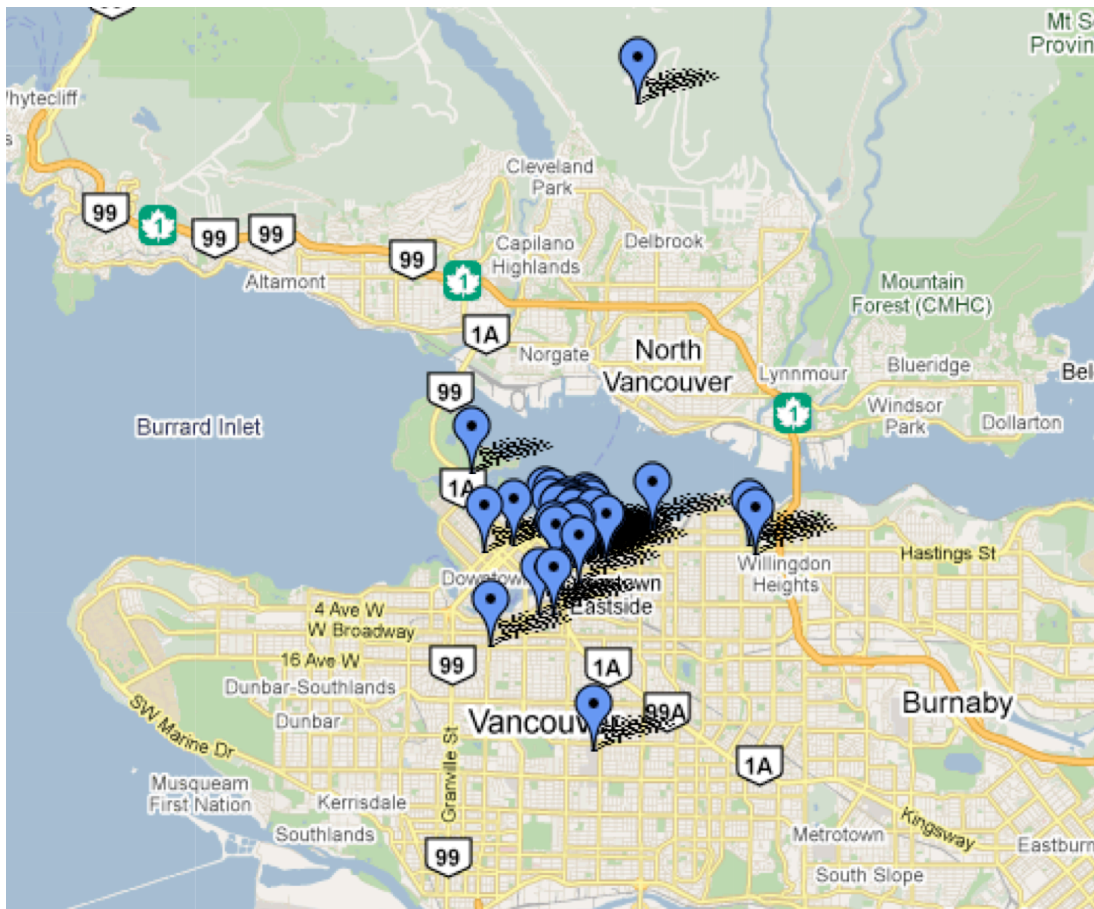


Figure 1. *The Jade Peony's* extended neighbourhood in regional context

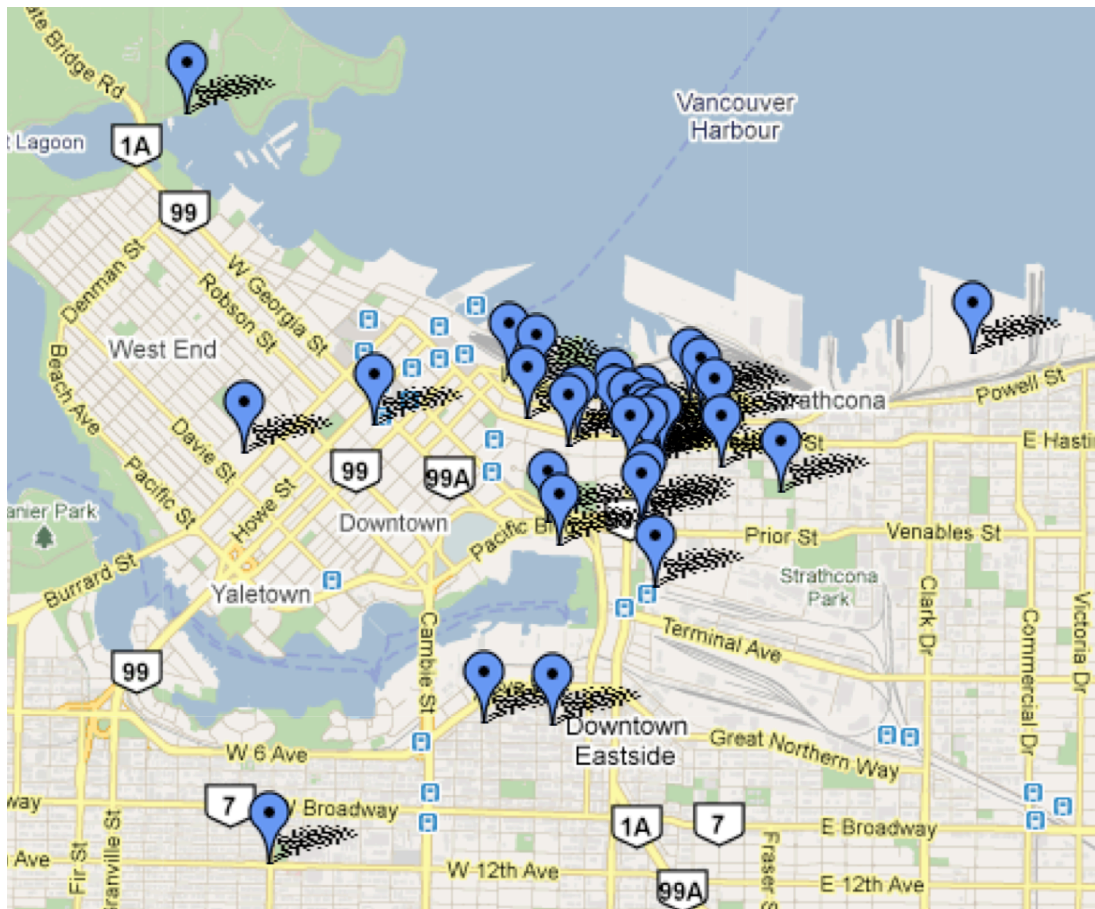


Figure 2. *The Jade Peony's* extended neighbourhood (detail)

This novel's neighbourhood is densest, most detailed as a closely knit-together urban terrain, in the area that the three narrators define as the Chinatown where they grew up. (The density and detail of known territory is, in part, a function of how mobile a person is in the city; unlike some other Vancouver narrators, these three are confined to a small area by their youth and lack of access to automobiles as well as, especially, by the social pressures of white racism.) Their Chinatown covers the area stretching between Main Street to the west and Maclean Park to the east, and between Hastings Street to the north and Union Street to the south. False Creek's fringes, which at that time verged on

the corner of Main and Georgia Streets, are included at its outermost corner. Jook-Liang and Sek-Lung's narratives, especially, repeat again and again the prominent street names of this neighbourhood for their audience. The narrators recollect repeatedly, and block by block, the pathways of their habitual on-foot movement through Chinatown. They treat the specific streets as pointedly relevant. Jook-Liang, for example, recites in order all the primary east-west streets of her neighbourhood while she describes the look of the houses in that area: "Those damp shacks decaying on their wooden scaffolding, whose doors you reached only by negotiating rickety ramps—all the one- and two-story houses parallel along Pender and Keefer, Georgia and Union" (51). The narrators announce the streets by their proper names, as if casually treating them as well-known information.

For example, Jook-Liang says of the path of her walks with an elder friend, Wong Suk:

Wong Suk and I were, as usual, going to have a lunch of leftovers, then walk two blocks down Pender, across Main, down to Hastings near Carrall, to the Lux movie house. Hastings Street, outside of Chinatown, was where people always stared at the two of us—stared at this bent-down agile old man with the funny face [...], at this almost nine-year-old girl with her moon face—but we didn't care. (45)

And Sek-Lung, whose attention to geographical detail prompts him to record the length of his "five-block sprint [home] from Strathcona" Elementary School (200), also recites as if with casual precision the pathways he traveled with his friend Meiying:

Instead of turning south on Jackson, over the cobblestone roadway towards Maclean Park, Meiying turned north and walked even faster [...] towards Hastings Street [...] She double-timed over the tracks [...] Meiying turned down a side street. [...] She pointed towards the end of the block [...] (208-9)

Identifying the major Chinatown streets by their proper names, these narrators deliberately mark their assumption that their audience shares these places as a common ground. Indeed, their apparently casual certainty that each street and landmark is reliably familiar begins to seem ostensive as the proper nouns accumulate and repeat. *The Jade Peony*'s place references almost command recognition; but in their generous abundance they also leave room for laggard audience-members, who might not have quite recognized yet the Chinatown geography they reference, to catch up.

Tracing and re-tracing the geography of the narrators' childhood experiences, this novel's narration offers its audience a homegrown Chinatown perspective on the street grid.⁷¹ On the first page of her narrative, for example, Jook-Liang notes that during her stepmother's pregnancy, her "Grandmother, or Poh-Poh, was going regularly to our family Tong Association on Pender Street to pray for a boy" (13). This account places her Poh-Poh's "Old China" customs, including a desire for grandsons, firmly within a Vancouver neighbourhood. Jook-Liang's generously informative narrative style assumes that the Tong Association she mentions is not entirely unknown to her audience—that is, she treats it as inferable when anchored to the known entities "our family" and "Pender Street"—but her manner of speaking works to build up, as if from scratch, a textured impression of a lived Chinese-Canadian experience in this neighbourhood. The three narrators are consistently, generously explanatory, addressing themselves to a specifically contemporary audience, an audience that does not know anything about the historical experiences of Chinese-Canadians living in Vancouver. They consistently gloss Chinese words, explain "Old-China" customs and Chinese-Canadian experience and points of view. And they explain things about pre-1950s Vancouver. "During the Depression and

the opening of the war years, you could only buy such a classic coat on Granville Street,” offers Jung-Sum, for example (93). Amidst all this explanation, the assumptions of common ground implied by proper names such as “Granville Street” stand out: as I have argued, these narrators deliberately assert that their audience shares with them extensive knowledge of present-day Vancouver geography. As part of the social context of narration in *The Jade Peony*, this common ground is the basis for invoking a strong local sympathy, and a shared sense among narrator and audience of the place-based personal relevance of the war-time experiences the novel’s three narratives relate. The audience here has no Chinese heritage, no historical memory of Chinatown, and does not speak Mandarin, but is presumed to share with the narrators a mutual interest in the events related precisely because the events took place on their shared ground.

Importantly, then, the common ground assumed in the narrators’ address differs from the racialized geography that they describe having experienced as children.⁷² They describe distinctly defined neighbourhood borders, outside of which they encountered the stares and rudeness of a white, English-speaking, middle-class Vancouver. Jook-Liang recalls being stared at on Hastings Street. Sek-Lung recalls that outside of the safety of Chinatown’s borders, “on streetcars or in shops where only English was spoken,” he and his classmates encountered “the humiliation and the mockery” of Anglo-Canadian racism (177). And Jung-Sum recalls the up-market men’s clothing stores on Granville Street, west of Chinatown, as places where salesmen in “black suit[s] sniffed at Chinamen” (93). One of their friends, Liang reports, believes that all young Chinese-Canadians should “have real English names. When we’re outside of Chinatown,” she thinks, “we should try not to be so different” (124). Evidently, white, Anglophone, middle-class Canadians

were only to be encountered outside of Chinatown, in the experience of these three narrators.⁷³ And yet their own audience, which is Anglophone and presumably not Chinese-Canadian, shares the neighbourhood streets with them.

While the novel's primary audience is people familiar with Vancouver, its references to Vancouver landmarks are so generously phrased and so often repeated that the narrators seem to adopt a disclosing attitude towards a secondary audience of bystanding readers whose grasp of the geography is imperfect. The narrators repeatedly refer to certain places and institutions using their full proper names—"the Vancouver Health Inspection Board" (32), "St. Paul's Hospital" (32, 151), "the North Shore mountains" (51, 81, 155, 165; Sek-Lung only finally shortens his reference to "the mountains," on page 207, after twice speaking of them more formally), and "the Anglican Vancouver Chinese Mission" (91) for example—which thus give those bystanders who do not actually recognize these places a few extra, descriptive words to help them accommodate the reference.⁷⁴ At the same time, however, these repeated proper nouns emphatically call upon their primary audience to recognize their Vancouver specificity. As an important example, one of the sites that is referred to with repeated formality is the former Carnegie Library. Jung-Sum mentions it first, treating its identity as inferable and in fact phrasing his reference less than formally, by saying, "the library at Main and Hastings" (76). But Sek-Lung later elaborates more formally, referring first to "the Carnegie Library at Hastings and Main just off Chinatown" (219) and then to "the Carnegie Library at Hastings and Main, between the boundaries of Chinatown and Little Tokyo" (223-4). By waiving his narratorial right to treat the Carnegie, on its second mention, as already textually evoked within his storytelling address, Sek-Lung refuses to

let the library become simply a textualized referent for his audience. He insists on their recognizing it as a specific Vancouver landmark they already knew. He thus calls on *them* to recognize it *as* people for whom this library and its Hastings and Main location are especially and mutually relevant because of the landmark's intense visibility in a contemporary Vancouver landscape. (By rehearsing this landmark's importance as a boundary-marker, Sek-Lung also reframes the well-known site within his description of a specifically Chinese-Canadian experience of the place.) What the narration of *The Jade Peony* expects to summon, in its audience, is a shared sense of the personal relevance for them—as well as for the narrators—of what growing up in this neighbourhood felt like.

Other novels that reconstruct a historical experience of Vancouver Chinatown life—notably SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* and Jen Sookfong Lee's *The End of East*—are not so consistent in their patterns of reference to Vancouver locations and landmarks as Choy's *The Jade Peony*. Their narrators tend to shift unpredictably between assuming local knowledge shared with their audience and introducing local neighbourhoods and landmarks as if they were unknown. The social contexts of their narration are less clearly defined by an extent of *physical* common ground than by a shared fascination with the juicy and “intricate complexities of a family with Chinese roots” (S Lee 19), in *Disappearing Moon Café*, and a shared interest in the aesthetics and emotional tensions of the narrator's attempt to reconcile herself to her own inherited, complex, Chinese-Canadian family history, in *The End of East*. However, it is worth pointing out that these two novels construct maps of a known Vancouver that are distinctly similar to *The Jade Peony*'s map. In each of these two novels, the accumulated points of local reference that the narrator does assume to be common ground overlap

substantially with the extended neighbourhood outlined in Choy's novel. Each of them assumes knowledge of a very similar corridor of central and east Vancouver, a corridor densest in Chinatown but stretching northward to Stanley Park and southward to landmarks in central residential Vancouver—Oak Street and the Connaught (Cambie Street) Bridge in *Disappearing Moon Café*, and South Cambie street in *The End of East*.⁷⁵ Despite their differences, all three suggest that city-dwellers may assume common grounds that extend beyond conventional neighbourhood boundaries. They also suggest that, as un-textured grids of streets and sparse assortments of landmarks, these grounds may be assumed shared even despite very different, differentially racialized, experiences of the place.

The extended neighbourhood featuring in Coupland's *Girlfriend in a Coma*, like that in *The Jade Peony*, is well known as a densely coherent terrain at its centre and more sparsely known at its outer fringes. Unlike Choy's narrators in *The Jade Peony*, these narrators really are casual about their assumptions of local familiarity; in their nostalgic and fated attachment to their childhood neighbourhood, they seem to have imaginatively insulated themselves from the differences of perspective that mark a diverse urban modernity. Coupland's protagonist-narrators, Jared and Richard, share with their audience a nearly perfectly mutual knowledge of the conjoined suburb cities of North and West Vancouver. In particular, they share both fine-grained details of certain parts of this north-shore urban area and a coarse-grained overview of the rest of it: they mutually know the streets and back alleyways of several small, tucked-away residential neighbourhoods; major and minor features of the conjoined cities' topography (Grouse Mountain and the runs and chairlifts of its ski hill, the Capilano River, the Cleveland

Dam, a golf course, the Capilano canyon forest and the pathways of that forest); its major highways, central city streets, and bridges; and its city-central public spaces, such as Park Royal Shopping Centre and the Lonsdale Quay.⁷⁶ At its sparser fringes, this common ground terrain stretches out southward to include a few major landmarks (but not street names) from Vancouver proper: the famous Aquarium at Stanley Park, the landmark Hotel Vancouver, and, “off [...] across town,” the University of British Columbia (57). It even extends southward from there across the international border, to the small American weekend-trip destination towns Bellingham and Birch Bay.⁷⁷ It does not, however, extend northward past the ski runs: Grouse Mountain’s slope climbs steeply up behind their suburb, cutting off their knowledge of the terrain behind them. Jared and Richard share their knowledge of this extended neighbourhood with their audience in just as much intimate detail, and just as casually, as the group of lifelong friends who are the novel’s central characters share it with each other—and the latter grew up side by side, exploring the place together. For example, when he and his friend Linus take a shortcut together from one part of the suburb to another, Richard narrates their route to his audience as offhandedly as if he had been mentioning it to another of their friends. “We decided to walk up the hill to Pam’s [movie] shoot while Hamilton drove,” he says. “We shortcutted through the golf course and [...] arrived at the location on Southborough Drive bemucked” (87).

The suburban neighbourhood terrain of common ground assumed by Coupland’s narrators supports two new observations about how city-dwellers experience urban terrain as a shared place. For one, several of Coupland’s works of fiction, *Girlfriend in a Coma* included, are collectively remarkable among other Vancouver fictions for the

position they take with respect to the city. Whereas most narrators look out from the central Vancouver neighbourhoods of the Point Grey Peninsula or downtown, across the Burrard Inlet, towards the North Shore mountains, Coupland's narrators look down from the North Shore slopes at the central city.⁷⁸ Their ex-centric perspective suggests that even city-dwellers who live at the fringes of a city, at a remove from the majority of the population and the city's most public spaces, easily conceive of their neighbourhood as a common ground shared with unknown others. Even the quiet back-streets of Jared and Richard's suburban home neighbourhood are as well known to their audience as the central Chinatown streets are known to Jook-Liang and Sek-Lung's audience. Another new perspective is offered by this place-sharing narrative's example of urban common grounds that include both official and unofficial pathways through parkland and scrubland. North Vancouver's residential neighbourhoods are tucked in among forested folds in the mountainside, and Jared and Richard's audience share with them an intimate knowledge of the off-grid byways into and through these folds as well as of the street grid.

The social context of narrative address is layered in this novel. Hence it suggests two rather contradictory things about the community assumed to know the narrators' North Vancouver. On one hand, Richard and Jared's style of address suggests that their primary audience grew up with them in North Vancouver. How else do people come to know quiet suburban neighbourhoods so well, except through long residence there (and especially childhood exploration and visiting)? Neither this novel nor the analyses of urban life I have read offer any other explanation. Unlike the numerous landmarks the narrators refer to, which are visible, public spaces likely well known to most North

Vancouver residents if not to a wider Vancouver community, most of the many street names they assume to be equally well known are not busy public thoroughfares but quiet Drives. For Richard especially, lifelong intimacy with the extended neighbourhood prompts a nostalgic, cherishing attention to the specific place, and he assumes that his audience will indulge if not share in his nostalgia about the place. Richard names backstreets and other landmarks with an insistence on their inherent relevance and mutually shared importance as specific places. He does not recite places' full proper names with the same deliberate ostension of Choy's narrators, but he returns repeatedly to certain landmarks' names. For example, he mentions Park Royal Mall five times during his narrative, calling it "Park Royal mall" or "Park Royal" (37, 75, 153, 179, 181), and other characters refer to it in their reported speech an additional three times. His references seem to replicate local habits of speech: Vancouverites in my acquaintance confirm that "Park Royal" is not markedly informative phrasing but rather the colloquial name for this particular mall. He also narrates specific and extensive sequences of street names and pathways, offering his audience a careful charting of the characters' movements through their neighbourhood. For example, he narrates at length the exact route one character takes when she needs a roundabout long cut: she

hops onto [her motorcycle] and guns it up Delbrook Road, through Edgemont and across the Cleveland Dam. By now it's fully dark. She takes the utility road up to Glenmore and then bombs down Stevens and into Rabbit Lane. (195)

On the other hand, while their patterns of reference to North Vancouver streets and landmarks seem to assume primary audience who are longtime residents, even nostalgic fellow-neighbours, other elements of Jared and Richard's style of address

suggest a second, much wider audience. Like the narrators of Coupland's other works of fiction, Jared and Richard's narration is saturated with the big brand names of international capitalism and American popular culture, and their brand name-dropping is carefully dated. When describing the events of the characters' teenage lives, in 1970s North Vancouver, these narrators refer with equal casualness and assumed familiarity to Pebbles Flintstone, Charlie's Angels, Tab, and La-Z-Boy as they do to now-obsolete features of a 1970s-era North Vancouver, such as Grouse Mountain's old Blueberry chairlift (13). And describing the year when the world ends ("just before dawn, November 1, 1997" [278]), the narrators call on their audience to recognize Range Rovers, NutraSweet, and Shoppers Drug Mart. This signature of Coupland's style has been widely read as speaking from a pointedly trans-local cultural moment, capturing the spirit and vocabulary of a particular international generation. (See, for example, Blencoe and Cowley's argument that Coupland "is careful to *set* all of his novels *in the year they are written*, so that his oeuvre provides a history of the changes in [trans-local] contemporary culture" [my emphasis].)

In my view, *Girlfriend in a Coma* is an exception among Coupland's other works of Vancouver fiction, because its fixed focus on a local common ground addresses a primary audience of local people who know the international brand names simply because these brands have been part of their North Vancouver lives. *JPod*, by comparison, addresses itself primarily to an international audience who by default does not know North Vancouver. Nevertheless, in every respect except for the style of their references to local common ground, even *Girlfriend in a Coma*'s Jared and Richard would seem to be addressing a broadly international audience of white, middle-class,

North American suburbanites. Their corporate and pop-culture frame of reference is reinforced by their steady attention to the material artifacts of 1970s and contemporary middle-class suburban life, and the nostalgic attitude expressed in their references to these items assumes that their audience recognizes their own nostalgic and cherishing investments in the same lifestyle. Jared and Richard open their narrative by framing the city of Vancouver, and their North Vancouver suburb within it, in explanatory ways that abstract it from its local specificity and make it a symbol of the promise and possibility of (white, middle-class, Western) human culture. Richard opens his narrative by first affirming that his audience shares local knowledge with him, and then re-framing and introducing the well-known city as “*a city*” with a certain special abstract quality:

Karen and I deflowered each other atop Grouse Mountain, among the cedars beside a ski slope [...]

Here is where I go back to the first small crack in the shell of time, to when I was happiest. Myself and the others, empty pagan teenagers lusting atop a black mountain overlooking a shimmering city below, a city so new that it dreamed only of what the embryo knows, a shimmering light of civil peace and hope for the future. (7)⁷⁹

He is looking at “the lights of Vancouver before the 1980s had its way with the city” (15), and although he sees a specific city here, he and Jared frame the loss of its innocence as integrally part of a world-wide cultural shift. The 1970s ended, they explain, and “With them left a sweetness, a gentleness. No longer could *modern citizens* pretend to be naïve” (46, my emphasis). When “the world” resumes its progress again for

the novels' characters, Jared frames its re-genesis as happening simultaneously across the globe:

In London the supermodels wear Prada and the photographers snap their photos. The young princes read their *Guinness Book of World Records*. In California, meetings are held and salad is picked at. [...] The world indeed wakens: The Ginza throbs and businessmen vomit into Suntory whiskey boxes to the giggles of Siberian party girls [...] cities shine: cities of gold and tin and lead and birch and Teflon, molybdenum, and diamonds that gleam and gleam and gleam. (283)

When combined with the narrators' casual assumption of their audience's knowledge of international popular culture, their framing of local events as part of a world-wide apocalypse seems to address itself to a broadly-based audience.

The contradiction between these two layers of address—Jared's and Richard's primary address to nostalgic fellow-neighbours and their simultaneous framing of events for a secondary, apparently international, audience, who would likely never have heard of Rabbit Lane or the Capilano canyon pathways—can only be finally resolved in individual readers' accommodating imaginations. For me the combination of these two tendencies in the novel's address does two things. For one, as I mentioned, it reminds me that even the most neighbourly and locally-based contemporary community shares a frame of reference shaped at least as much by international corporate brands and popular culture as by physical common ground. For another, it suggests to me a more unexpected conclusion: that Coupland is offering the city's suburban pathways as common ground to an international audience as if *they* know it—as if they would somehow recognize this quiet North Vancouver neighbourhood, inhabited by “the middlest of middle classes”

(40), in all its specificity, as home. This latter conclusion recalls the notion that suburbs are the same everywhere, that the experience of living in a North American suburb is removed from any sense of local specificity. But Coupland's nostalgia for a specific suburb denies that notion, strangely implying instead that international audiences have inherent knowledge of his North Vancouver home.

Collected together, these place-sharing narratives—Mootoo's "Out on Main Street," Bowering's "Standing on Richards," Choy's *The Jade Peony*, and Coupland's *Girlfriend in a Coma*—suggest a few useful points about how city-dwellers experience parts of their city as shared places. Mootoo's and Coupland's narratives indicate that city-central landmarks and downtown street culture may be part of many city-dwellers' relationships to one another even if these downtown sites are held as distant grounds. Bowering's and Choy's narratives suggest that people assume common grounds that are no less thoroughly shared for being very differently experienced. People's relative positions with respect to certain grounds, and therefore the different textures and degrees of their intimacy with these places, may be based on radical differences in their racial and class identities, their freedom of movement, their access to personal and professional legitimacy (as judged by mainstream national and municipal society), and/or their historical memories. But they nonetheless recognize themselves as sharing these grounds. What I have been calling the sympathy of locality, the shared sense of the narrative's personal relevance implied for narrator-audience relationships by the narrators' reference to such territories, is not, then, necessarily an easy, happy experience of civic equality based on the sharedness of place. Common ground is not necessarily either comfortable or politically neutral. It is an experience of contact mediated by

narrative address, and it may evoke awareness of reciprocal alienation or differentials of power even while acknowledging shared territory. These place-sharing narratives suggest as well that narrators may assert common ground precisely in order to claim sympathies of locality. Choy's narrative—and Coupland's too, to an extent—make their references to common ground deliberately ostensive, lavishly repeating and sequencing local place names, so as to claim the shared personal relevance of these places. *The Jade Peony* asserts the shared personal relevance of common ground in the context of a racial divide between narrators and audience, and *Girlfriend in a Coma* suggests it in the context of race and class identity, but both claim it to assert the importance of events which happen right here, on shared ground.

Edge-setting narratives

Edge-setting narratives in Vancouver fiction show us a complementary picture to the one illuminated by place-sharing narratives. They show the areas of the city that are off shared maps: distant zones at the city's fringes, fine-scale details of the residential neighbourhoods that fall between the coarse lines of the city grid, specific little restaurants and pubs known by name only to their locals, and neighbourhoods marked off as the territory of other classes or ethnic others. Among other things, they reveal the city to be a terrain that can be known to a range of different degrees of resolution; or, to use a non-visual metaphor, a terrain that can be sensed at a range of different textural grains.⁸⁰

Theories and analyses of urban life offer one context for understanding the edges set in these narratives. This context is a widely-shared concern with the socio-political

pressures that limit or even prevent experiences of collective membership of urban place. I think of these pressures as setting limits on common ground in certain circumstances.

As urban theorists Doreen Massey, John Allen and Steve Pile argue in their book *City Worlds*, city-dwellers experience their cities as divided into multitudes of different worlds, some mutually exclusive and some overlapping.⁸¹ No one person can access all of the different worlds being lived in a single city. And, importantly, while few people would feel comfortable in or even be able to find many of the city's worlds, some people are radically restricted (by their marginalized class status, ethnicity, gender, age, literacy, or physical ability, etc.) in what worlds they are allowed or enabled to access comfortably.⁸² When different worlds collide, as people move about the city or make their homes next to each other, there are several possible outcomes, according to Steve Pile:

One outcome [...] is that people reject difference and draw 'walls' around themselves and their communities, either to defend themselves or, more commonly, to protect their advantages. This is the point at which physical boundary lines are drawn across a city in an attempt to fix its spaces. Another, more fluid possibility, however, is for people to remain indifferent to the close proximity of others, remote in their ways despite their nearness to everyone. (85)

In both of the cases Pile describes, people react to others' difference from themselves by instituting boundaries between themselves and their fellow city-dwellers. In neither case is the outcome positive, because they both indicate people's refusal to recognize the equal worth and mutual responsibility, the basic human commonality, implied by their physical nearness to one another.⁸³ However, only one of these cases—the former—indicates a

complete refusal of the commonality I am discussing. Common ground in my sense requires no personal relationship at all. The most reciprocally indifferent (or even hostile) pair of city-dwelling strangers might still recognize that they share knowledge of a certain place. But by barring others from “their” urban terrain, people establish physical limits on shared place. They may do so by actively building physical walls (like those around the gated communities Pile discusses) or hiding behind barriers (such as freeways dividing areas of a city), by policing areas (formally, or, as in neighbourhood watch programs [Ahmed 27], informally), by gentrifying neighbourhoods to the point where some people do not feel comfortable in and cannot afford to frequent them, or by removing neighbourhoods to distant areas accessible only by car (cf. white flight [M Bennett 176]; cf. the reported anxiety of former Richmond city councilor Kiichi Kumagai that the Canada Line will bring drug-users into his city from central Vancouver [Pablo]). Concerned with these barriers to place-sharing, and recognizing that differentials of power and access mean that some groups of people suffer from the limits of common ground in ways that other groups do not, urban cultural critics have emphasized urban experiences of strangeness (Ahmed, Sennett, Simmel) and segregation (M Bennett), rather than mutual recognition and sharedness.

As a context for my reading of edge-setting narratives, these concerns remind me to investigate what dynamics of power and exclusion are at work at the particular edges defined by these narratives. They urge me to examine where authority and power of access are located: do they rest with the narrators, who know enough to tell about areas of the city beyond the limits of their common ground, or with their audience, for whom those areas have, until the storytelling moment, remained mysteriously or invisibly

beyond the pale? They prompt me to consider how storytelling authority holds up against other kinds of empowerment or disempowerment, as the case may be. As I have argued, my reading of place-sharing narratives like Choy's *The Jade Peony* showed that some narrators conceive of themselves as sharing common ground with their audience despite differentials of power and exclusive access. Their narratives relied on a sympathy of locality to claim their stories' personal relevance to their readers. In these cases, claims of common ground were a source of authority for narrators whose inheritance of a racially marginalized social position had historically stripped them of claims to social power, belonging, and community-membership. Edge-setting narratives may handle narrative claims to power differently, strategically setting limits on common ground rather than strategically asserting its sharedness.

As it happens, I do not find many strong examples of this sort of strategic edge-setting in Vancouver fiction, although Bowering's story "Two Glasses of Remy" establishes an edge that is distinctly class-based. The two texts that I will discuss as examples of edge-setting narratives, "Two Glasses of Remy" and William Gibson's "The Winter Market," illustrate the limits to common ground exerted by what might be better called *city-structural* pressures, rather than socio-political pressures.

Structurally speaking, a city is just too big in both physical expanse and population for the individual city-dweller to know every part of it or every person moving within it. The open domain of public space that city-dwellers like Woolf's Clarissa Dalloway might imagine sharing, and the open set of citizens with whom they might imagine sharing it, are imaginative extrapolations from everyday experience. City-dwellers' sense of potential access to all the public spaces and all the other people in the

city is balanced by their recognition that one could never access them all. And, meanwhile, cities collect together vastly different places and vastly diverse populations of people, as urban analysts emphasize. Parts of the city differ from one another according to, among other things, location with respect to the city centre; function for residential versus commercial versus recreation uses; age, economic value, style, and state of repair of the built environment; and the demographic of the people who live there. The sorts of walls and boundaries I have listed as established by socio-political pressures curtailing experiences of shared place—gated community walls, freeways, policed zones, differentials of gentrification, un-walkable distances—certainly also count as structural pressures delimiting experiences of common ground by separating one part of a city from another.

A city's diversity of parts is widely acknowledged. But I have not found a theoretical account for which parts of a city might be more likely to be treated as zones beyond the pale of common ground, versus which are likely to be treated as shared. I perceive that parts of a city differ in relative degree of apparent privacy or publicness, as well as in all the ways listed in the previous paragraph. I assume, accordingly, that city-dwellers who imagine themselves sharing the city's spaces with an indefinite group of fellow citizens are likeliest to be imagining the city's *public* spaces as shared. There must be some correlation between relative publicness and the likelihood of a sense of sharedness. (On the flip side, there must be some correlation between relative privacy and sharedness, too. We are most certain of sharing place with a particular set of people—as opposed to a generalized, indefinite group of other citizens—when we share exclusive access to a certain private place.)

My own list of the parts of cities that seem especially public (and therefore especially likely to be shared with unknown others) includes busy high streets with wide sidewalks, centrally-located open squares and parks, green spaces, transit stations, and open-air markets. It also includes highly visible and distinctive buildings and monuments. The sheer visibility of a distinctive landmark makes its existence widely knowable, I suggest, even when a building's interior is barred to public access. In Vancouver, the strict gridlines of the street network prevent citizens from getting a sense of their city's landscape, Lance Berelowitz has argued, except in the moments when, traveling over bridges or taking scenic routes along the city's ridges and the peninsula edges, citizens break free of the grid (52-3) and see Vancouver's city- and waterscape unfold as a panorama around them (136-7). (Where the grid's orientation skews at the hinge-point between the bulk of residential Vancouver and the downtown peninsula, the grid does briefly acknowledge topography.) In this city, then, the landmarks that might be most easily assumed to be widely shared are precisely those landmarks that are strikingly visible in the panoramic views—among them the mountains, the downtown skyscrapers, the oddly shaped entertainment venues on False Creek's shores (BC Place and Science World), and the bridges themselves. On my list, more private-seeming areas include walled homes and policed areas, of course, but also quiet residential streets, out-of-the-way parks, and smaller, less-visible shops and restaurants.⁸⁴ My own experience of living in Vancouver suggests that the physical environment's gradations of visibility and apparent publicness or privacy offer some context for understanding fictional placements of the edges of common ground.

George Bowering's short story "Two Glasses of Remy" establishes the outer reaches of Point Grey as territory off the edge of the common ground shared by the narrator and his audience. In this case, differences of class and lifestyle apparently are part of what sets the limits on common ground. As in Bowering's "Standing on Richards," the narrator-audience relationship in this story is characterized by a familiar, among-equals tone of masculine camaraderie that is calibrated, in this case, to a shared working-class identity. References to their Vancouver common ground help establish this social position by means of both a shorthand, colloquial mode of reference and an assumption of shared affinity to parts of Vancouver that contrast with wealthy, suburban Point Grey. For example, at a moment when, in the middle of telling his audience about his brief, enchanted encounter with a wealth and class he had never before experienced, the narrator feels that his story might be stretching his audience's credulity, he reaffirms his own comfortable, working-class identifications by saying,

I'm not a gold digger, I'm not a gigolo, I'm a recently separated man with a taste for beer parlours and movies. Willy had been driving me home from the soccer game and a meatball sandwich on the Drive. Well, here I was, a short climb from the Fourth Avenue bus. (65)

Here the narrator positions himself socially by indicating his own familiarity with Commercial Drive, which is a mixed-income East Vancouver neighbourhood with relatively low real estate prices and a history of immigrant settlement (or at least it was such a neighbourhood in 1999, when Bowering's story was first published). He assumes his audience shares in his familiarity with that neighbourhood; they both know what soccer game he means, and together they can refer to the street as "the Drive." The

narrator assumes they also both know Fourth Avenue, which runs westward to Point Grey. He uses their shared knowledge of the street to help express himself efficiently and communicate implications, as he exclaims (“Well, here I was”) over the distance he travels from that familiar neighbourhood in his story. And even in his reference to this street he positions himself as socially separate from the Point Grey resident he meets in his story: he knows the street best by its public bus-line, whereas she takes taxis and drives a Cadillac.

As I mentioned, the class difference between this mysterious, wealthy woman on one hand and the narrator and his audience on the other partially determines the limits of common ground in this story. Having followed her into her quiet residential neighbourhood and driven with her to the Point Grey lookout, the narrator now knows them and can report back about them to his audience, for whom, he assumes, these places are unknown territory. Narrating his journey into this woman’s world, he reports,

The taxi had been turning right and left. Now it turned left off Blanca, I guess, and into Belmont. These were all million dollar houses when a million dollar house was still something. The taxi turned into a circular drive in front of a big white mansion, I guess you’d say. Now what, I thought. (65)

Here the major street grid and substantial landmarks of the area are still within the bounds of common ground for narrator and audience, but their details—the texture of the neighbourhood and its specific houses—are not mutually known to them, these details being known, by implication, only to those who live a certain lifestyle.⁸⁵ Likewise, although the route to the lookout is well-known to both the narrator and his audience, the lookout is not. Driving the woman’s Cadillac, a new experience for this narrator (“I’d

never driven a Cadillac before, and I'd never driven any kind of car during the year it was first bought" [66]), the narrator reports,

I took two rights and headed out the drive to the university. [...] We went past the Japanese garden and south along the ring road, the ocean to our right, beyond some trees that were made to look like a forest in a book [...] she motioned toward the lookout. This is a little parking space for about four cars. You can point the nose of your Toyota or Cadillac toward the edge of the cliff overlooking the Strait, and catch a glimpse of the log booms below. If you're in a Cadillac, your back bumper isn't all that far off the road. (67-8)

Landmarks along the road out to the lookout are familiar to his audience, the narrator assumes, but perhaps not intimately enough known for him to presume to use proper names for them. He expresses them instead as inferable (speaking of "the university" and "the Japanese garden" instead of "UBC" and "Nitobe Garden"), placing them lower on Prince's familiarity scale (cf. Chapter One) than he otherwise might have done. Having first phrased the lookout as inferable as well, he then immediately treats it as new, offering full explanation ("This is a little parking space..."). The Point Grey fairy-land this narrator tells his audiences about, with its richness and its storybook forests, are beyond the pale of their common ground, in part because of the limiting pressures of class.

But the luxurious places of Point Grey may in part also be off the edge of common ground, in this story, simply because they are so distant from the city-central locations the narrator assumes to be mutually known. The social context of the narrator-audience relationship is grounded in places like the Drive and Cambie Street, which are

busy commercial high streets near downtown Vancouver. The mysterious woman's residence is on a curving suburban cul-de-sac in a steeply-graded, treed, hillside neighbourhood distant from the city centre. The lookout is even farther west, at the very tip of Point Grey, and thus it is separated from the downtown by a steep hill and a broad belt of forest. (The neighbourhoods surrounding the university, at this tip of Point Grey, are not counted as part of municipal Vancouver.) The lookout is small, too, having space only for four cars, and it looks away from the city, over the ocean. By contrast to Commercial Drive and Cambie Street these places are not very public, in my sense. They are not central, or popularly frequented, or highly visible; from the Cadillac the characters do not look out over the iconic, postcard view of the mountains but in the opposite direction. The narrator in "Two Glasses of Remy" is willing to assume that his audience knows the general area of the story's events—hence he phrases as inferable rather than new his references to other landmarks—but these tucked-away spots are not so likely to be known to fellow city-dwellers, he assumes. The gradations of publicness and privacy play a part in establishing the edges of common ground, and, in this story, they complement the differentials of class.

In William Gibson's story "The Winter Market," common ground has edges because the city is simply too big and too various for the narrator and his audience to know all of the same terrain. The protagonist-narrator's style of address suggests that he has a prior acquaintance with his audience: they already share knowledge of someone named Barry, for example (172). The narrator speaks with casual familiarity to an audience with whom he shares very similar cultural and professional frames of reference, an audience with whom he is on an equal class footing and who, he assumes, relate easily

to his aesthetic and value system. Certain parts of Vancouver are common ground he shares with this audience, but they do not hang out in the same places, and he has the advantage over his audience when it comes to detailed knowledge of his home neighbourhood and the areas he frequents socially. By mentioning their mutually-known geographical reference points, in the process of narrating a story that involves his own rambling movements through the city, he acknowledges this common ground, by paying friendly, polite tribute to the overlap in their respective Vancouver terrains. He uses short forms for certain place names, for example, to indicate his awareness that they share knowledge of Fourth Avenue (“Fourth,” he says) or to indicate his certainty that they both know which market is the relevant one to his story (“the Market”).⁸⁶ But to convey properly the emotional texture of the setting and events of his story, he has to explain the places his audience does not know in any detail. “Trash fires gutter in steel canisters around the Market,” he offers, treating the steel canisters as items new to the audience’s awareness. Or he adds aesthetic and social texture to a neighbourhood otherwise known to his audience only from a distance: “Up in Fairview’s arty slum-tumble, someone’s laundry has frozen solid on the line” (161). His audience share a coarse map of his neighbourhood with him—he can name his home intersection casually to them, calling it “Fourth and Macdonald”—but they know none of its specific buildings or the small businesses, and he treats all of these as unknown: “I have two rooms in an old condo rack at the corner of Fourth and MacDonald, tenth floor” (152), or “We eat samosas in a narrow shop on Fourth that has a single plastic table wedged between the counter and the door to the can” (166). Later in the story, when he wanders away from his well-known

neighbourhood to an area of the city he does not know well, he assumes his audience will not know the bar he finds there, either: he winds up

in a West End club that looked as if it hadn't been redecorated since the nineties.

A lot of peeling chrome over plastic, blurry holograms that gave you a headache if you tried to make them out. I think Barry had told me about the place, but I can't imagine why. (172)

"The Winter Market" shows us that the limits of common ground may be imposed by the sheer size and variousness of a city: even people who move in very similar cultural circles, and who share the same generalized map, are bound to delineate edges for their shared space, addressing themselves to acquaintances who live across the city.

The pattern of address I describe characterizes most of the narrator's references to Vancouver places and establishes the story's primary layer address. But there is a second audience design built into the story: a sideways, tongue-in-cheek wink at bystanding local readers. Gibson wrote "The Winter Market" on commission for *Vancouver Magazine* in 1985. In accordance with its mission to inform and entertain "people who engage with the city" ("About Us"), the monthly magazine wanted a story set in Vancouver (Wiebe D5). Because the story is science fiction set in a high-tech and dystopic Vancouver sometime in the not-too-distant future, the street-level texture of the city that the narrator takes for granted as ordinary is as yet unimagined for the Vancouverite audience to whom the story was intended to circulate. While Gibson wrote a narrative that addresses people who are the narrator's contemporaries in the future, he was always aware of the bystanding 1985 Vancouver readership. The story plays with their familiarity and unfamiliarity with the city it refers to; it assumes that the local

reading audience will take interest and perhaps pleasure in reading offhand narrative references to places they know well but do not know as having the textures assumed for them by the narrator. For example, in 1985 there was no “condo rack” at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Macdonald Street (there is none there still), and Gibson relies on his reading audience to know that fact, even while he has his narrator claim to live on the tenth floor of an old condo rack there. Likewise, while Gibson might have imagined that readers of *Vancouver Magazine* could see potential, in elements of the Fairview neighbourhood they knew, for it to eventually develop into the “arty-slum tumble” Gibson’s future narrator describes, they would not likely have known it as such at the time.⁸⁷

This audience design for bystanding local readers in “The Winter Market” suggests more about city-dwellers’ experience of reading fiction set in their city, perhaps, than about city-dwellers’ experience of the city as a shared place. But part of their experience of reading a story like this is a dawning awareness of a writer who lives nearby and whose writing involves his fellow citizens in a shared joke about their city. And perhaps it is not incidental that Gibson’s story, which clothes the city in the high-tech, dystopic trappings of an as-yet-unimagined future, should also exploit in its primary narrative address the city-dweller’s experience of not sharing certain neighbourhoods at any level of detail. Perhaps there is something productive and convenient for fiction-spinning in the everyday urban experience of the city as a differentiated terrain, an uneven map of well-known and unknown areas. Bowering’s story seems to hinge on the same everyday experience of city life: while both stories refer very faithfully to the major lines and landmarks of a recognizable contemporary Vancouver, both of them also

give that recognizable city a fictional twist just where they slip off the edges of common ground. At the hidden fringes of the mutually known city live mysterious women and storybook trees, in “Two Glasses of Remy”—and things happen there to the questing everyman that are worth returning home to tell about! And in “The Winter Market,” the telling of a sci-fi story about a future Vancouver to contemporary local readers hinges on the same turns of phrase that, in the social context implied by the actual narration, fill in the blanks in the future audience’s rough-grained knowledge of certain areas of the city.

City-building narratives

Living in a city that’s neither big nor small, Vancouver writers, in some respects, have the worst of both worlds. We’re not in a publishing centre like Toronto or New York City [...] Nor can we write about our hometown in the same way a London or Paris writer can casually name-drop neighbourhoods to a cosmopolitan (or at least aspirational) readership. (Chong “Writers”)

As I mentioned in my Introduction, novelist and journalist Chong asserts that Vancouver is just too small to be common ground shared with a sophisticated international reading audience. And indeed Chong’s own novel *Baroque-a-nova* (2001) is not a place-sharing narrative—Chong’s narrator-protagonist Saul introduces his audience to a place he does not expect them to know (an unnamed version, if I read it right, of Ladner, BC):

I lived in a flat, drained municipality thirty minutes south of Vancouver whose outskirts were populated by faded barns and electrical towers. [...] From the overpass I could see the traffic wash in from the city along Highway 17 past the

intersection, the hockey and curling rink, the cow pastures where new housing developments were planned, the highway stretching toward Tsawassen and the ferry to Vancouver Island. We were right by the ocean. (16)

Saul begins this description of his hometown with an indefinite article (“a flat, drained municipality”), setting a tone of introduction from the beginning. He reinforces the indefinite article’s implication that his audience do not know the town by following it with mention of “faded barns and electrical towers,” elements of the place which he treats as new information. His story hinges on the strangeness of a turn of events that brings “the world” to little Ladner (51): the body of his internationally famous late mother is returned from Thailand, a German documentary crew comes to film the spectacle, and his suburban home is suddenly globally networked. Saul’s narration, accordingly, is designed to introduce his unknown little town to a cosmopolitan pop-culture audience.

But even Chong’s Saul takes certain elements of his local place for granted as being recognizable to this distant audience. In the passage quoted here he treats Vancouver, Tsawassen and Vancouver Island as already known—at least by name—to his audience.⁸⁸ Later in the novel, when he is recounting events that take place in Vancouver proper, Saul assumes his audience knows of Kitsilano and of Jericho Beach (133-4). In *Baroque-a-nova*, Ladner may be just too small to be an international common ground, but Vancouver has a fighting chance. The bigger centre wins.

The place-sharing and edge-setting narratives that I have already discussed show Chong to be wrong about Vancouver, at least in part. Their narrators go ahead and assume various parts of Vancouver to be well known to their audiences. The writers of these novels and short stories decided that their fictions would emerge in a circle of

narrative address involving Vancouver common ground and an attendant Vancouver-based sympathy of location, a mutual sense of the personal relevance of local events to both narrator and audience. And they decided to circulate these narrative instances of address, in the form of short stories and novels, to as wide a reading audience as their published distribution could reach. (By contrast, William Gibson's "The Winter Market," with its *Vancouver Magazine* publishing venue, relies on the general map of Vancouver to which it refers being well known to its *readers*, as well as its implied audiences.) The writers' respective decisions may have been motivated, in some cases, by a desire to transpose into a fictional narrator-audience relationship their own affinities to and knowledge of the city. Jen Sookfong Lee, for example, says that it does not "come off right" when she tries to write fiction set anywhere else (Wiebe D1), and Douglas Coupland apparently writes out of a personal sense of nostalgic connection to and intimate knowledge of his city: I notice striking resonances between his narrators' perceptions of the city, in fictional texts like *Girlfriend*, *Life After God*, *Everything's Gone Green* (a feature-length film), and even *JPod*, and Coupland's own non-fiction persona's sentiments about the city, as expressed in essays (cf. *The Vancouver Stories*) and his book, *City of Glass: Douglas Coupland's Vancouver*.⁸⁹ Other writers' decisions to treat Vancouver as common ground in their fictions might have been driven by a desire to speak, however indirectly, to a specifically local reading audience. We might say of Choy's work, for example, that it seeks to set up a receptive position for a potential readership that is personally invested enough in the city as a social space to respond with fully local sympathies. *The Jade Peony's* uptake by the Vancouver Public Library's One Book, One Vancouver promotion suggests that it has been received as especially

addressed to such an audience (cf. Grafton)—indeed, as able to include diverse local readerships in its scene of address.

The city-building narratives I discuss in this section emerge out of fictional social contexts in which Vancouver is not common ground. The city (or part of it) is well-known to the narrator, but not to his or her audience, and something about this difference in their knowledge of and intimacy with the city motivates the narrators' storytelling. Lowry's narrator and the other city-builders show us instances of city-dwellers self-styling as knowledgeable insiders with a personal (and sometimes a specifically aesthetic) relationship to the city, insiders who express their relationship to it by means of an address to people they position as relative outsiders—a more or less distant audience for whom Vancouver is unknown territory. The social context of the storytelling address involves in each case, then, a gap in physical common ground, a gap in mutual knowledge of place. The boundary dividing the outside audience from insider knowledge is usually a more or less spatialized boundary of some kind. These narratives offer examples of the boundary spaces that are relevant to Vancouver narrators: a borderland, such as the borderland crossed in Lowry's "The Bravest Boat," for example, or the span from centre to fringe of a colonial space, or the distance between opposite poles of a diasporic trajectory.⁹⁰ But in these city-building narratives, narrators and audience usually share other-than-spatial domains of mutual knowledge: they are not foreign to one another. The city-building narratives thus offer instances of the kinds of physically distanced social relationships that motivate narrators to bridge gaps in common ground by introducing their audience to Vancouver. Meanwhile, by speaking across those gaps

in common ground, these narratives bring dispersed, distantly located subjectivities into relationship, establishing relative spatial positions within a cross-spatial address.

Theories and analyses of urban life offer an important context for my reading of city-building narratives. As I have claimed, the city is theorized as a space experienced as *shared* only by an imaginative leap facilitated by texts, and then only shared anonymously with an indefinite set of other citizens. When it comes to urban subjects' experiences of more directly personal and specific relationships, such relationships are increasingly theorized as *not* located in a shared place.⁹¹ An often-repeated understanding of spatialized social relations is that shared local place is no longer a relevant experience in contemporary urban life, since, thanks to high-speed transportation, freeway networks, electronic communications, globalized systems of media distribution, and global capitalism, people rarely develop personal relationships and a sense of social context that are anchored in specific, shared place. As influential geographer Doreen Massey puts it, the contemporary world is a place of “stretched-out” social relations (147), not localized ones. According to Massey, many important social ties stretch outwards, away from the place where people find themselves, rather than exclusively binding people together in and to a specific place. Therefore, she argues, local places are best understood not as bounded grounds but as

articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, [...] where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent. (154)

In other words, the particular character of any place you might name is determined at least as much by its multiple links to people and places elsewhere as by the proximal elements of the place itself. (Vancouver's Punjabi Market, for instance, is defined as much by its links to the "social relations and understandings" of the broader Indian diaspora as it is by the relations between neighbours and properties along those few blocks of Main Street.) Hence, in their book *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*, Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift argue that accurate and responsible theories of urban life ought no longer to emphasize propinquity, proximity, or spatial intimacy as keys to social experience.

They propose instead

a vision of the city as spatially stretched patterns of communication, bringing distant sites into contact (maybe through visits to family and friends), but also separating adjacent spaces (as with neighbours with little in common with each other). (22)

What these theories offer my reading of city-building narratives is a way of contextualizing the narratives' address outwards to a distant audience, one with whom the narrator shares some social relationship that is not located in shared physical place but rather stretched out across a gap in common ground. These theories suggest that relationships with distant audiences are part of contemporary city-dwellers' everyday experiences. In this context, city building narratives show storytelling in novels and short stories to be one medium among others by which city-dwellers connect across space to distant audiences. The medium of their narration acknowledges differences in knowledge of place and recognizes gaps in common ground. Social relationship is stretched out, but not ignorant of relative place. And these theories of urban social relations as stretched

out suggest the sort of social bonds that we might expect would draw audiences into the circle of address in these narratives, if novels and short stories are indeed comparable to other media of relationship: perhaps they resemble the bonds that Amin and Thrift imagine connecting people to their distant family and friends? The identifications of people who have interests and orientations “in common”? Or the tastes and desires that drive consumer capitalism? Recalling as well the kinds of discursive community I reviewed in my Introduction, I am prompted to ask whether the bonds connecting narrator and distant audience resemble the imaginative affiliations of diasporic nationality or the ethical allegiances of transnational political awareness, both of which bonds critics have seen depicted in urban Canadian novels.

Each narrative offers a different version of such relationship, and hence each implies different motivations for narrating a story that builds a Vancouver for its audience. Generally, shared tastes and ethical orientations are not pinned to any easily specified geo-political allegiances, and storytelling scenarios do not match neatly with the theorized social bonds that I listed in the previous paragraph. In Ethel Wilson’s stories, however, values, sympathies, and aesthetic sensibilities are so closely aligned, despite what seems to be the substantial geographical distance separating the members of the circle of address, that I find myself reading her stories as narrated in the stretched-out social context of empire, as if by a voice writing home from the imperial outskirts. Lowry’s “The Bravest Boat” conjures its Enochvilleport for an audience whose geographical orientation we might specify as American, because it approaches the Canadian border from the south. Yet in other respects he does not assume a specifically American audience but more precisely an audience whose moral compass matches his

own and who is his equal and in worldly acquaintance with exotic and beautiful locations. Timothy Taylor's novel *Stanley Park* speaks about Vancouver as if engaging an international connoisseur consumer's appetite, appraising eye, and slight regional preference—appropriately so, perhaps, since *Stanley Park* is in part a novel about classy cooking.

Appadurai's theory of the production of locality in the modern world offers one additional theoretical context for the city-builders' motivations. In Appadurai's view, people work daily, by means of quotidian ritual and cultural practices, to produce the structure of feeling that is locality (182). In order to define their neighbourhoods, they must define as well the elsewheres, the "contexts against which their [neighbourhoods'] own intelligibility takes shape" (184). They are motivated to do so by the need for places within which they can be recognized as belonging and "empowered to act socially" (181). As Appadurai acknowledges, neighbourhoods cannot be considered closed to the outside world, and locality is now produced within a globally "engaged cultural and political literacy" (197).

In my view, city-building narratives are engaged in trans-local "flows" of cultural and political information of the kind Appadurai identifies, but the motivated direction of their information-flow is the opposite of the one he describes. He points out that people draw information from the wider world in to their neighbourhoods and use it to produce a globally-engaged sense of locality: in his words, "global flows add to the intense, and implosive, forces under which spatial neighbourhoods are produced" (197). And indeed such a globally-literate production of locality, incorporating information (knowledge, ideas, images, aesthetic dispositions, sensibilities) drawn in from various elsewheres,

characterizes many of the Vancouver narrators' implied senses of their local places. Choy's definition of Chinatown involves immigrant attachments to "Old China" and his narrators incorporate Chinese ideas of person-hood into their senses of their local, social selves; Malcolm Lowry's Vancouver-based narrators (in "Ghostkeeper," for example) combine British and American national influences, and various European literary influences, in their local identities; Douglas Coupland's narrators locate themselves in an international corporate culture; Timothy Taylor's narrators (in his novels *Stanley Park* and *Story House*) incorporate various European and Asian aesthetics into their perceptions of locality.

But if they draw influences in while constructing their Vancouver neighbourhoods, these narrators also direct influence outward: they work in the opposite direction to Appadurai's "implosive forces." Their address is directed outwards to more or less spatially distant audiences. By means of this address, city-building narrators offer their portraits of Vancouver to outsiders, extending to these audiences a relationship with Vancouver and hence a new set of Vancouver-specific information that these audience might now use in constructing their own respective senses of locality, elsewhere. As I have mentioned, the city-building narrators I discuss are each apparently motivated by different storytelling impulses. Some narrators seem to speak out of a desire for self-expression, offering their own aesthetic responses to Vancouver as inherently interesting to outsiders because they reveal the narrators' inherently interesting personalities (Bowering's narrators in *Burning Water* and "Ebbe and Hattie," or Coupland's persona in *City of Glass*, for example). Others, however, seem to consider the city itself, in the various vivid incarnations they give it, to be relevant for their distant audiences'

respective senses of “cosmopolitan” knowledge (in Chong’s sense), or global literacy, so to speak. Their motivation may be a desire to expand their own connections to distant audiences by expanding the mutual cognitive environment they share with them, offering Vancouver as a relevant extension to that environment; or they may simply aspire to locate their city on distant people’s maps. And these narrators also construct Vancouver as a relevant and fascinating source of images and of information ripe for distant others to incorporate in producing their respective localities.

If this last point seems unexpected, it may be because much of the literature of this city has not, I believe, been widely included within canons of relevant contemporary literature elsewhere. (And in the world of movie-making, Douglas Coupland is fond of reminding readers, Vancouver is far more often filmed as a stand-in for settings elsewhere than as a setting in itself [*City of Glass* 6].) Hence Kevin Chong’s frustration: there may not yet be a ready-made, cosmopolitan appetite for Vancouver-specific cultural wisdom and aesthetics. But city-building narratives seek to cultivate such an appetite, in part by assuming that it already exists and treating Vancouver as relevant new information. And Chong can take heart, if not simply by reveling in the courageous example these narratives set, then by enjoying the fact that as a *city* (if not yet as a literary setting), Vancouver is reportedly being observed and mimicked by city-planners worldwide. As urban analyst Lance Berelowitz writes,

Vancouver has emerged as the poster child of urbanism in North America. In recent years, through a series of locally grown strategies, Vancouver has consciously willed itself into becoming a model of contemporary city-making.

[...] places such as Shanghai, San Francisco and even Toronto [are] now hiring Vancouver architects and planners to fix their cities. (1)

City-building narrators, too, have something to say about how dwelling in Vancouver is an experience worth sharing.

Well before Vancouver's urban form began to attract the attention of international city planners, Ethel Wilson was deliberately and attentively setting her stories in the city. In her novels *The Innocent Traveller* and *Swamp Angel* and her short story "The Window" in particular, the narrators position themselves as addressing English audiences from Vancouver, speaking back across the span of distance between colonial centre and fringe with its attendant gaps in knowledge.⁹² I say an English audience, and would add a friendly and interested one, although the audience's nationality is not specified. These narrators have such confidence in a complete sympathy with their listeners as to suggest that they mutually share a national culture and perhaps a class background as well.⁹³ But they must nonetheless introduce Vancouver to this distant and unknowing audience, setting out the city in its surrounding landscape for them, as in this passage from *The Innocent Traveller*:

If you arrive in Vancouver on a fine day and go up into a high place, to Little Mountain perhaps or even to the top of some high office building, you will come under the immediate spell of the mountains to the north of you, and of dark coniferous forests. You will see high headlands sloping westward into the Pacific Ocean, and islands beyond. And then you will turn again and look at the mountains which in their turn look down upon the grace and strength of the

Lion's Gate Bridge, upon the powerful flow of the Narrows, upon English Bay,
upon the harbour, and upon the large city of Vancouver. (123)

This passage is typical of Wilson's narrators in its characteristic introductory and assuming mixture of new referring statements, inferables, and proper nouns—a mixture that I will shortly discuss—and in its slow, step-wise unfolding of Vancouver as one continuous panoramic view. There are distinctly similar passages in *Swamp Angel* (7), “A Drink with Adolphus” (73), and “The Window” (197). A deep affection for the place and its people motivates these narrators' storytelling, just as it motivated Wilson herself (cf. Giltrow and Stouck 233).

These narrators know and love Vancouver, and the stories they tell are not only about the subtle twists and shifts, flows and ebbs of affection and alienation in the mental and social lives of the characters (the “currents of disturbance, [...] vulnerability or precariousness” [221] that Janet Giltrow and David Stouck convincingly identify as thematically and stylistically central in *Swamp Angel*). Wilson sets her characters' consciousness and experiences firmly into the specific landscapes of Vancouver, telling stories that are also about the characters' and narrators' perceptions of the city. Thus, for example, in *Swamp Angel* the narrator suspends the plot, at the point when Maggie leaves the city of Vancouver, to comment on the different characteristics of the several roads leading from Vancouver to New Westminster. Her commentary plays a teasing game with her audience, which is led to assume as she introduces each new road that she is now telling them about the one Maggie takes, and that its character reveals something about Maggie's destination and destiny. Will she take the first road, “a highway bright with motor hotels, large motorcar parks, small shops, factories of various sizes,” whose

development gradually obliterates the graceful remnants of a rural past (*Angel* 17), or will she take the second way, “called the river road,” where there remains yet “the agreeable illusion that the few pleasant and small rustic houses that stand alone amongst the trees [...] are really permanent in their aloneness” (17)? When finally the narrator reveals that Maggie’s taxi takes the third of these roads, one which “had no special characteristics” (16), the narrator also reveals that she had stepped aside from the plot of the story on purpose to incorporate discussion of Vancouver’s expansion and development into her story. “The landscape is being despoiled, as it must” (17), she concludes, establishing an urban/rural contrast, and thus the expanding modern civilization’s threat to old values, as part of the thematic point of her story. And her use of proper nouns (Vancouver, New Westminster, the Fraser River) and precisely observed local details indicates that it is an urban/rural edge specific to Vancouver that generates her analysis: it is specifically “the city of Vancouver [that] is crawling on” (17).⁹⁴

Apparently, where they are concerned with perceptions of the city, Wilson’s narrators are motivated to tell these stories to their distant audience by two impulses. One is a desire to share, with an audience whose worldview and aesthetic/sentimental value systems overlap extensively with the narrator’s, the effusions and the subtly cutting critical edges of the narrator’s feelings about the place. This impulse motivates the narration of *The Innocent Traveller* especially. Sperber and Wilson might explain that these narrators share with their audiences such an extensive mutual cognitive environment—an environment defined by a shared aesthetic as well as shared world knowledge—that they assume with certainty that their audience will feel the personal relevance of their observations and feelings, even about a place so far from the audience’s

daily experience. Because they share so much mutual knowledge and aesthetic perspective, but so little Vancouver common ground, Wilson's narrators introduce the city to their audiences with their distinctive and unusual mixture of referring expressions. While their descriptions of the city are phrased as introductory, and they mark their assumption that their audience does not know the city by setting up information about it as news, they also use proper nouns liberally (in a special, Wilsonian way). And they frequently express things as inferable, as if their audiences, who know so much of what the narrators themselves know, could infer the identity of landmarks and place-names in a city they have never themselves seen. The opening page of *Swamp Angel* offers a good example (and it echoes passages from Wilson's other stories):

She looked out over the small green garden which would soon grow dark in the evening. This garden led down a few steps to the wooden sidewalk; then there was the road, dusty in fine weather; next came the neighbours' houses across the road, not on a level with her but lower, as the hill declined, so that she was able to look over the roofs of these houses to Burrard Inlet far below, to the dark green promontory of Stanley Park, to the elegant curve of the Lion's Gate Bridge which springs from the Park to the northern shore which is the base of the mountains; and to the mountains. The mountains seemed, in this light, to form an escarpment along the whole length of the northern sky. (7)

The narrator's pattern in the references in this passage is to refer to each feature of this panorama as if it were either inferable from general knowledge of cities and landscape or as if it were unused—that is, already known uniquely, as implied by use of a proper noun—but meanwhile to attach richly descriptive modifying phrases to each reference.

Thus, for example, “the [...] garden” is helpfully described as small and green, as about to grow dark, and as leading down “a few steps” (which steps are themselves treated as new). More pertinently, Burrard Inlet is “far below,” Stanley Park is a “dark green promontory,” and the Lion’s Gate Bridge curves elegantly and “springs from the Park to the northern shore” (which shore is itself “the base of the mountains”). The narrator builds the panorama outward from where her character stands, by linking one feature of it to the next, so that each landmark is knit textually to the ones around it. The pattern of inference that the narrator requires of her audience here urges them to draw on the general world knowledge and on the aesthetic sensibilities they share with the narrator to infer the unique identity even of things that she introduces as well known but which they do not know (that is, the Inlet, the Park, and the Bridge). She relies on the accuracy of their imaginative inference, assuming that—with the help of her own generous descriptions—they will be able to conjure up accurately resonant connotations for the names “Stanley Park” and “the Lion’s Gate Bridge.”

Perhaps, even at their distance, this narrator’s audience has heard of these few iconic Vancouver landmarks: in their letters home to England, the characters in *The Innocent Traveller* exclaim to *their* audience, “You *should* see Stanley Park” (121, 122, emphasis in original), apparently quite assured that they have heard of the place. But the narrators in both stories generally assume an introductory posture, setting Vancouver out for unknowing audiences. Their proper nouns, in this context, ask from their audiences the imaginative inference I described in the previous paragraph, expecting that audiences who share such an extensive worldview with them will infer accurately. Consequently, the narrator of *The Innocent Traveller* can use proper nouns for street names and

landmarks that her audience has presumably never heard of, as she does when, in one chapter, she repeats the name “Barclay Street”:

So Rose and her Great-Aunt started off down Barclay Street in very good spirits
on a sunny July afternoon. (146)

So Great-Aunt and Great-Niece proceeded down Barclay Street towards English
Bay, Rose bowling her hoop [...] (146)

She pranced up Barclay Street, carrying her Minutes [...] (153)

The narrator repeats the street name here out of a sort of cherishing pleasure she takes in casting this street in her account of a wonderful day. In its repetition, the street name becomes a mild joke about Topaz’s silly buoyancy, but it also becomes an incantation: abstracted from its deictic value, the proper noun comes to evoke the narrator and audience’s growing joint understanding of the happy connotations of this street. Ethel Wilson’s narrators are motivated by a desire to share this kind of aesthetic and sentimental accord with their audience, by introducing their audience to the Vancouver that has become so resonant for them.

The other impulse motivating Wilson’s narrators to introduce Vancouver to their distant audiences is an impulse to bring home, so to speak, a narratorial perspective on English and Anglo-Canadian society, and on individual characters, sensibilities and patterns of consciousness within this society—a perspective that has been sharpened and clarified by the narrators’ exposure to the frontier.⁹⁵ In this sense, Wilson’s narrators consider their perceptions of their characters’ social and mental lives in the city to be relevant for their distant audiences’ sense of local subjectivity. As a city of beauty, as a new city taking shape right at the edges of wild natural landscapes, as a city that harbours

English society at a great distance from England, and yet as a city where different social classes, religions, and ethnicities mix with some freedom (cf. *Innocent* 121), Vancouver and the perceptions it evokes offer a source of images and social analysis relevant to the English audience's respective production of its own located subjectivity. That is, the narrators introduce Vancouver to their implied audiences as an elsewhere, a distant context, that sheds new light on their English here, by force of contrast. To paraphrase Appadurai, Vancouver and its environs offer their audiences a context against which their own home neighbourhoods' intelligibility takes shape. This implicit motive is evident in the treatment of Vancouver in "The Window" and, less pointedly, in *Swamp Angel*, but it is most clearly marked in the narration of *The Innocent Traveller*. (See endnote 92.) The latter novel also provides a model for the narrator's address back to England in the letters written home by the family newly settled in Vancouver. The letter-writers' enthusiasm for Vancouver's beauty is summed up in their repeated, written exclamations of "You should see Stanley Park..." (*Innocent* 121-2)—exclamations that seek to explain and describe for their unknowing audience the aesthetic and sentimental texture of this city, but which resort to using proper names to refer to unique landmarks, as if the names alone might almost explain the rapture one feels experiencing these places firsthand. The narrators of Wilson's Vancouver fictions construct the city for their audience as, variously, a place where modern time and frontier space combine to emancipate the Englishperson settling here (*Innocent*, "Window"), as a beautiful object of contemplation which inspires introspective spiritual questing ("Window"), and as a multicultural urban centre where one who is seeking emancipation from normative social bonds formed within "white" society (cf. *Angel* 21) can find avenues of both imaginative (22) and

actual (21) escape with the help of racialized strangers. Offering these images and constructions of the city to their English audiences, these narrators provide them with new imaginative materials for the production of their own relationships to local place. Assuming that their audiences share with them extensive mutual world-knowledge and a sympathy of aesthetic/sentimental perspective, Wilson's narrators assert that the images they offer and stories they tell about experiences of self, society, and place (in Vancouver) will be relevant to them. And introducing them to the unknown little city in the West, where the perceptions and experiences they tell about take place, the narrators offer their audience a sense of their own distance from the frontier-like elsewhere whence these images and stories come—a sense of otherness to be incorporated into their own locality.

Timothy Taylor's novel *Stanley Park* is the final city-building narrative, and indeed the final text, I will discuss in this chapter. In some respects it brings me full circle from Lowry's "The Bravest Boat," since like this story it introduces its audience to a Vancouver that it builds carefully for them, slowly expanding their knowledge of the city outwards from a Lost Lagoon location where the narrative begins. Like Lowry's story too, *Stanley Park* constructs a vivid Vancouver, a densely-built modern city so rich in moral and aesthetic contrasts that it verges on becoming an allegorical space polarized between park and city. Taylor does not explicitly declare his story's Vancouver a fictional space, as Lowry did by naming it Enochvilleport—indeed, Taylor's "Author's Note," which announces that "One strand of [his] novel is based in fact," expressly links the Vancouver named and described in the novel to the existing city. But *Stanley Park*, like "The Bravest Boat," fictionalizes the city in the process of introducing it to its

audience. That is, even while the novel, like the story, refers very extensively and attentively to the specific geographies of the real city, it also lifts its Vancouver off the real map, allegorizing the places referred to, layering their mundane surfaces with luscious textures, and inventing new spaces within it.

Taylor's narrator, unlike Lowry's, seems to recognize the bystanding presence of a local audience. Vancouver has grown, since Lowry and Wilson were writing, and Taylor and certain other contemporary, locally-based writers frame their city with (what seems to me) a luxuriant assurance that an in-the-know local audience exists to appreciate the implicit resonances of their setting-work. Perhaps, indeed, this assurance is the mirror twin of their greater confidence in the city's national and international cultural salience.⁹⁶ Two passages from the first chapter of *Stanley Park* show the narrator addressing what I discern to be a wide audience in a style that integrates an address to knowing locals. Like the narrators of Ethel Wilson's stories, this narrator mixes references high on the familiarity scale with references assuming no familiarity; like Wilson's narrators, too, this narrator often treats parts of Vancouver as inferable, even if the audience generally implied by his audience design is not likely able to identify those places in fact. The novel opens like this, shuttling its audience straight into the midst of an unfolding storyline, as novels often do (Giltrow "Ironies" 217):

They arranged to meet at Lost Lagoon. It was an in-between place, the city on one side, Stanley Park on the other. [...] Now the Professor was late. Jeremy Papier found a bench up the hill from the lagoon and opened a section of newspaper across the wet boards. The bench was between two cherry trees, the pink blossoms of which met high over his head forming an arch, a doorway. It

wasn't precisely the spot they'd discussed—the Professor had suggested the boathouse—but it was within eyesight, within shouting distance. It was close enough. (Taylor 3)

In this passage, stylistic markers of assumed audience familiarity—including proper nouns (Lost Lagoon, Stanley Park) and inferable references (*the city, the hill, the boathouse*)—mix with references that introduce more minor details of the unfolding setting (*a bench, two cherry trees*). Proper nouns are prominent indicators that these places are well known to a certain community. Generally I would read such proper nouns as, therefore, primarily addressing that knowing audience, especially if the place names were presented immediately in opening sentences, as they are here. However, in Taylor's novel, proper nouns seem to signal instead a textured, resonant, close knowledge that—other stylistic features suggest—the implied audience does not yet possess. Interpretive glosses explain the symbolic value of these named elements of the setting, managing both the supposedly given and the new information: as in, for example, *an in-between place, the city on one side, Stanley Park on the other* and *the pink blossoms [...] forming an arch, a doorway*. The indefinite articles introducing both arch and in-between place designate these readings of place as authoritative narrative property only now being unveiled for the audience. The narrator gradually supplies details that enrich the spare knowledge supplied by a name like Stanley Park, noting the park's four-hundred-hectare size (4) and its thousands of visitors a day (20). Meanwhile, however, the proper nouns hospitably reserve a privileged ring-side seat for the bystanding readers who already have that knowledge.

A few pages on, when Jeremy has been led into a disorientingly unfamiliar part of the park, the narrator comments,

A map and a global positioning system would have revealed to him that he was not far from things that he knew. Just a couple of hundred yards off the Park Drive, near Prospect Point, in fact. Here a densely forested slope fell from the road, down to the top of a cliff that towered a hundred feet above the seawall and the ocean below. [...] At the bottom of the cliffs and to the left stood Siwash Rock, which pillared fifty feet out of the water near the shore. A rock that was once a bather, legend had it, a bather honoured by the gods with this permanent place at the lip of the forest that had been home. (20)

Here, again, the setting narrative begins with proper nouns, but this passage moves more directly from them into introductory language that describes *a* slope and *a* cliff. The seawall and the ocean, treated as familiar here, have already been established in the novel's landscape (4, 5). The distinction between what is treated as familiar and what is not is partly protagonist-oriented, as the passage depicts the minimal distance between Jeremy's familiar landmarks and the strange territory he has now entered. (The style of the novel's opening paragraphs might also be read as partly reflecting Jeremy's knowledge.) But the narrator is not absorbed by Jeremy's consciousness here, so the style continues to present itself as pitching its references for an audience: the narrator turns to tell his audience what the character *would* have realized if he had access to an authoritative overview of the topography. Introducing the locally well-known landmark Siwash Rock, he is informing a presumed distant audience about a site that will eventually host an important plot episode. The passage thematically foregrounds a globe-

wide system of orientation, with its references to cartography and GPS; but, characteristically, it makes the character's on-the-ground experiential knowledge a necessary and desirable complement to such abstractions.

As Taylor's narrator gradually supplies knowledge of the written city to his primary audience, he uses proper nouns and other assumptions of familiarity to remind this audience of the things they cannot fully know at their remove. Meanwhile, the city he builds gleams with the extra richness of an imagined, though closely observed, version. One example of this attentive invention is the novel's framing of "Crosstown," the Vancouver neighbourhood where Jeremy's restaurant The Monkey's Paw is meant to be found. The novel's Crosstown is as closely responsive to the existing Vancouver cityscape as is its Lost Lagoon (or Lowry's).⁹⁷ The street names, landmarks, topography and street culture the narrator ascribes to the neighbourhood are recognizably referential to the city as it was in about the year 2000, when Taylor would have been writing *Stanley Park*. But the place *name* "Crosstown," around which the narrator builds his treatment of the city, and which he handles as if it reliably and authoritatively indicates that neighbourhood, apparently had very little purchase in actual residents' awareness of and daily practical knowledge of Vancouver. Although Taylor did not invent the neighbourhood name—a group of local artists claim to have invented it in 1992 (Thomas, Laurence)—it was not in 2000, and is still not, now, a neighbourhood name with anything like the local currency of the "West End," the "Downtown East Side," or "Gastown" and "Yaletown" for that matter.⁹⁸ Thus, "Crosstown" is ground for invention, more than common-ground recognition, as Taylor uses the name. The narrator's references to it offer Taylor fiction-making leverage, and they imply an address to an audience whose

relationship to Vancouver is not in any simple way grounded in knowledge of the real city readers might recognize. Likewise, Taylor's insertion of a fictional restaurant into otherwise recognizable cityscape, and his allegorizing of the Starbucks coffee chain as the "Inferno International" coffee houses, opens fictional ground within the recognizable city. So indeed does his re-framing of the Downtown Eastside as "the Middle East" in his second novel, *Story House* (113).

The passage in which the *Stanley Park* narrator introduces "Crosstown" is characteristic of *Stanley Park*'s narrative address: it tightly combines marks of mutual place-knowledge with marks of introductory, explanatory framing of a place; it offers both unused proper nouns (Cambie Street, Hastings Street) that specify shared territory, and lists of generic nouns (film school kids, architects, software developers) which describe rather than specify. In this passage, importantly, Taylor's narrator treats the Downtown East Side as inferable rather than unused, foregoing the proper noun treatment he uses for "Crosstown," with its attendant assumption that the audience can identify it uniquely, and phrasing his reference to it instead as a descriptive, inferable phrase—"the downtown east side."

[...] that spring, the Monkey's Paw did open. A narrow fifty-seater on Cambie Street in Vancouver's Crosstown neighbourhood, edgy but with cheap rents. [...] The neighbourhood offered a shifting multicultural client base that nobody could consciously target. Film school kids in the mid-morning [...] Business lunches for the kind of businesses that embraced neighbourhoods in the earliest stages of gentrification: architects, designers, software developers. After work they had a bike-courier scene. And in the evening, a tantalizing trickle of those foodies and

reviewers adventurous enough to dine out deep on the downtown east side, pushing up against the Hastings Street heroin trade. It was a colourful, kaleidoscopic place. Very Crosstown, very X-town. (50-53)

Although this passage is relatively dense with apparent assumptions of shared local knowledge, it is organized as an introduction. The narrator frames his Crosstown as a new place—or he *re*-frames the place anew, for those in the audience who happen to have rather more knowledge of it already—and builds up its colour and texture out of descriptive phrases. “Crosstown,” he tells his audience, is edgy, cheap, shifting and multicultural, colourful, kaleidoscopic. (His remark “Very Crosstown” extends this process of describing rather than referring, making of “Crosstown” a flavour rather than a specific place-name.)

Knit closely together by *Stanley Park*’s narrative language, the references that assume Vancouver common ground and the introductory, framing descriptions that assume that the city is unknown territory combine in an address designed for a broadly-based North American audience. Vancouverites who know the city well are among this audience, and they will perceive more richness of texture in the novel’s descriptions than the other North Americans. For those of them already “in the know,” the connotations of certain place names will be stronger than for others—the name “Hastings Street,” for example, adds extra resonance to the descriptive phrase “the Hastings Street heroin trade,” only for those who know about that street already. And the effort of inference and accommodation required by the narrator’s frequent use of inferable references will be considerably less strenuous for those among the audience who in fact already know the unique referents of those phrases. For example, the narrator’s treatment of a finely

differentiated Lost Lagoon geography in the following passage offers the unknowing outsiders among its audience plenty of descriptive help in making the inferences required, but it simultaneously offers more knowing Vancouverites the pleasurable spark of easy recognition. I have italicized the decisive inferables in this passage:

He [...] walked the rest of the way down the sidewalk, to *that point where* the city abruptly ends and the park begins. That spot on *the curb* above *the tennis courts*, above *the short stretch of grass*. (61)

I suggest a broadly based North-American audience rather tentatively. Like Douglas Coupland's narrators, *Stanley Park's* narrator assumes a number of international brand names to be part of the frame of reference he shares with his audience, although the brands he refers to connote a more rarefied, hip or expensive taste than the mainstream pop-culture icons of Coupland's books. *Stanley Park's* big brand names are from Europe (Aga, Gucci) as often as America (Wolfgang Puck, Planet Hollywood). But while the narrator sets Vancouver into a network of cosmopolitan cultural influences strongly connected with European tastes, when he sets the city's daily urban culture in relation to places elsewhere he frames the city as a North American one. He explains that the 1940s murder of the Babes in the Woods represented,

For Vancouver, the first of the self-inflicted wounds North Americans would come to associate with late 20th-century urban life. [Other major crimes] would follow. But the murder of those two children ushered this unsettling aspect of modernity onto the stage of Canada's third city, quiet at that time in its West Coast rain forest. (115)

Meanwhile, the novel's treatment of Vancouver as part of a West-Coast ecosystem and fault-line topography calls on its audience to recognize Portland as well as Vancouver, although it offers formal introduction of "the Pacific Rim's Cascadia Subduction Zone, where popular science would have it that everything from Portland to Vancouver was spectacularly overdue for obliteration" (139). Perhaps the novel's thematic focus on region-local food production influences me, as I identify the audience as North American (instead of even more broadly international): I notice the narrator assuming that his audience will recognize as relevant-because-local the points of origin of "Saltspring Island chevre" or "Fraser Valley foie gras" (54).

More pertinent for my discussion of the novel as a city-building narrative is the novel's thematic treatment of the audience for Jeremy's cooking performance. As a city-building narrative, I am arguing, *Stanley Park* broadcasts images and information about the experience of life in Vancouver so that others may imaginatively incorporate them into their respective production of local subjecthood, elsewhere. "Elsewhere," in this novel's case, is elsewhere in cosmopolitan North America (or beyond?)—including in non-fictional Vancouver. The novel constructs its fictionalized Vancouver as self-sufficiently a centre of radiant cultural influence. This Vancouver, which is centred on Crosstown and Jeremy's locally-inspired culinary innovation, generates taste—taste with enough cachet to capture the investment of Inferno International and the attention of *Gud Tayste*, "the millennial food magazine of choice for foodie-scenesters on both sides of the Atlantic" (63). Meanwhile, however, Jeremy also generates taste intended to attract and appeal only to immediate friends and personal contacts, when he cooks for homeless friends in the park or for his underground circle of friendly patrons in his off-grid final

restaurant. His affinity for local materials and his desire to perform for a local audience are part of the home-grown code of “taste” that the novel, ultimately, offers its wideflung audience: be as hip in your own homeplace as we are here, in Vancouver.

On one hand, *Stanley Park*'s mixture of reference and invention in its narrative treatment of Vancouver suggests that in creatively re-framing a real city, overlaying it with extraordinary texture and inserting fictional spaces within it, writers set aside the chance for social contact involving common ground's mutual recognition. City-building narratives are not anyway very likely to make bystanding local readers feel as if they are being invited into the intimacy of address, because such narratives' address does not presume an audience with a prior relationship to the city. And narratives that re-invent the city with added fictional elements introduce dimensions for it that local readers could never have known yet, making their familiar city new to them. Such narratives position local audiences amidst broad audiences of outsiders, and they show off to all the assembled on-lookers the city's extraordinary dimensions, suggesting its relevance to all of them on the basis not of how proximate but rather of how engaging and desirable it is as a setting for urban life. They seek to evoke in their audiences a sympathy of taste, perhaps, rather than a sympathy of locality. (We might say something similar of Ethel Wilson's narrators.) On the other hand, however, *Stanley Park*'s references to a recognizable Vancouver are so invested in and attentive to the city that an audience that happens to live here will find the narrative's ideas and imagery especially attractive as materials for their production of local subjectivity. The novel does not mediate for them an experience of urban common ground, but an experience of their home ground that frames it as being just as cosmopolitan, exciting, and culturally influential as other, more

frequently fictionalized cities elsewhere. And because the novel's Vancouver is recognizably modeled on the city they know very well, it is all the more easily adopted as their own.

Chapter Three: Theatre and Locality

How does theatre performance offer its audiences an experience of what I have been calling common ground? And how does it do so differently than novels and short stories? Just about all of the references made to Vancouver landmarks by the scripts of plays set in the city assume audiences' ready familiarity with those landmarks (even, to my surprise, when the plays were performed first or subsequently for audiences elsewhere, in Ottawa or Toronto). The question then becomes what sort of places these plays share with their audiences: how do these grounds compare to the extended neighbourhoods addressed in novels and short stories? And, especially, how are these grounds positioned in relation to the physical space of the theatres where the plays were actually performed—and in relation to the actual audiences who assembled in those theatres? In this chapter I think through these questions by discussing four important plays as they were first performed on Vancouver stages: George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, Sharon Pollock's *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Joan MacLeod's *2000*, and Marie Clements's *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*. In an effort to make clear that I am considering these plays not as published texts but as historical events, I use the past tense when discussing the details of the performances.⁹⁹

Before turning to the plays, I comment briefly on the pragmatics approach I take to theatre. Journalist Richard Eder offers a useful point of departure for this approach in his book chapter "Theatre and Cities":

If it were only a matter of words or ideas, books would do it better. The theatre is action as well; the message is not merely asserted or represented but acted out.

The action may be a facsimile, but it is real action in real time by real people up

on that stage. And the impact is not received in privacy, as with a book or the cocoon of a movie theatre. We receive it as a group; it is shared by the audience as well as the actors. We do not simply react; we are seen to react, and we see or feel others react. (127)

Eder is referring to theatre's special capacity to engage people in recognizing social problems. But his observations apply to an investigation of how live performance handles common ground, in my sense: how it engages people in recognizing that certain geographical grounds are mutually known to them. If books do something better, they construct more vivid, extended, coherent swaths of urban landscape than conventional theatre performances. The terrains indexed by most plays are dispersed and thin on the ground, so to speak. But—speaking generally for the moment, and considering the theatre in its most basic pragmatic structure, removed from any specific locale—a theatre is precisely a ground for an immediate social encounter between actors and audiences of the kind that Eder describes (cf. Marvin Carlson 6): it is a space of copresence and mutual response.¹⁰⁰

Actors and audience share with each other what I will be calling the *performance space* of a play. And the images, speech, and gesture presented onstage are all ultimately addressed to the assembled audience and received “as a group,” as Eder remarks, by everyone present. In these respects, the theatre encounter is an experience of both physical and linguistic copresence that is more immediately personal than the indirect, disembodied brush with narrative sociality experienced by readers of novels and short stories. Most members of the audience remain strangers to one another and to the people producing the play, of course, so they cannot be certain of sharing many domains of

background knowledge with one another. Having assembled in the theatre, however, they make up a temporary community sharing mutual knowledge of at least the theatre site itself and the performance space they are producing.

The performance space includes the storyworld of the play, so to speak—the site of the play’s imagined action, produced inside the auditorium over the course of a play by the joint imaginative work of everyone in the theatre. It also includes the audience and the auditorium itself. In thus defining a space not divided by a “fourth wall,” I am deliberately collapsing a distinction between what Karen Gaylord has called the two simultaneous “levels of ‘reality’” in a theatrical event (qtd. in S Bennett 139): the reality of the actors-audience encounter and the reality of the world constructed onstage.¹⁰¹

Taking a pragmatics approach to live theatre, I see no distinction between the storyworld and the actors’ performance of it for the assembled audience: the gestures that embody character and produce setting are performed for the sake of the audience’s uptake.

Performance spaces are hybrid realities, we might say, where the social dynamics of the actors and audience’s collective presence and imaginative work are inseparable from the world they produce together (cf. also S Bennett 139). The plays I examine in this chapter support such an approach. Even the most conventionally naturalist among them,

MacLeod’s *2000*, deliberately included direct address to the audience: the performance space of this play was a domestic interior, but one offered to, and thus in a sense extended to include, the silently appreciative and appraising audience. The other three plays each quite clearly sought to map the space within the theatre auditorium in a way that incorporated the audience into the social geography of that space, as I will show.

Thinking of the dynamics of address as inseparably part of the performance space also

supports my investigation of how these plays offer an experience of the city of Vancouver as common ground.

I write here that the images, speech, and gestures presented onstage are addressed ultimately to the assembled audience. Indeed, in the discussion of specific productions that follows, I have attempted to take into account any aspect of each production that claimed audience attention as being part of the play's design, including press releases, advertisements, house programs, and lobby displays. These materials were all offered to the audience by the *ensembles* of people who produced these plays;¹⁰² as aspects of the production, their ostensive claims to attention asserted their relevance to anyone attending. However, a problem of audience design remains, precisely because, in theory, anyone might attend: the spoken references to Vancouver landmarks, and indeed all other aspects of the plays' framing, are styled in such a way as to presume a specific audience. Plays are not custom-designed for whoever is in attendance any more than novels or short stories are for whoever reads them. Consciously or not, the individual audience-member at each of these plays would have confronted her own difference from the primary audience imagined by ensemble. Yet because the encounter between actors and audience is so immediately embodied and copresent, and because whatever is staged is so overtly staged *for* the very people in attendance, I would argue that the theatre organizes its audiences rather differently than written works do. The primary audience implied by the play's language and gestures remains a role that no actual audience-member could exactly fill, except by an imaginative leap of identification. But the theatre positions the actual audience, including everyone in attendance, as "side-participants" in its circle of address, rather than overhearers standing outside that circle.

(Side-participants, as I explained in Chapter One, are those members of a conversation circle who are given deliberate assurance that the speaker intends them to hear and understand what he is saying to his immediate addressee; his address to the addressee is offered to them, too [Clark and Carlson 218-20].) Celeste Derksen's analysis of theatre monologues fits nicely with the audience design I am proposing here: she explains that monologue may be spoken to the character's self or an absent addressee, but it is ultimately spoken "for," if not "to," the audience (7). I would argue that what Derksen says of monologue may be extended to all staged dialogue and performance.

Generally, then, these plays seem to assume that their language, gestures, and imagery *are* framed to accommodate the actual audience-members in attendance.¹⁰³ The ensembles thus may be seen to make assumptions about the sort of people who might be drawn to a particular production and come to a certain theatre, and what background knowledge such people are equipped with. Discerning these assumptions can tell us a lot about what sort of communities, in Clark and Marshall's sense, are imagined by the theatre (see my discussion of "community membership" in Chapter One); the plays I discuss imagine audiences who relate to the city as, variously, national citizens, locals, and members of an invested neighbourhood community, and the plays presume their audiences' identification with a variety of different ethnic, gender, and class positions. An ensemble's assumption about its audience exerts some social pressure on any audience-member who differs substantially or uncomfortably from the side-participants anticipated by the play. If an audience-member recognizes herself as so different from the social profile of the presupposed audience that she decidedly does not fit into it—if she lacks so much of the assumed knowledge, for example, or possesses such different

background knowledge than the ensemble imagined—she may find herself placed in the role of eavesdropper, rather than side-participant. Although she may feel extremely conscious of her difference, this audience-member has the option to keep that difference private and invisible, in the plays I discuss.

Common ground of the kind I have hitherto been interested in, which depends on a mutual recognition of certain real-world place knowledge, would not require that the landmarks indexed in the performance space of a play be anywhere near the theatre. The original Ottawa audiences of *2000*'s premiere production were addressed as if they shared knowledge of Vancouver's Second Narrows bridge, Pacific Coliseum, and other landmarks with the ensemble; whether or not the actual audience-members possessed the prior knowledge of those landmarks that the play presupposed, in effect they left the theatre sharing mutual knowledge of these landmarks' names. Theatre can certainly construct distant grounds as a shared discourse. I investigate the Vancouver productions of the four plays in this chapter, however, because theatre can also produce a stronger, spatially immersive version of common ground.

I argue here that the theatre event may create this stronger experience to the extent that the geographies that actors and audience produce together in the performance space are ostensibly connected to the audience's social lives outside the theatre. While there is no fourth wall dividing stage from seats, in my understanding, the enclosing walls of the conventional auditorium potentially divide the imagined geographies of the performance space from the world outside the theatre. Accordingly, plays that want to spotlight collective *local* knowledge must overtly connect the immediate social relations and the imagined geographies produced inside the performance space to the cityscape outside.

Otherwise the world outside the theatre may fade to a distal background once the performance begins to absorb the audience's attention. The ensembles who produced the four plays discussed here managed the correspondences between spaces inside and outside the theatres in a variety of ways. But their plays suggest that the absorbing social intensity of the actors-audience encounter relies somewhat on the enclosure of the auditorium walls. Hence the absorbing social encounter potentially competes with the deictic thrust of references and icons that direct attention away from the immediate room towards the city outside. The theatre itself is quite circumscribed, as a literal "ground" on which to base citizens' reciprocal awareness of one another (cf. Clark and Marshall 33-35): beyond the auditorium and lobby of the theatre venue, and beyond the sidewalks, lawns or plazas immediately outside the theatre doors, the space of the city is less evidently shared by those in attendance the farther it gets away from the theatre. And after the show is over, the performance's electric social immediacy may seem to dissipate as the audience disperses.

An ensemble needs to keep the indexical connections between performance space and city alive if the theatre site itself is not to stand as the limit of the potential common ground that a play can offer. If the ensemble succeeds, audience-members may be brought to feel that they are part of a local community that is self-aware: connected to other members of that community not by incidental parallels in their relationships to the city but by a theatrical moment that spot-lights their communal local knowledge.¹⁰⁴ While the theories of modern urban alienation I reviewed in Chapter Two suggest that city-dwellers rarely experience moments of communal self-recognition explicitly indexed to local geographies, it seems to me that daily social life in the city is actually full of

small, private moments where people draw on their presumed common ground, recounting stories about their outings for friends or providing directions to strangers. And the narrative voices in place-sharing and edge-setting novels and short stories echo the tones of those conversations. But the theatre, I think, is one of only a few sites where sizeable groups of strangers are collectively addressed in such a way as to conjure parts of the city as their communal locale.¹⁰⁵ These plays compellingly suggest theatre's potential to imagine what *locality* could feel like in the modern Canadian city—and even to produce locality with its audiences.

I use Appadurai's term locality, because it corresponds to the strong form of common ground I have been developing. Experiencing certain landmarks as part of a shared locality, people do not simply hold mutual knowledge of those landmarks (as in "common ground"); they see themselves as jointly immersed in an immediately proximal landscape defined by those landmarks, and as sharing patterns of social identification and deictic orientations within that landscape.

For Appadurai, locality is a "structure of feeling" (181) produced by the combination of several phenomena. One is a "sense of social immediacy" (178). Eder and others, including myself, suggest that this sense is distinctly available in the theatre, and I am arguing that the audience's feeling of social immediacy in the performance space can be linked effectively to their presence *as locals*. Another phenomenon that contributes to producing locality is a set of "technologies of interactivity" that community members employ to produce local subjects, including techniques such as "ceremonies of naming and tonsure, scarification and segregation, circumcision and deprivation" that

“inscri[be] locality onto bodies” (Appadurai 178-9) as well as “techniques for the *spatial* production of locality” such as

the building of houses, the organization of paths and passages, the making and remaking of fields and gardens, the mapping and negotiation of transhuman spaces and hunter-gatherer terrains [that constitute] the incessant, often humdrum preoccupation of many small communities studied by anthropologists. (180)

In modern Vancouver, the most powerful techniques for naming, clothing, schooling and assimilating children and immigrants into acceptable citizenship are generally performed with reference to much wider contexts than the local, the nation being foremost among them. The “making and remaking” of urban space, likewise, is largely governed by broadly municipal, provincial, and international corporate interests.¹⁰⁶ But people also work to produce and police distinctly neighbourhood-based identities, by imaginatively performing them (through clothing style, street culture, niche marketing, official and unofficial public art works, and neighbourhood conventions for house and lawn presentation, for instance) or ascribing them to other neighbourhood residents in online commentary and the local media.¹⁰⁷ And small groups of citizens do actively shape and re-shape parts of the city in ways that produce neighbourhoods oriented to their own needs and preferences, thus abiding by their own senses of locality.¹⁰⁸ In these everyday activities, people develop physical neighbourhoods and/or inscribe the stamp of local belonging onto themselves or others. They might be understood as producing or performing local citizenship; their respective abilities to produce senses of locality that take hold and get reproduced by other performances depend on their relative social power.

Like these other activities, I see people's claims to common ground with one another in everyday speech as being a grass-roots "technology of interactivity" that produces local subjects, because these claims routinely presuppose the existence of a community that is familiar with the city in the particular way presumed by the speaker: such claims invite, or force, the addressee to recognize the extent and limits of their belonging in this community. And the theatre, as a powerful technology of interactivity, may make similar claims even more strongly. Plays may create new geographies out of real-world landmarks or reproduce existing maps; they may assert these geographies as common ground shared collectively by a sizeable group of people; and they may do so while highlighting the group's immediate location in the very landscape being constructed as a neighbourhood.

The third phenomenon Appadurai lists as contributing to the production of locality is "the relativity of contexts" (178), which I discussed in Chapter Two: that is, locals' shared perception of places beyond the bounds of their neighbourhood as a distinguishable context or background "against which their own intelligibility takes shape" (184). This aspect of locality—indeed locality-production in general—is currently fragile, Appadurai admits, given the powers of nations to subsume and control localities and given contemporary mobility and media-driven global interconnectivity (188-9).¹⁰⁹ Reciting Appadurai's argument that locality is fragile (188), I am not suggesting that the globally interlinked social relations that now define any local place (as in Massey 154-6) are bad. Nor am I suggesting that locality is necessarily a progressive structure of feeling. But I *am* interested in examining what motivates the ensembles who ask their audiences to recognize themselves as part of a located, local community—a

community with a proximal terrain of its own—as the plays do to varying degrees. Several of them attempt to use these social differentiations to inspire or reinforce a sense of locally-based political and social responsibility.

The “relativity of contexts” produced by these plays offers us some insight into what Appadurai’s “neighbourhood” feels like in a modern North American city, by contrast to the landscape settled by a tribal community. The plays tend to assume that their audiences share with them a spatial orientation that focuses collective attention and detailed street-level knowledge on a particular central area of the city. Shared geographical knowledge stretches out to the official limits of metropolitan Vancouver, and beyond the city to other regional centres, but the farther away these other places are, the more generally and vaguely they are jointly known.¹¹⁰ The plays do not clearly produce an external context, an *elsewhere* divided from the local neighbourhood. Rather, the plays’ localities have neighbourhood-internal contexts: sets of others who do not relate to the city the same way the community assumed in the theatre does (cf. Ahmed). Strikingly, however, most of these plays do not overtly acknowledge those internal contexts, which are otherwise left as the implicit obverse of the social and geographical orientations presumed shared by the play. Different localities potentially overlap each other, where audience-members from various different parts of the city and with different experiences in it may sit side by side. But even then it is clear only to those individual audience-members who notice, self-consciously, that they do not share the locality assumed by the play.¹¹¹

In the four performances I discuss here, the ensembles drew on their audiences’ local knowledge as they worked to produce localities indexed to Vancouver social

geographies contemporary with the production of the play. But their relative emphases on the local dimension of their relationships with their audiences varied greatly. *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, for instance, barely referenced an overtly specific Vancouver landscape, even in its premiere Vancouver production. Yet to emphasize the potentially potent rhetorical effects even of *Ecstasy*'s rather abstracted connections between the social geography imagined in the performance space and the surrounding city, let me offer a brief example of a production that did not engage locality at all. The 2009 Bard on the Beach production of Shakespeare's *Othello* was set, as scripted, in Renaissance-era Italy and Cyprus. Distant in both place and time from the audience's everyday social world, that setting registered in the language, costumes and set design of the performance, separating the characters and the emphases of the play from the daily life of the audience-members (myself included). By bringing us together to Vanier Park and into the open-windowed Mainstage tent where the play was staged, *Othello* did make evident to me and my fellow audience-members our copresence with each other and the ensemble in a certain segment of the city, at the particular social event of that afternoon performance. But the performance did not overtly engage us as Vancouverites or even, more specifically, as frequenters of Vanier Park. The performance space we produced together in that tent did not ostensibly bring together the two social worlds immanent to the theatrical event—*Othello*'s Venetian empire and Bard on the Beach's fenced, open-air festival compound. In other words, the ensemble did not stage our Vancouver common ground as part of the social event of the play.

I now turn to the plays themselves, considering them in chronological order. The earlier two plays seem to have been stunningly successful at foregrounding the actors-

audience encounter. The ensembles staged them as social events implicating their audiences both personally and politically in the stories imagined onstage, as members of the contemporary society. And, like the later plays, these first two productions connected the geographies of their performance spaces to the city outside the theatre. Interestingly, however, the Appadurain senses of locality they produced by doing so were broadly national, rather than condensed and proximal. They thus complicate the emphasis on strictly nearby space that seems implicit in the notion of locality; to put it differently, they illustrate how particular nearby landmarks may be imagined as part of a much wider Appadurain neighbourhood. These two plays also serve to highlight the more emphatically proximal neighbourhoods constructed by *2000* and *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*.

***The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*: national neighbourhood**

Reviewers and critics alike have suggested that the Playhouse Theatre Company's premiere production of *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* at the Vancouver Playhouse in November, 1967, was deeply involving for its audiences (Barber 38, Hoffman "George" 3, Innes 161). One CBC reviewer referred to *Ecstasy* "not as a play, but more as an act of communion in which our own participation is inescapable" (qtd. in Innes 161), and James Barber reported in the *Vancouver Province* that even the cast was caught off guard by "the undeniably electric atmosphere of the [opening night] production and the mystery of little, naked emotions running around the Playhouse" (35). Set design and staging importantly helped generate the play's exhausting "emotional experience" (Barber 35) of communion, by emphatically drawing attention to the audience's presence in the

performance space and incorporating them into the play.¹¹² This resulting sense of social immediacy helped to produce a sense of locality, albeit one primarily linked to national space.

Charles Evans's set design was abstract and minimalist, its sweeping ramp and bare spaces shaping a social space unique to the play rather than a naturalistic space iconically or indexically representative of recognizable places outside the theatre.¹¹³ It was an expressionist theatrical space where characters and audience were collectively immersed into a dreamlike montage of scenes from the life of the central character, Rita Joe (cf. Innes 158-9 and Grace "Expressionist" 52).¹¹⁴ The characters' changing actions and dialogue presented shadowy reconstructions of a shifting set of places—a rural reserve, a residential school, a generalized urban landscape called "the city"—but only the surreal courtroom scene that framed the play's events was represented as presently taking place onstage, so to speak. And the characters' dialogue, which was frequently spoken directly to the audience to help them construct the world of the play, tended to generalize these represented spaces rather than indexing them to a specific geography. Hence, for example, the Magistrate, who represented the institutional forces trying to make Rita fit into accepted patterns of urban Canadian social life, spoke not of a city-wide social order but of a national one and a national scale of law enforcement (Ryga Ms 2, 83).¹¹⁵

Through the characters' language and their manner of address, *Ecstasy* established a single strong social divide in its performance space: a racial distinction between white Canadians and Indians. The play aligned the audience with the white characters and apart from the Indian ones, drawing on the dynamics of Western theatre conventions to enforce

the audience's passivity in this alignment.¹¹⁶ The audience sat silently in darkness while the Magistrate gestured towards them (Ryga 67), constructing them as white Canadian "civilization" (Ryga Ms 27) and reminding them that, like him but unlike Rita Joe, they were freed and protected by the laws of Canadian society—enabled by those laws to move freely through the city (Ryga Ms 2). They likewise had to accept in silence the defiance of David Joe, who constructed them (cf. Ryga 113) as white urban "animals [...] who sleep with sore stomachs because they eat too much" (Ryga Ms 77).¹¹⁷ At the close of the play, Eileen Joe and the other Indian characters turned outward to face the audience with defiant resistance (Ryga 130). Eileen addressed the play's final spoken line to the audience with a "deadly intensity"; her line, "When Rita Joe first came to the city she told me the concrete made her feet sore!," reinforced the distinction already drawn between those members of society, including the audience, who move easily in the city and the Indians who do not (Ryga Ms 96). Thus the Playhouse audience was incorporated directly into the play's social dynamics.¹¹⁸

The set design and staging drew attention to the play *as* theatre. But they also refused to separate the performance space from the everyday world. The backdrops were only lowered into place to conceal the "back wall of the stage, exit doors, etc." (Ryga 37) after the cast had already entered the auditorium and stood onstage to confront and acknowledge the audience. Ryga suggests that this lowering of backdrops would create "a sense of compression of stage into the auditorium" (37), directing the audience-members' attention both to the artifice of theatrical setting and to their claustrophobic incorporation into the performance space. The actors made their "workmanlike and untheatrical" entrance into the auditorium through the same doors the audience used.

This entrance of the actors as themselves, as citizens and the immediate social peers of their audience, has been called “one of the greatest moments in British Columbia theatre” (Hoffman “George” 3).

The actors’ entrance staged the ensemble’s intention that the play be received as a social and political event. So did efforts to invite important politicians and civil servants to the opening night performance—efforts finally rewarded when, having been recognized as an “instant classic” and an important piece of Canadian political theatre (Innes 162), *Ecstasy* opened in Ottawa in 1969 with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Jean Chrétien, and other politicians in attendance. But Christopher Innes observes that by the time of its re-mount in Ottawa, *Ecstasy* had become so successful that audiences received it as theatre rather than as a challenging social event: in Ottawa the

opening night received a five minute standing ovation that paid tribute to the actors’ skill and the play’s status, in place of the silent stillness that had acknowledge their intensity and its passion [at the Vancouver premiere]. (162-3)

Innes quotes the Playhouse’s then-artistic director, Joy Coghill, speaking about how the original Vancouver audiences had felt too “beaten” (Barber 35) by the experience of the play to respond to it as a piece of conventional theatre by applauding its conclusion:

it wasn’t taken as a sort of dramatic event that you applauded afterwards. It was such a moving experience that people didn’t want to clap. They simply were stunned in some very basic way. The performance ended with all the actors appearing from nowhere, coming out to stand looking at the audience. And as they walked away the audience always just sat there. (Coghill qtd. in Innes 161)

That the Playhouse audiences did not receive *Ecstasy* as simply a performance of appraisable quality suggests that, as a technology of interactivity, the theatre's potential to implicate its audiences in the social geography it constructs depends on it refusing to commodify its productions as neatly bound "plays" that are capped with concluding applause. "There is a third part to *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* that is being written daily by all of us. You and I," director George Bloomfield urged in his program notes.

Ecstasy continues to be read as set in Vancouver.¹¹⁹ But the Playhouse production of the play treated Vancouver as an incidental part of a wider whole: the Playhouse Theatre venue itself, the house program, and the play's scripted references to its setting worked to produce a national neighbourhood. Ryga wanted his audiences to recognize their membership in a Canada-wide society that alienates and persecutes indigenous people.¹²⁰ The play engaged them in imaginative construction of an urban setting intended to figure symbolically as a national territory, despite that this urban setting was recognizably based on Vancouver.

The Playhouse, which opened in 1963, is part of Vancouver's flagship civic performing arts complex. According to archival city maps, its location put it on the edge of the commercial downtown core of the city, near the post office and a bus depot, at the time of *Ecstasy*'s performance. As a civic theatre, the Playhouse signified for its 1967 patrons an intention to serve local artists and audiences.¹²¹ But as a major downtown theatre with over 650 seats, surrounded by the offices of communications, transit, and commerce, and situated in a complex of other performance venues near the Granville Street "Theatre Row," the Playhouse also signified an entrance into a modern and "world-class" (Marvin Carlson 92) urban culture, positioned among other world cities

even while proudly sited in Vancouver. Because of its location downtown, then, the Vancouver Playhouse was not simply enmeshed in a *local* “urban text” (Marvin Carlson 68) but also in a broader context of international high-brow culture. (A mid-1960s advertising brochure for the Playhouse claimed that it was “designed particularly for *legitimate* theatre productions” [my emphasis].) Meanwhile, celebrated as one of “a network of regional theatres” being built across Canada in the 1960s, the Playhouse was conceived as participant in “a Canadian national theatre that would be decentralized and regional—a professional theatre version of the ostensible Canadian mosaic” (Wasserman “Introduction” 14). Precisely *as* a centre-piece of municipal and regional professional theatre culture, then, the Vancouver Playhouse was intended to be a major platform for the development of a national theatre culture. Its stage offered Vancouver audiences of *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* a venue intended to connect them with Canadian society.

The house program for *Ecstasy* likewise connected the play and its Vancouver audiences to a national project of self-examination. The program acknowledged in small print the “generous assistance of The Centennial Commission” in producing the play. And it reproduced the text of Chief Dan George’s “A Lament for Confederation” on the page facing Ryga’s own program notes. Titling Chief George as “of the Burrard Indian Reserve,” the program claimed him as a national figure of local origin. Meanwhile, Bloomfield’s program notes similarly framed *Ecstasy* as a national story of Vancouver origin.¹²²

The primary field of place-references in the play is a place that the characters all call “the city.” In the opening lines of the play, the Magistrate establishes that the city is a geography fully ordered and “protected” by the laws of the society occupied by

everyone in the performance space. And the laws of society are those of the state (Ryga Ms 2). The Magistrate says “to the audience,”

The quality of the law under which you lived and functioned today is the real quality of the freedom that was yours today. [...] Your home and your well-being was protected. The roads of the city are open to us. So are the galleries, libraries, the administrative and public buildings. There are busses, trains—going out and coming in. Nobody is a prisoner here. (Ms 2)

The nation is condensed and abstracted in *Ecstasy*'s symbolic geography, so that “the city” is a general home to white, mainstream Canadian “society” (cf. also Gygli 314). Throughout the play, the characters linked the performance space to the social world outside the theatre through their references to “the city,” but for the most part they did so without framing this city as a specifically local place.

For the Playhouse audiences, the Magistrate's references to an unnamed city and its “galleries, libraries, [...] public buildings” might well have seemed to point specifically to Vancouver and its civic institutions. Because he spoke to *them* (“you”) personally about their well-being in the city, these audiences might have interpreted his assumption that the city's institutions are well-known to them as a gesture towards the actual institutions that were part of their daily lives. And occasional references throughout the play to other parts of the city would have supported interpreting “the city” as Vancouver, as in Jaimie Paul's description of city sites, for example:

I seen a guy on top of a bridge, talkin' to himself...an' lots of people on the beach watchin' harbour seals...Kids feed popcorn to pigeons... an' I think to myself—boy! Pigeons eat pretty good here! (Ms 4)

In this instance, the Playhouse audiences would likely have found it easy to identify “the city” as *their* city. (The Ottawa audiences would have found it comparatively difficult to do the same!)

But these references to city landmarks did not overtly stage their proximity and local specificity.¹²³ As definite references (“*the* administrative and public buildings,” “*the* beach”) they assumed the audience could identify their referents. But because they employ common nouns rather than proper nouns, which assertively specify unique entities, their indexical force may be weakened by the context of their use: these references could expand and disperse their referential power to take in generic elements of an urban Canadian social space. Given the non-realist, non-referential performance space, the premiere audiences likely interpreted “the city” as primarily nonspecific. The play’s simplified opposition of “the reserve” to “the city” (e.g. Ryga Ms 10, 14) registers its field of reference as especially abstract.¹²⁴ Recalling Appadurai’s “relativity of contexts,” I suggest that *Ecstasy* constructed the reserve as the national neighbourhood’s internal context: an opposing space against which the city defines itself to make its own “intelligibility take shape” (Appadurai 185).¹²⁵ Thus, when it staged the Indian characters as speaking defiantly to the audience, casting them as representatives of the city, it gave the margin radical power to re-define how the centre understood itself.

The Komagata Maru Incident: an absorbing performance space

Like *Ecstasy*, *The Komagata Maru Incident* spotlighted the actors-audience encounter when it was premiered by a short-lived second stage troupe of the Vancouver Playhouse, called the New Company, at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre (VECC) in January,

1976. And the sense of locality the performance sought to produce with its audience tended towards national breadth, like *Ecstasy*'s. But the neighbourhood terrain it imagined was a more compactly proximal one. The VECC theatre site suggested a local community event more than a metropolitan one, and *Incident* more obviously claimed nearby locations as common ground than the earlier play. We might best approximate the compound character of the local population constructed by this play, then, by calling it "Vancouverite-Canadian": a community whose intelligibility as a group is most clearly defined by their participation in the nation, but who nonetheless reliably possess an easy command of Vancouver geography.

Pollock and the New Company/Playhouse staged *Incident* as a "theatrical impression" of a real historical event, as Pollock put it in the production's house program. This event was the racial persecution of the steamer *Komagata Maru*'s 376 Sikh passengers, who, having journeyed from India to Vancouver in May, 1914, were confined to the ship by Canadian officials. Imprisoned for two months in Vancouver's inner harbour and denied contact with their waiting relatives and friends onshore, most of the passengers were finally refused entry to Canada and sent back to India, despite that they held British passports.

As Erica Kelly argues, *Incident* re-staged the events in Vancouver harbour as a "moment of national boundary marking" (257). Most of the written material surrounding the play asserted a national social context.¹²⁶ And some of the important lines of the magican-like master of ceremonies character, named T.S., tended to telescope Vancouver into national space. (T.S. may have been named for "The System" [Grace and Helms 87,

Hoffman “Local” 110].) For example, T.S. constructed the *Komagata Maru*’s arrival in Vancouver harbour as an attempted entrance into Canada:

The Komagata Maru. A Japanese steamer chock-full of brown-skin Hindus headed for a predominantly pale Vancouver, and entry into whitish Canada. The *Komagata Maru* in blue Canadian waters. (102)

It may well be that borders are precisely the sites where specific topographies do matter to the nation. In any case, I would argue that Vancouver harbour’s capacity to be construed as a point of entry into Canada allowed the play to produce a sense of national locality grounded in a Vancouver neighbourhood.

The VECC’s website currently claims that the building “has always been a gathering place” (“Our Story”). In 1976, the theatre’s medium- sized, 325-seat capacity, its open stage and wrap-around balcony, and the relative closeness of all of its seats to the stage meant that when the actors looked at and addressed the audience during performances of *Incident*, everyone in the performance space would have been aware of the event of the play as a social encounter.¹²⁷ It is difficult to say whether this social encounter would have felt precisely like a community gathering of the kind housed by the building, for example, when it was a well-attended church in the 1920s (Arnott 92; “Our Story”). Certainly, compared to the Vancouver Playhouse, the VECC is relatively intimate, non-central, and embedded in a densely populated and ethnically diverse residential neighbourhood.¹²⁸ In 1976, the building’s exterior suggested a modest, wood-frame church on an octagonal plan; even the small steeple remained intact. (The VECC has since received a comprehensive renovation.) While approaching it along residential streets, audience-members may have experienced the event of the play as embedded in

their daily routines in a way that they would not have done, approaching the grander and more urban and commercial space of the Playhouse. But I suspect that the interior design of the VECC offered its audiences something of the removal from daily reality into a specifically theatrical space that Marvin Carlson identifies as a function of theatre architecture (134; cf. also Garner Jr. 96), for the interior reflected its purpose as a Cultural Centre rather than a church or community centre. For some audience-members, its auditorium may have recalled the building's former church function, since its interior had not been renovated beyond the replacement of "church items (pulpit, organ, etc)" with a stage (Legassicke 2). But, to one approving critic at least, the auditorium without those items was nevertheless *theatre*-like enough to recall "a miniature European Opera house" (Max Wyman qtd. in "Our Story").

Approaching the VECC, some of *Incident*'s audience-members may have noticed the North Shore mountains on the skyline or even caught a glimpse of Vancouver's Inner Harbour. They may thus have had in mind their spatial relationship to the harbour referred to in the play when they entered the theatre. But the VECC site itself does not offer much access to harbour views. And upon entering the theatre, audiences were met with a play that emphasized the interiority of its performance space. Stanton B. Garner Jr. has suggested that one reason comparatively little critical attention has been paid to "the functioning of theatre within the urban landscape" is that "theatrical performance tends to suspend, render invisible, the fields (spatial, temporal) of actual location." He continues: "[E]ven in most avant-garde theatre dramatic performance is constituted, to varying degrees, through the suspension of [the very urban context that frames it]" (96). *Incident* used the enclosure of the performance space to compress and intensify the

actors-audience encounter in a way that may have diminished its references' indexical force to the city beyond. Insofar as some of the references did effectively connect the performance space to Vancouver, the play produced a nearby neighbourhood for its audiences. Perhaps, however, the enclosed performance space helped suspend the VECC audience's awareness of the immediate geographical location of the theatre itself, for the neighbourhood construed by the characters' spoken references to Vancouver was centred a few kilometers away, where downtown Vancouver meets Coal Harbour. I wonder as well if the play's tendency to weaken its own indexical force might not have helped it connect the play's social concerns to the wider geography of nation.

At *Incident's* centre-stage was a naturalistically presented brothel drawing room. A brothel is already a necessarily closed-off interior space, and the *mise en scène* emphasized its enclosure. An arc-shaped ramp symbolically kept the characters who occupied centre stage within the brothel even when they spoke of having left it. Above the stage, caged behind a grillework of bars, a character called the Woman represented the *Komagata Maru's* Sikh passengers in confinement on the ship. While the characters' and audience's respective abilities to *look*—through bars, out windows, and into the open playing space of the stage—allowed both parties to see beyond the confines of their respective spaces, *Incident* repeatedly emphasized that they could ultimately look no further than each other. The play confronted the audience with their own gaze returned to them. Thus the audience was kept conscious of their captive presence in the performance space.

Director Larry Lillo (in consultation with Pollock) had the actors remain onstage throughout the play, a staging decision that presented *Incident's* single act as a social

encounter of unvarying and inescapable intensity. And the actors set up an exchange of gazes with the VECC audience meant to make the audience uncomfortably aware of their spectatorship. Foregrounding copresence, the actors' gaze also placed the audience in a position similar to that of the 1914 Vancouverites, who stood onshore to stare out at the racialized spectacle of the *Komagata Maru* at anchor and who gathered in tens of thousands to watch it finally being bullied out of the harbour by a Canadian warship (Kelly 257).¹²⁹ As Grace and Helms have pointed out, the *mise en scène* opened to the audience's eyes the private space of the brothel and the historically distant and enclosed space of the ship, positioning the audience uncomfortably "as voyeurs spying on the brothel and as fairgoers observing the spectacle of one group of people treating another group as if they were caged animals on display" (93).

As if to emphasize the immediacy and enclosure of the performance space, T. S. spoke directly to the audience. Unlike the other characters, who represented historical personages, T.S. presented himself as a theatrical figure existing in the performance space for the moment of the play. He introduced the events of the play to the audience, animated those events for them like a puppet-master, and cajoled them into uncomfortable consciousness of their position as spectators (cf. Grace and Helms 93). He was the only character who could range freely around onstage, displaying his power to start and stop the brothel plot's naturalistic action. T.S. played his scenes, then, in what Sherrill Grace and Gabrielle Helms have called a non-realist "presentational" style (94). When the audience entered the performance space before the play began, he was already there with them, observing them (Pollock 100).

Thus, even while T.S. explicitly addressed the audience as if they were in the historical moment of the actual events in lines like the following, in his master of ceremonies function he claimed his copresence with the audience in the present-day space and time of the theatre and invited the audience to construct imaginatively the events of the play with him.

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Right this way, ladies and gentlemen! First chance to view the *Komagata Maru*! At this very moment steaming towards picturesque Vancouver Harbour [...] carrying [...] Three hundred and seventy-six Asians, to be precise, all of them bound for Oh Canada, We stand on guard for thee! (101)

Lines like these were deictically split. Temporally, they pointed to both the immediate presentational moment of the performance (“this very moment”) and to the historic moment that the play was imaginatively representing: the *Komagata Maru*’s actual arrival. “This is Vancouver, ladies and gentlemen, the 21st day of May, nineteen hundred and fourteen” (101), he offered at one point. And because of that temporal doubling, his references were spatially split as well. They referred to both the actual Inner Harbour and to the immediate space of the performance inside the theatre.

One could argue that the deictic doubling in this play knit together the two moments and hence the two versions of Vancouver space. The ensemble’s stated purpose was to draw together the social worlds embedded in these two chronotopic points: Pollock commented in the house program that “the attitudes expressed by the general populace of that time [1914], and paraphrased throughout my play, *are still around today* and, until we face this fact, we can never change it” (my italics) (cf. also *Grace Making* 152-3, on how *Incident* and Pollock herself were part of concurrent discussions about

racism in contemporary Vancouver). Placing the 1976 audience in the social position of the 1914 harbour crowds achieved this purpose, I believe, but these staging maneuvers also depended for emphasis on the theatre's containing walls. Similarly, because T.S.'s and the other characters' lines asked the audience to participate imaginatively in constructing a historical Vancouver right in the performance space—a Vancouver where “at this very moment” the *Komagata Maru* was afloat in the harbour—these lines did not so forcefully indicate the present-day harbour. The play purposefully denied the audience any view of the grotesque spectacle of the historical ship and its racialized passengers, replacing spacious vistas of “picturesque Vancouver harbour” with the intimate and enclosed space of the theatre.¹³⁰ These elements of the performance did not directly stage the audience's collective local knowledge of the contemporary city.¹³¹

2000: local jokes

MacLeod's script for *2000* has substantial potential to be developed into a play that would root itself firmly in a Vancouver geography, engaging its audiences as specifically, knowingly, local residents. Reading the script, I find it hard not to think that, overall, its rhetorical effects so pointedly engage local community membership that *2000* roots itself here and would wither in performance elsewhere. But it has evidently transplanted successfully. Its apparently successful premiere production in Ottawa was commissioned by that city's Great Canadian Theatre Company. And the script does contain elements that allow that the play *could* be set or staged elsewhere without failing to have some of its potential meanings and effects.

MacLeod's setting notes, for instance, frame the domestic interior setting of the play in terms that abstract it from local referentiality, making of it a symbolic space where wilderness meets civilization. These notes, which were excerpted in the Vancouver Playhouse's house program for the 1997 production, set the play

in *a* suburb of Vancouver built up against the mountains. This house is very much on the edge of *a* forest that is barely kept out. And in a similar sense this house is very much on the edge of *a* city... (my italics)

These indefinite articles frame the setting as not yet known. Likewise, the play's millennial title indicates an international temporal moment; several commentators, previewing or reviewing one of the play's first three productions in Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver, framed the play for their readers precisely as engaging that widely-shared millennium moment (Kennedy C2, Wagner D4, Armstrong B1). A production that aimed to develop the play as a local social event would frame it differently, suggesting that the play is set at a particular millennial edge between wilderness and civilization, one unique to North Vancouver and uniquely known to a local audience, and that the play purposes to engage that audience as locals.

2000's potential, from my perspective, lies in its far more extensive use of Vancouver references than either *Ecstasy*'s or *Incident*'s. As in all three of the other plays, in *2000* the local references are phrased familiarly, rather than introduced—and, since they are spoken in this manner to the audience, they stage an assumption that the audience is just as familiar as the characters with the Vancouver landmarks being named. In an extended monologue that opens the play, a character named Wyn describes a cougar running over the Second Narrows bridge from the North Shore into Vancouver proper:

He runs over the swell of the bridge, doesn't bother looking west toward the city made headless by fog. He has no knowledge of how the first bridge collapsed, knows only that this one is solid and enough. He is aware of whirlpools beneath him and that the train bridge to the east is shuddering with freight. He runs past the grain elevators, past a Korean freighter that is lit and trembling beside the dock. Our cougar crosses McGill Street, miraculously, with the pedestrian signal. [...] He bounds through the empty parking lots of the PNE, past the twin poles of the loggers exhibit, the platform that will soon become Teen Town, the Agrodome and on to his destiny, the Pacific Coliseum. (MacLeod 13)

Here, Wyn assumes community membership by using proper nouns for a number of landmarks along the cougar's path, and she presupposes her audience's knowledge (though not the cougar's) of a "first bridge" that collapsed before the Second Narrows was built. The other characters in *2000* speak about the city frequently, in similar detail, and with equally casual familiarity.

The Playhouse Theatre Company ensemble performing *2000* in Vancouver had a less political motivation for compelling their audiences to recognize their locality than had either *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* or *The Komagata Maru Incident*, but their production did assume local community membership with its audience. And, to a degree, they developed the play's potential, by presenting it as ostensibly staging a local social event: a funny and moving collective examination of a particular Vancouver brand of millennial angst. But nonetheless an archival videotape of one evening's performance shows that the production did not emphasize the locality of its storytelling as much as it emphasized the emotional dynamics of the characters' relationships to each other.¹³² The characters

were Wyn and Sean, a childless couple of urban planners; Nanny, Wyn's kooky 97-year old grandmother; Janine, their stirring young boarder from Nanaimo; and the "Man," their strange, homeless neighbour.

The balance of emphases depended on the extent to which the ensemble opted to perform the majority of the local references with presentational ostension or not. As a script, MacLeod's *2000* is a relatively naturalistic domestic comedy/drama. And under the direction of Patrick McDonald, the Playhouse Theatre Company actors played the majority of their scenes "representational[ly]" (as in Grace and Helms 94), acknowledging the audience only indirectly, and acting as if the characters believed they were going about their daily lives in their home on the North Shore. Local details were subsumed into a generalized domestic realism. The characters' references to nearby landmarks seem to have been intended primarily to make their lives appear recognizably quotidian.¹³³ For example, when Janine was coaxing Nanny to take a day-trip with her, she said, "Why don't you and I take the Sea Bus and then the bus-bus and have an afternoon in Stanley Park?" (MacLeod 83). The practicality and casualness of Janine's line grounded her character in a middle-class North Vancouver life, where people talk through their transit options and are easily familiar with the identity and routes of the local buses. According to the theatre pragmatics of this scene's language, Janine addresses herself to Nanny but offers her line equally to the audience, who stand by as acknowledged side-participants; thus the style of her reference to "the Sea Bus" indicates an assumption of joint common ground and potentially might be spoken to highlight this flagging of ground shared with the audience. But the scene played instead as primarily a touchingly emotional interaction between Janine and Nanny; Leslie Jones, who played

Janine, delivered the line as a throw-away, staging it as simply mimetic of domestic patterns of speech, as Janine tried to console and distract Nanny. Thus the especially naturalistic dynamics onstage did not foreground the play's local niche. (In MacLeod's own opinion the play's central dynamics did not depend on audiences' local knowledge; these moments of domestic drama frame a sort of "truth" likely to resonate for audiences across the country, allowing *2000* to "cross regional lines," according to MacLeod [qtd. in Johnson 41].)¹³⁴

But at certain moments in the performance, the Playhouse audiences must have been made especially aware that the actors were playing the characters for them. These moments had the most potential to stage locality. Wyn's cougar monologue is an important example. The archival videotape suggests that Hogan and the audience performed the cougar scene as spoken between them, in one of *2000*'s most "presentational" moments. As Derksen points out, monologues are moments where characters "develop a direct, often intimate relationship with the audience" (2). Hogan faced the audience and spoke animatedly. She paced Wyn's monologue to allow for—even orchestrate—audience engagement, speeding through certain segments to build momentum and pausing skillfully for moments of emotion. The audience laughed warmly with Wyn at numerous points, and she waited with them for their laughter to subside.¹³⁵ Like T.S.'s direct address to the audience in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, Wyn's monologue used the theatre at its fullest capacity as a technology of interactivity to connect with the audience. Wyn's monologue had even greater power to produce locality, because it came closer to recognizing the audience's actual location relative to the landmarks it named. When T.S. claimed that 1914 Vancouver existed right inside the

performance space, his lines lost some of their referential purchase: they threatened to make the theatre auditorium itself the limit of common ground. Wyn's lines pointed outside the shared space of the theatre auditorium to the landscape beyond, connecting the two spaces rather than replacing one with the other.

A number of the play's jokes, as well, pointed to the geography outside the theatre in a way that generated a North Shore neighbourhood mutually shared by audience and ensemble. Janine in particular was characterized and made humorous for the audience by calling up the audience's (and the characters') associations with Nanaimo, Janine's hometown. The place-name "Nanaimo" stood as shorthand for Janine's brassy toughness and for her closer, less glassed-in relationship to West Coast forests, beaches and wildlife than Wyn and Sean's. The ensemble assumed that "Nanaimo" would call up for their Vancouver audience what they left unspoken: a relatively complete social context for Janine that could knit together her sexy clothing, appreciation of beach-cooked bannock and raw oysters (MacLeod 61), and suspicion of urbane tastes (52). They also assumed that their Vancouver audience would have just enough distance from Nanaimo to accept a caricature (albeit a nuanced one) of an "Island girl." Janine was an outsider to the North Shore neighbourhood being produced in the performance space. When Nanny wanted to talk with her about Nature Boy, a Mount Seymour hermit whom Nanny and Wyn both remembered from their younger lives in North Vancouver (MacLeod 20), Janine had to remind Nanny that she was "not from around here" (26). The ensemble assumed that Nanaimo was close enough to Vancouver audiences for them to reliably know *about* it with the generalizing, lofty assurance of in-jokers. But it was far enough from the North Shore for Janine and the other characters to lack certain common ground.

Establishing local community membership with these jokes, then, enabled setting and characterization—and it must have been part of the play’s rhetorical effect: *here we are together*, the ensemble was suggesting to the audience, *laughing at and feeling anxious about our own local millennial moment*. In-jokes are pointedly engaged with the local: they depend for their snappy efficiency and their pleasurable inclusiveness (or their unpleasant exclusivity) on unspoken, already-known background information. If an audience were too unfamiliar with Nanaimo to “get” the jokes about Janine’s hometown, the lines referring to that hometown would lose their in-joke dimension and their richness. Wyn’s amused, mocking comment to Sean, “Island Girl. Janine of Nanaimo. She’s a purebred, that’s for sure” (MacLeod 40), or Janine’s declaration, “And I’m not from the retire-and-play-golf Nanaimo. I am from pure and old Nanaimo” (31), would be only as full of information and associations as the words themselves and the actors’ performances would supply. In these lines, the words themselves are relatively information-poor: Janine is “pure” Nanaimo, but what does that mean? The Playhouse audience of the videotaped performance laughed knowingly when Janine said of Nanaimo that, “granted, [it] does have its fair share of problems” (MacLeod 25). Leaving background information unspoken (or “tacit” as in Giltrow 216), as Janine does here, signals assumed mutual understanding (Sperber and Wilson 218). Since an unknowing audience does not already have enough background information about Nanaimo to form much of a context for the uninformative Nanaimo references, lines about the city’s purity or problems would not trigger for them an immediate landslide of comic inferences. And an unknowing audience would be conscious of not sharing background knowledge. According to MacLeod, the play had a special chemistry with audiences at the Playhouse

production. “It was fun bringing the play home to a Vancouver audience, because it’s such a Vancouver play. They get the Nanaimo jokes,” she commented to the *Globe and Mail*’s Chris Dafoe (C1).

Perhaps one of the Playhouse ensemble’s most elegant moves towards framing *2000* as being performed specifically for local audiences was in an advertising brochure for its 1996-’97 season. The blurb about *2000* called it a “contemporary fable of Vancouver life”:

Local playwright Joan MacLeod takes us to the North Shore at the dawn of the new millennium where the myth and mystery of the mountains force an ordinary Vancouver family to question the quality of their urban existence.

This blurb manages very adeptly to construct the rhetorical situation of the play as a local social event, because it registers the distance between the position of audiences at the Playhouse’s downtown Vancouver location and the North Shore setting of the play. According to the blurb, the play will allow a knowing local playwright to take “us” to the mountainous edge of the city. The Playhouse’s self-presentation as the city’s flagship theatre and its relatively expensive ticket prices likely meant that the “we” in question (that is, those who would assemble in the theatre) did not themselves represent the “ordinary Vancouver family.” But the blurb uses “ordinary” to set up an effective contrast between central Vancouver as a site of everyday urban reality and the North Shore mountains, which it treats as inherently mysterious and mythic. The mountains will force the Vancouver audience to ask questions of themselves, the blurb suggests. In other words, the play’s story is necessarily set on the North Shore and necessarily speaks to an audience of Vancouverites gathered downtown.

I have been tracking shifts between a naturalistic representational style and a more theatrical, presentational address to the audience in this play because these have seemed, respectively, to have placed less and more emphasis on mutual recognition in the performance space. As the advertising brochure blurb hints, the Playhouse production shifted away from realism in another respect as well. Indeed, in *two* other respects: some of the printed paratextual material surrounding the play and the scenography both tended away from mimetic realism in their framing of the play's setting. The paratextual material, especially the house program and newspaper articles about the play, sustained the possibility that a non-realist representation of the North Shore setting could evoke audience recognition. However the set design seems to have operated almost independently of the rest of the play, and it does not fit with my alignment of theatricality and emphatic locality.

The house program opened with a message from the Playhouse's Artistic Director, Susan Cox, who wrote that "the strange longings and the chronic uneasiness" expressed by the play are indigenous to Vancouver and its natural setting. These feelings seem "ever-present in this extraordinary environment," she wrote. The play's setting in an elegant home poised on the very edge between forested Mount Seymour wilderness and the rapidly developing city of Vancouver was intended to register both an everyday realism and a symbolic liminality (Wasserman "Joan" 99). Along with MacLeod's setting notes, which I cited earlier, the rest of the Playhouse's house program also framed the play as combining realism with symbolism. Patrick McDonald remarked in his director's notes, for instance, that MacLeod's script is "poetic, whimsical and startlingly real at the same time." And Vancouver reviewers of the production noted both registers:

remarking that *2000* was “billed as a modern Vancouver fable,” the *Province*’s Renee Doruyter nevertheless described it as a “slice-of-life reflection of who, what and where we are at the edge of the wilderness on the eve of the millennium” (B8). “North Vancouver is the perfect setting for this clash of urban and rural,” wrote Tim Carlson (E11).

Designer Ken MacDonald’s set clearly staged the play’s symbolic register. The *mise en scène* represented the interior of Wyn and Sean’s home. While MacDonald supplied elements of a realist household set, the designer also employed a visual symbolism to figure the wilderness as penetrating Wyn and Sean’s home. MacDonald made the upstage wall of the house transparent and indefinite, exaggerating the effect of the glass walls characteristic of West Coast modernist architectural styles, which seek to open houses out into their natural surroundings. At that edge of the playing space, smooth columns reached from floor to ceiling, suggesting both structural elements of the house and tree trunks outside of it. Amongst them, two pillared, conical shapes strongly suggested evergreen trees, but they were such static and abstracted forms that they appeared at the same time somehow integrated into the house’s structure. A square frame hovered in front of one of them, suggesting a window in the invisible wall and thus seeming to put the tree outside, in its natural place, so to speak. But it framed the tree-shape so neatly as also to seem to invite it into the house as an artwork. In MacDonald’s words, “When defined by a red picture frame [the tree] signaled an interior and when surrounded by large sono-tube trees [it] became part of the forest” (qtd. in Rewa 208). Similarly, a pair of large rocks sitting upstage centre might have been either outside or inside of the house. At one point, without apparently having gone outside, Nanny sat

down on those rocks for a rest, preferring them to the couch, and Janine leapt up onto the rocks when seeking a defensible position during the Man's attack. But Wyn and Sean never acknowledged the rocks as furniture. Both Reid Gilbert (70) and Natalie Rewa (210) have argued that MacDonald's set design offered interpretations that supplemented and extended MacLeod's scripted narrative. In this case, the rocks emphasized the scripted distinction between Wyn and Sean, the sterile, urbane couple, and Nanny and Janine, who were supposedly closer to nature, in their respective aged wisdom and earthy unpretentiousness.

The performance space that the *2000* ensemble and their audiences collaboratively imagined in the Playhouse theatre was less overtly interactive than those of *Ecstasy* or *Incident*. However, the set presented a kind of counterpoint to the actors' realist play. According to the actors' speech and gestures, the performance space was fully focused on Wyn and Sean's household: while the actors acknowledged the audience's audible responses in the timing of their lines, they otherwise usually ignored the audience's presence. Meanwhile, however, the darkened space of the Playhouse's sizeable auditorium added to the visual effect of the household's elegant spaciousness. And the non-realist abstraction and visual symbolism of MacDonald's set design contrasted with the actors' naturalism and established an interactive dimension for the play. The set invited the audience to interpret the onstage space for themselves, to decide where household ended and forest began—or, put another way, to decide whether to take the upstage forms as natural rocks and trees or as always representing artificial design (cf. Gilbert 70) in their abstraction and minimalism.¹³⁶

Indeed, the set left open to their interpretation the question of whether Wyn and Sean's household, as staged, offered the audience an imaginative window on a North Shore wilderness where cougars roam—or whether it offered the audience instead a gorgeous and expensive image of nature as artwork. The *mise en scène* positioned Wyn and Sean's household between the audience and the upstage edge of the trees. Looking out their window, the characters apparently saw a back yard—complete with birdfeeder and compost heap—edging on Mount Seymour forest (MacLeod 37, 19). By contrast, looking through the frame offered by Wyn and Sean's furniture and the invisible rear wall of their house, the audience saw a sequence of tree-like shapes and a beautiful, abstracted backdrop of pillowy cloud- or tree-frond-like shapes strongly reminiscent in style of a Lawren Harris painting. Gilbert indicates (70 n. 2) that the Playhouse's house program included an inserted page on which MacDonald noted his allusion to Harris; whether guided by this authority or their own familiarity with the Group of Seven painter's famous style, the play's reviewers recognized Harris as an artistic intertext (e.g. Tim Carlson E18). If the play was indeed offering to usher ordinary Vancouverites towards an edge-line in their daily experience, to “take us” to a liminal space that would force us to question our urban existence (Playhouse brochure), MacDonald's set design offered a counterpoint to the naturalistic characterization of this edge-line as “the North Shore at the dawn of the new millennium.” The set seemed instead to usher its audiences to look past the domestic tension and existential anxiousness of the characters' lives towards a beautiful modernist artistry, as if, perhaps, even the human drama could not blot out the beauty of the elegant North Shore home.

Thus, the visual semiotics of MacDonald's set design only equivocally claimed the Playhouse audience's West Coast community membership. For some audience-members the *mise en scène* might have seemed to assume their recognition of specifically local artistic and architectural references.¹³⁷ For others, its gorgeousness, its abstraction, and its visual echoes of a Group of Seven style might have seemed to engage them not as local residents but as Canadian or more broadly modern citizens.

Despite my sense that the Playhouse production of *2000* did not capitalize as fully as it might have on the script's potential, it clearly had the effect of neighbourhood-production for at least some audience members. In a talk-back session after the videotaped Playhouse performance, the first person to ask a question indicated that he knew the play had been produced elsewhere, including Toronto. He went on to say,

I was just wondering if you had to change any of the text [for those performances], because the geography may not mean that much to people in Toronto; they may not get the allusions; they may not understand.

Leslie Jones, who had also played Janine in the premiere production for Ottawa's Great Canadian Theatre Company in 1996, remarked that they did not change any of the script's references to Vancouver geography, "but people still got the idea." Another actor joked that "the references to Nanaimo" and other local places might not have been received precisely the same way by audiences in Toronto, "as you can imagine." At this comment, the talk-back session audience laughed heartily. And several minutes after the first question's discussion subsided, another audience-member asked how the play had been received in Toronto. Apparently, this self-identifiedly local audience recognized *2000* as overtly engaging their local community membership, and the experience was

sharpened by their sense that Torontonians would not get the play. As I explain elsewhere (Banting “Social”), audiences’ awareness of other, less local audiences make them especially aware of their privileged position as addressees.

The Unnatural and Accidental Women: urgent local investment

Unnatural premiered at the Firehall Arts Centre in November, 2000, under the co-direction of Clements and the Firehall’s artistic director, Donna Spencer. *Unnatural* treated a particular sense of locality as already established in a proximal neighbourhood immediately surrounding the theatre, and the play addressed itself selectively to an audience that was already acceptably spatially oriented and politically invested. That is, the play’s primary addressees were those among its audience with neighbourhood knowledge and investment already intact. (Any audience-members without this expected background were positioned as side-participants—that is, as people in attendance, they were still deliberately offered the play’s address—but the play’s attitude toward their responsive understanding seems to have been a benign indifference, an attitude which Clark and Schaeffer would understand as only being suitable for bystanders in ordinary conversations.) Ostensively addressing a neighbourhood audience, the play contributed to an ongoing history of community development by artists, activists, educators and politicians who have worked to produce the Downtown Eastside *as* a neighbourhood.¹³⁸ But *Unnatural*’s social orientation combined a feminist concern for women’s security and happiness with anti-racist indigenous community values, selecting a particular angle of interest among the multiple dimensions of that wider project. Thus, while the play drew on an ongoing project of locality it also refined and re-organized that work; the play’s

treatment of a certain locality as already established functioned creatively, inducting the audience into a new social role, as much as it functioned to reinforce an actually existing role.

This production offers an appropriate culminating point for this chapter's sequence, because it drew on all available resources to connect the performance space it constructed to the area of the city outside the theatre. Whereas the other three plays were set at some remove from the specific landmarks referred to in the performance space, *Unnatural* capitalized on the Firehall's location in the immediate vicinity of its focal landmarks. *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* recreated a version of certain real events in its performance space, re-envisioning the deaths and imagining the afterlives of ten women who had died, in the company of a predatory man, in hotel rooms around the Downtown Eastside. The Firehall Arts Centre is located immediately around the block from several of these hotels. In her "Producer's Note," on the second page of the house program, Donna Spencer emphasized the Firehall's location "in the [very] neighbourhood in which [the play] is set." And audiences did not miss the connection: in a newspaper article published the day *Unnatural* opened, reporter Kathleen Oliver claimed:

When audiences take their seats at the Firehall [...], they can abandon the comfortable illusion that theatre takes place at a distant remove from reality. In fact, they will be sitting steps away from the scene of the horrific events that inspired Clements's script. (Oliver 61)

Oliver's image of "sitting steps away from the scene" clearly imagines the performance space inside the Firehall as physically continuous with the neighbourhood outside.

The ensemble emphasized this continuity of spaces by displaying a series of 1988 *Vancouver Sun* articles prominently in the Firehall lobby. The newspaper pages reminded audiences of the real events that had inspired Clements to write *Unnatural*.¹³⁹ While Marvin Carlson argues that the lobby spaces of theatres are “intermediate spaces” where audiences shed the associations and preoccupations of their daily reality as they pass into the performance space (133), audience-members’ bodies are still situated in continuous physical relation to the everyday spaces outside, and the same associations and preoccupations continue to be available to them inside as outside. Some theatre-going experiences attenuate the continuity between performance space and everyday world in order to play up the theatricality of the social event for its own sake or to offer their audiences a transporting fiction. *Unnatural* foregrounded that continuity instead. In Sperber and Wilson’s terms, this production made the context of the outside world “manifest” inside the theatre—that is, readily perceived or recalled to mind. Not only did the newspapers refer to the city outside the Firehall’s doors, but precisely as the pages of a widely-circulated local daily newspaper they overtly brought everyday local discourse and citizenly routines into the theatre. I have shown elsewhere that *Unnatural* subtly complicated and rendered uncertain the precise correlation between both its women characters and its staged citations of newspaper text and their respective real-life analogues (Banting “Being” 81). But despite this indirectness, the lobby newspapers reminded audiences of the world outside the theatre, claiming a relationship between that exterior world and the spaces imagined inside the performance space.

The earlier three plays invited their audiences to produce with them spaces that had no evidently precise analogue outside the theatre: an abstracted montage of real and

remembered spaces in *Ecstasy*, a brothel embedded in a theatrical space in *Incident*, and a domestic interior in *2000*. Audiences' copresence in those performance spaces offered them the experience of collectively participating in imagined creation of a new national and/or local space—but one that in some respects would remain contained by the theatre, since it had no concrete counterpart elsewhere. By contrast, *Unnatural* represented versions of East Hastings Street and the very Eastside hotels where the real women had died in its performance space. Asserting the spatial continuity of theatre and neighbourhood and, at the same time, reproducing the neighbourhood in the performance space, the play multiply reinforced its own capacity to organize local space and effect common ground.

The play's manner of staging indicates that *Unnatural* assumed its audience arrived with intact knowledge of East Hastings and the hotels—perhaps even with a daily acquaintance with them as landmarks.¹⁴⁰ The ensemble projected a sequence of the Eastside hotels' names onto onstage screens while the actors played a sequence of hotel-room scenes. These title slides paired poetic scene titles with hotel names:

FALLING BACK – Beacon Hotel

ROOM 23, WHEN YOU'RE 33 – Clifton Hotel

FOUR DAYS, DAY 1 – Glenaird Hotel

Thus staged for the audience, these place-names labeled the different hotel-room spaces represented onstage and helped distinguish them from one another as the onstage action cycled through the different scenes. The labels constructed a space that existed only inside the theatre. But, significantly, they also indicated the real hotels in the neighbourhood surrounding the theatre. For the play's primary intended audience, local

audience-members who did recognize these hotels, the projected names must have taken on the rhetorical significance of a chilling reminder and call to witness: *these deaths happened just “steps away”; they are our local inheritance.*

In representing specific Vancouver sites on its stage, *Unnatural* re-imagined the represented sites, creatively re-presenting them. It thereby framed new versions of those sites, staging the new versions as spaces that everyone assembled in the performance space shared anew on the basis of their copresence together there and their collective work imaginatively creating those versions. Thus, while it drew upon what it assumed to be its audience’s local community membership, it gradually created with its audience an experience of copresence together in creative, theatrical versions of local places. While familiar references to distal Vancouver locations assume local community membership, no one could ever be quite sure how many individual members of a given audience do recognize the landmarks referred to. But, by the end of a play, the ensemble and the audience alike can be reasonably certain that everyone present has now experienced together the scenes represented in the performance space. Combining theatrically mediated copresence in local spaces with membership in a located community, the play made the audiences’ sense of sharing local common ground especially vivid and evident.

In staging its assumption that the Downtown Eastside setting was familiar to its audience, the play aimed to honour and engage a sympathetic and invested neighbourhood-based community. A model of the kind of investment in the Downtown Eastside that I write about here is Rebecca, the central character. Although she now lives in Kitsilano, Rebecca goes to Hastings Street and the Eastside bars to think and drink “in quiet without some suit coming up and trying to dazzle [her]” (Clements *Unnatural* 509),

and to search there for her long-lost mother. She knows the neighbourhood's social history (478-80), recognizes the pain and degradation of its trade in alcohol and sex work (495), and recalls her own connections to the place. She recounts for herself and the play's listening audience her memories of growing up there, dancing happily in "Pigeon Square" as a young girl (484) and longing to be given new shoes from the Army and Navy instead of castoffs from the Salvation Army (482). Despite staging Rebecca's investment in the neighbourhood as stemming from her childhood there, *Unnatural* implied that its audiences need not have lived in the neighbourhood to be personally invested in its community. As Rebecca teaches the policeman named Ron, investment means recognizing one's vulnerability to the same accidents that isolate and depress those who drink in the Downtown Eastside. These accidents, she explains, do not just happen to distant others—those who are "Indian" or "mentally ill or brown or addicted to one thing or another"—but to people, "period" (510). Similarly, the play allows that even white audience-members might sympathetically invest in the struggles of its mostly indigenous characters, despite that it defines "white people" as those capable of looking blindly at Native people as if they are not worthy of being seen: "White is a blindness—it has nothing to do with the colour of your skin," declares Aunt Shadie (505).

By addressing audiences who were already invested in the Downtown Eastside primarily, rather than introducing outsiders to the neighbourhood and its various concerns, *Unnatural* staged itself as a community event: an event intended to bring together people for whom the neighbourhood is a common ground. And it treated the shared physical ground of streets and landmark buildings as inextricably part of a particular shared social history. Participating in this experience of locality involved

taking part in a supportive and accepting local community, responding warmly to feminist and indigenous perspectives, and witnessing the neighbourhood's painful histories of wider social neglect, poverty, addiction, racism, misogyny, and murder of women. *Unnatural* encouraged the community to a collective strength of historical recollection and present purpose. It was inextricably about convening a local community.

And it built itself upon an *exclusively* local investment. Clements reacted to a lack of just such sympathetic identification with the lives of aboriginal women residents of the Downtown Eastside when she wrote the play—a lack that she and others perceived in the police and civic authorities, who ought to have investigated the women's serial deaths long before they did, and in the *Vancouver Sun's* sensationalist reporting of their deaths, which tended to reduce the women to grim lists of vital statistics and fixate on the life of the barber who killed them (Clements "In the End" 329).

Clements later wrote skeptically about the Firehall audiences, assuming that they came to the play with less sensitively aligned perspectives than I am describing.

I'm sure the audiences came in for a good old-fashioned Native woman victim story and came out a little afraid, not because the women were frightful but because the Native women were just women, just like you and me, and had had 'enough' [...] (Clements "In the End" 330)

Here Clements imagines audiences eager to consume the sensational pathos of a certain kind of "Native woman victim story." The poster and newspaper advertisements for *Unnatural* may have offered some attraction to such appetites, for they featured a reclining—or collapsed—woman smiling knowingly and perhaps somewhat drunkenly at the camera. The ads were framed with excerpts from an official B.C. Coroner's Service

form and stamped with the words “APPARENT CAUSE OF DEATH,” which lent them a true-crime feel. But it seems to me, as to Clements, that such audience-members would have been confronted with a play that expected a more sympathetic and partisan investment, once they entered the Firehall’s performance space.

As staged at the Firehall, Clements’s play appeared to suggest what her later reflection does not: that she and the rest of the *Unnatural* ensemble trusted their audiences to come to the play with informed local perspectives and sympathetic investment already intact. The play’s many subtle, punning jokes assumed that its audiences would appreciate a Native perspective and sense of humour, for instance: that they would laugh with the Native characters as they punned off of Rose’s royalist, Anglo-Canadian, earnest prudery (e.g. Clements *Unnatural* 481, 491), for example. Indeed, the ensemble did not acknowledge any other receptive attitude. (Considering the strength of the play’s overt feminism and anti-racist commitments, I would argue that the ensemble’s attitude to any side-participants among the audience who did not share those commitments was less benign than its attitude towards anyone who did not come equipped with the necessary local knowledge: any such audience-members might have felt themselves to be so indifferently treated—or even unwelcome—as to be bystanders indeed.)

Likely a good number of the actual audience-members in attendance at the Firehall Arts Centre did come equipped with the expected knowledge and investments. Archival materials at the Firehall Arts Centre indicate that the producing ensemble planned to “bring Downtown Eastside women into the world of theatre, many for the first time, to see their stories reflected onstage in a dignified and respectful manner.” Making

a special effort to invite women from the neighbourhood to attend *Unnatural* was consistent with the Firehall's commitment to outreach programs. The venue regularly provide[s] opportunities for low income residents to attend performances through our pay-what-u-can and free ticket program while allowing social service organizations to access free or minimally priced tickets for their clients. (Spencer "Support Us")

The Firehall's strong mandate and deserved reputation in the early 2000s for consistently programming shows reflective of the interests of its own ethnically and culturally diverse neighbourhood likely means that it tended to draw audiences with sympathetic perspectives.¹⁴¹ And the house program for *Unnatural* staged Spencer's expectation that the audiences would indeed be locally invested. In her program note, Spencer refers to "those whose lives were used as a source" for the play as "*our* lost women" (my emphasis). The program advises its audience that

Some of the content of this performance is disturbing and may be personally involving. Should you wish to discuss your experience this evening, following the performance please contact the House Manager in the Lobby to be connected with on-site support or a number to call for counseling services.

Many audience-members evidently did feel that the play was relevant to them personally: "Audience members phoned, mailed, and faxed the playwright, the administration, and the acting and technical crews; talk-back sessions were instituted; and the comment book placed in the company's lounge was well used" (Ratsoy 476).

The pragmatic dimensions of *mediated* common ground are potentially rich and multiple, but they are also dependent on the individual audience-member's reception. The semiotic links between the play's onstage versions of Vancouver sites and the sites themselves are of two kinds identified by Charles S. Peirce (as summarized in *Theatre as Sign-System* by Aston and Savona [6]): *index* and *icon*. And the apparent strength and obviousness of these links depend on the individual, perceiving audience-member's awareness of the real sites.

Phrased as proper nouns, place-names asked to be recognized as doubly indexical signs. (In Peirce's terms, an indexical sign points to its object.) But only if audience-members recognize them as pointing both to the onstage scene and a location outside the theatre will these place-names be received as "doubly deictic" (Herman 342): that is, as anchored in two contexts at once—the imagined geography of the performance space and the remembered urban geography outside the theatre. The hotel names projected onto onstage screens in *Unnatural* are one example. For those among the Vancouver audience of *Unnatural* who did not have prior knowledge of the real places being represented onstage, these references' intended doubleness would still have been evident, since the house program emphasized the play's setting in real places. But for these unknowing audiences, who inferred, for instance, that there is a real "Balmoral Hotel" somewhere outside the theatre walls, without knowing how near or far away it might be and without having any personal experience or prior associations with it, the place-name indicated the offstage hotel less forcefully.

Iconic signs were also doubly deictic in *Unnatural*, for those audience-members who recognized their originals. (In Peirce's terms, again, an icon is a "sign linked by

similarity to its object” [Aston and Savona 6]; a photograph is an example of an iconic sign.) Imagery was projected onto a backdrop screen and otherwise transparent scrims, which interposed between the characters and the audience. Clements’s script calls for shifting images to backdrop, surround, and sometimes partially obscure the characters at different points in her published script, as the following passages of stage directions demonstrate:

Throughout [this scene] – a blizzard of sawdust chips swarms the backdrop, covering AUNT SHADIE and tree parts. One by one, the trees have been carved into a row of hotels.

And, shortly afterwards:

The woodchip blizzard clears, and crudely made stumps that look like bar stools remain behind her and deepen the look of the bar – The Empress Hotel. AUNT SHADIE walks across the bar but is also covered by it, in it.

(Clements *Unnatural* 479)

The Empress Hotel is on Hastings near Main, around the block from the Firehall Arts Centre. Like the nearby Balmoral, which also featured in *Unnatural*’s series of hotels, the Empress, with its own distinctive neon sign, is a neighbourhood landmark. Donna Spencer tells me that the Firehall production projected photographic and video images of the actual Downtown Eastside hotels the characters were meant to be living and dying in—including, presumably, the Empress (personal communication). The projected images in the play often accompanied and complemented the projected words of scene titles. Thus, for example, the character named Verna’s scenes were backdropped by a slide saying, “THE WRONG ROOM – Balmoral Hotel,” and, presumably, by an image

of the actual Balmoral as well, and the title slide “KEEP ON WALKING – Hastings Street” was paired with photographic or video imagery shot on Hastings. For those audience-members who did indeed recognize them, these projected photographs must have unmistakably indicated the neighbourhood landmarks outside of the theatre. (Even those audience-members who were unfamiliar with the sight of the hotels would likely have seen the photographs as claiming to indicate existing buildings; framing information offered by the house program, the play’s advertisements, and other aspects of staging would have assured them that these buildings were part of the surrounding neighbourhood.) Meanwhile, the onstage projections also brought these hotel names and photographic images into the theatre.

Thus the projected iconography in *Unnatural* pointed both to the neighbourhood outside, with which the play assumed its audiences had a prior relationship, and to the performance space being imaginatively created by the ensemble and the audience during the theatrical event. The photographs’ double-indexicality allowed the ensemble to construct new experiences of the hotel landmarks, to be shared with the audience in the performance space. The play staged the Hastings Street streetscape and the hotels as a newly mediated common ground: a collaboratively imagined geography where women’s lives and deaths were now newly visible and shared, although once they had been isolated and concealed behind hotel walls. In this performance space, the women characters moved through a shifting montage of projected images, so that they came very visibly to inhabit the pictured hotels and bars. According to Clements’s stage directions, for example, when Aunt Shadie walked across the Empress Hotel bar, onstage, she was “also covered by it, in it.” And when Rebecca walked along Hastings, the projection screens

showed a “*Backdrop of Hastings Street [with] Signs in windows advertising for help [and] AUNT SHADIE’s face appear[ing] in the images*” (Clements *Unnatural* 492). The characters were visually integrated into the play’s images of the Downtown Eastside. And they enacted scenes from their lives before and after death. The first act, in particular, showed the characters alone in their hotel rooms, privately dreaming of their lovers, friends, and children while they struggled with alcoholism and loneliness. By staging the women’s private lives and lonely deaths, these scenes offered the audience a chance to imagine (indeed, to see enacted) what had formerly been invisible to public perception: the interiors of the hotel rooms and their inhabitants’ imaginative worlds.

The Unnatural and Accidental Women thus drew upon its invested neighbourhood audiences’ prior local knowledge and invited them to imagine a new version of their existing common ground. It offered its community the collective imaginative resources of theatre and, as I put it earlier, the play mediated for its audiences an experience of immediate copresence together in a re-imagined version of the Downtown Eastside. As a community event, the play allowed audience and ensemble to react emotionally together to historical events that were relevant to them because of the events’ very proximal locality and to then to imagine versions of their present lives together in which conditions improve in their shared neighbourhood. Grief and frustration were given vent, women’s bodies and identities were re-inscribed onto the city, and the murdering forces of misogyny and racism were vanquished, onstage, when the spirits of dead women helped Rebecca finally kill the predatory barber (Clements *Unnatural* 519-20). (Meanwhile, as a *Vancouver Sun* interview with Gilbert Paul Jordan made clear shortly after *Unnatural* opened at the Firehall, the actual killer was still alive and newly out of jail [Beatty A1].)

How exactly the newly imagined Downtown Eastside common grounds mediated by the play were supposed to relate to the grounds outside the Firehall Arts Centre remained up to the individual audience-members to decide. Even icons may fail to signal the connection between an image and its object, depending on their audiences' background knowledge and the manner in which they are handled. A later film adaptation of Clements's play, titled *Unnatural and Accidental* (Dir. Carl Bessai, 2006), was shot on location in the Downtown Eastside. While recognizable landmarks—the Cecil Hotel on Granville Street, the Astoria Hotel on East Hastings—do appear in the film, they are generally not positioned at the centre of the frame and they are not often the objects of sustained focus. (Clements is credited with the screenplay for the film.) Characters do walk down Hastings Street, but a shallow depth of field ensures that the street is not represented in such a way as to make its specificity *as Vancouver's Hastings Street* the point of the shot. The film does not often overtly invite recognition or overtly engage a local audience who might share Hastings Street with the filmmakers as a common ground. In other words, it uses its iconography quite differently than Clements's play, where I imagine the photographic imagery overtly staged community engagement. Confronted with the paired images and names of the Downtown Eastside hotels, even audience-members who had no prior experience of those landmarks would leave the theatre having been invited to share them with the ensemble and the other audience members as a mediated common ground. The manner of staging icons affects how audiences take up these representations.

Staged elsewhere, the specifically *local* potency of *Unnatural's* call to witness would diminish. Native Earth Performing Arts, the company which produced this play in

Toronto in 2004, did project the specific Downtown Eastside hotel-names as scene titles, as called for in Clements's script, and they presumably kept the scripted local references intact in the characters' speech. But audience-members attending Native Earth's Toronto performance would be less likely to recognize the real landmarks referred to, and the actual hotels indicated by the scene titles would be so very distal to the performance space as to weaken the indexical strength of their projected names. The hotel names might appear to Toronto audiences to point vaguely to real places somewhere over in Vancouver, rather than to an imminently nearby landscape demanding recognition and engagement. Other potent dimensions of the play's rhetoric would fill the performance space instead: the play would claim the staged deaths and their real counterparts as a shared social inheritance of a broader and more diffuse kind than a local one. A Toronto production might implicitly call its audiences to witness the staged deaths as their national inheritance, perhaps, since Canada is a territory that incorporates both the play's imaginative origins and setting in Vancouver and the audience and ensemble's location in Toronto.

I do not think that its overall power would be reduced by its production elsewhere than Vancouver: the play is richly theatrical and its language is poetically open to interpretation, association, and investments of many kinds. Indeed, although Susan Walker commented in *The Toronto Star* that the Vancouver women's serial deaths were "not a well-known story in Eastern Canada" (Walker "Demon" G11), she called the Native Earth Performing Arts production "A bold, ambitious requiem" and a "fitting obituary" for their deaths (Walker "Bold" C15), which suggests that she felt herself enough part of the community convened by the play to judge the relation of the

performance to the real women's deaths. The play has traveled successfully. But surely it must be a radically different event in each place it is produced.

Concluding observations

It may not be a coincidence that in Vancouver, at least, plays set in the city should have come gradually in recent years to engage more overtly and more specifically with local audiences. The majority of new scripts being developed and performed in contemporary Vancouver are not set here. But those that are set here, these days, do not tend to address their audiences as Canadians first, as did *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* in 1967. Since the Centennial moment, and the associated phase in the 1960s and '70s of focused governmental support for and critical interest in representing and examining national identities, the nation as a whole and specifically national communities have receded somewhat from the Canadian literary spotlight (cf. *New History* 211, Nischik 18-20, 23)—in Vancouver as elsewhere. (That said, recent revivals of *Ecstasy*, like that at the Firehall in 2007, continue to be marketed and received as, sadly, still relevant today [e.g. Wasserman "Here's"].) As Wasserman remarks in *Modern Canadian Plays*, "Unlike Canadian drama from the late 1960s and '70s that very often responds overtly to the countercultural and nationalist agenda of that period, the plays of the late 1980s and '90s suggest nothing resembling a master narrative" ("Introduction" 7). By the mid-1980s, he writes, "nationalism"—and, I would add, the notion in Canada of a national audience—"had pretty much gone out of vogue" (19).

Since then, the local has not come uniquely into vogue for Vancouverites as an investment or subject for representation any more than it has for theatre ensembles and

audiences elsewhere in Canada or the rest of the globalizing world. “Neither images nor viewers [now] fit into circuits or audiences that are easily bound within local, national, or regional spaces,” writes Appadurai. In the contemporary global moment, therefore, even the necessary activity of making sense of daily life in one’s immediate surroundings must imaginatively reconcile images of and encounters with other people and places (Appadurai 4). Accordingly, other contemporary interests than just local community motivate the production and creative reception of plays set in this city, as even the plays I discuss demonstrate.

But proximal grounds and immediate relationships remain urgently involving, even despite “the geographical stretching-out of social relations” that implicates distant communities and places in one’s daily life (Massey 147). Perhaps local territory and relationships are especially urgently involving for those Vancouverites whose survival, security, mobility, and freedom—let alone comfort—are threatened by poverty, poor health, and systemic oppression. It is not a coincidence that the most locally-engaged play I discuss was set and staged in the Downtown Eastside. But even for those with the relative luxury to create and consume theatre, as well as to participate otherwise in cultural economies, the local is not totally obscured by “multicentred” cultural life (Lippard). (At one basic level, for example, both public and private property is a serious investment and concern for Vancouverites of all incomes [cf. Blomley]; the figure of the real estate agent turns up in numerous Vancouver plays.) American writer Lucy Lippard describes herself as “lured to the subject of the local” by a sense of “the [very] absence of value attached to specific place in contemporary cultural life” (5), and perhaps some contemporary theatre ensembles and audiences feel the same absence and longing. But

theatre-going—like shopping, commuting to work, or going out for coffee—remains a social event that brings local citizens together to a particular neighbourhood, streetscape, building, and room, despite stretched-out social geographies. The Playhouse’s current artistic managing director Max Reimer claims that theatre “audiences in a lot of places, but especially Vancouver, really enjoy the experience of going out in lovely surroundings” (qtd. in Birnie F5). I agree with him, at least, that the local remains one potentially important context among others for the creative production of meaning by audiences of contemporary theatre in this city.

Meanwhile, while the imagined community of nation has “gone out of vogue” in recent years, cities have entered the Canadian spotlight, as Edwards and Ivison note (4). By the middle of the current decade, with Toronto’s mayor arguing that “cities—big cities—matter more than any other order of community in the country” (Gillis), cities have “suddenly [become] a hot topic in Canadian politics” (Wells). As for Vancouver, in particular, this city has become increasingly conscious of itself as attracting international attention since its world exhibition, Expo ’86 (cf. for example Berelowitz 1). This sense of the city’s increasing prominence on “the world stage” may help to explain how playwrights and ensembles in Vancouver have come to think of their local landmarks and familiar neighbourhoods as audience-worthy. Meanwhile, however, the plays I discuss imagine that audience as a local one, which seems to indicate that Vancouver’s increasing size and density, and the accumulating history and complexity of its neighbourhoods, have convinced at least some of its resident theatre-makers and audiences that the city is worth performing—to itself.

The trajectory of my discussion may have seemed to suggest that plays need to be performed in the very neighbourhood of their setting to powerfully link the mediated common ground produced inside the theatre with the actual shared territory of the city outside. It would be a shame to be so prescriptive. However, the examples I discuss do suggest that a performance might most persuasively construct the play's setting as common ground if it provided an imaginative bridge between the vicinity of the theatre and the grounds represented in the performance space. The Playhouse brochure, which advertised *2000* as “taking us” from downtown Vancouver to the North Shore, offers a suggestion of how such a bridge might be built, by acknowledging the distance between the Playhouse and the play's setting. The play itself did not lead its audience to the door of Wyn and Sean's house along a fully detailed route—indeed, from the landmark of the Second Narrows bridge, which connects North Vancouver to Vancouver proper, Wyn's opening monologue sent the cougar (and, with it, audience's imaginative map of the setting) back into the city, and most of the specific places referenced in the play were on the Playhouse side of the Burrard Inlet. But *2000* overtly invited its audience into a North Shore household and let them look out its windows.

Certainly, however, these plays' demonstrated portability indicates that audiences are capable of producing their own imaginative bridges, however geographically vague. Distant audiences are marvelously able to accommodate locally engaged references' poverty of information and demanding expectations of co-knowledge. Perhaps theatre performance as a genre licenses audiences to treat the rhetorical demands that attach to reference in ordinary, face-to-face conversation as unfixed and mutable in the theatre. To pursue the example of *2000*: in Toronto, unknowing audiences may take up a staged

reference to “*the Pacific Coliseum*” as if an ensemble had said to them, “*a hockey arena.*” Indeed, reporters and reviewers for Ottawa- and Toronto-based newspapers, summarizing the play for their respective reading audiences, translated its specific, familiarly-named landmarks into generalized sites. *The Ottawa Citizen*’s Janice Kennedy translated *2000*’s “Pacific Coliseum” (13) into “a hockey rink” and “a Vancouver arena.” *The Toronto Star*’s Vit Wagner referred to the Coliseum as “a hockey arena in downtown Vancouver” and set Wyn and Sean’s home “in a middle-class Vancouver neighbourhood” (D4).

A play is an entirely different rhetorical event when staged in a different location: the Toronto and Vancouver productions of *2000* were different plays in their respective relationships to their audiences. Despite the potential vagueness or incompleteness of a geographical bridge between a place of performance and a play’s setting, other dimensions of the play may bring audience and play neatly into contact. Audiences unfamiliar with the setting are perhaps especially able to unfix and translate references like those in *2000* when they do share some other substantial background knowledge with the characters. I have represented *2000*’s Nanaimo jokes as locally engaged—and I continue to read them as such—but I allow that Nanaimo is not the exclusive cognitive property of West Coast residents. Even Janine reminds me that images and ideas about Nanaimo circulate nationally (and likely cross borders as well). Of a story about a young Nanaimo girl selling heroin, Janine says, “It was on *The National*, that story. That and the bath tub races and red neck loggers” (25). And Janine’s character, as staged at the Playhouse, was legible enough through other frames of reference that she might have swiftly taught unknowing audiences what the ensemble meant by “Nanaimo.” Her short-skirted wardrobe, rough language, big hair, cackling laughter, familiarity with loggers

and guns, and crass but warm-hearted frankness recall, even for me, other, widely-circulated stereotypes that roughly map to 2000's "Nanaimo"—the trailer-park girl, the kid from the tough suburb—especially because they replicate the contrast between urbane, middle-class centre and rough-edged, working-class fringe that 2000 establishes between Vancouver and Nanaimo. (I attended university in Kingston, Ontario, where the relatively transient, and snobbish, student population used to derisively refer to more permanently local residents as “townies.” Calling Janine a townie on student stages there would have readily generated in-joke laughter.) Confronted with the Playhouse Janine, and recognizing in her elements of types they know from elsewhere, unknowing audience members could infer enough about Nanaimo from Janine's declaration “I'm from pure and old Nanaimo” or her reference to the city's “problems” to eventually let them chuckle along with the jokes about “Island Girl.”

Writing about reading world literature at a distance from its local situation—his example is Europeans and Americans reading Zimbabwean Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel *Nervous Conditions*—Kwame Anthony Appiah argues that novels from elsewhere engage our moral attentions and sympathies not because we share basic principles or broad understandings with their authors or protagonists but rather because we find specific “points of agreement” (Appiah 221), discrete “moments,” and “particular cases” (223) that we recognize and share. The particularities of local knowledge are precisely what may have been least easy to recognize and share for theatre audiences of 2000 in Ottawa or Toronto. But the play evidently offered them plenty to recognize and empathize with, in its emotional “truth[s]” and its resonant character types, as MacLeod put it. And skilled theatre audiences, with their marvelous abilities to unfix and imaginatively

accommodate even local particularities, may perceive agreement between otherwise distant frames of reference even in locally specific details. Kate Taylor, reviewing the Toronto production of *2000* for *The Globe and Mail's* Metro (Toronto) edition in 1996, translated the play's references to its mountain-side setting and Janine's Nanaimo origin into terms tailored especially to her Toronto audience's frame of reference. Wyn and Sean "share their *ravine-side* house with Wyn's grandmother," she explained, and Janine is "a street-smart college student who grew up on the wrong side of the tracks" (C3, my emphasis). A ravine is a Toronto topography, different in its tucked-away wildness from North Vancouver's towering, forested mountainsides, but a Ravine Man might offer Toronto audiences many of the same dramatic possibilities as Mountain Man does audiences on the west coast. And while "the wrong side of the tracks" does not capture all of the nuances of a sexy, bannock-eating Island Girl persona, it might allow Toronto audiences, in Leslie Jones's words, to "get the idea."

Conclusion

“Where are you?”
“I’m in North Van.” [...]
“Where are you specifically?”
“In the Denny’s on Marine Drive.”

(Coupland *JPod* 183-4)

The voices addressing us from the pages of novels and short stories and from theatre stages echo the conversations we have, via other media, in our daily lives. Cellphone conversations like this one from *JPod* can tell us a lot about how people create and refine personalized geographies by speaking to one another. These are geographies tailored not to our solitary experiences of the places we move through but to the particular ways our experiences overlap with and diverge from one another’s. Narrative language and theatre performance can tell us a lot about this too.

The novels, short stories and plays I analyze show us some of the physical territories on which city-dwellers ground their social relations—the personalized, urban common grounds, to use my phrase a final time. Read as conversations held in public, these works demonstrate that these territories are not the externally recognized, internally consistent, bounded terrains of conventional neighbourhoods. But neither are they disengaged from physical space or abstracted from pedestrian scales of near and far. They are scatter-plots of jointly known street names, landmarks, neighbourhoods and institutions stretching out to the city limits and often beyond. In novels and short stories, these dispersed points are often connected by the characters’ movement along the pathways of daily routine and the novel routes of adventure. Characters in novels and short stories mostly travel through the city on foot, preserving the flâneur’s longstanding

position at the intersection of narrative and urban motion, but they also use bicycles, taxis, buses, Sky Trains, Sea Buses, hitched rides and private cars to get around. All of this movement partly explains why streets in particular are so frequently assumed to be shared landmarks, when the audience is local: streets funnel people together, and they usher people from one destination point to the next. And as lengthy landmarks, stretching through sometimes disparate parts of the city, high streets are likely to be recognized by a broad audience. They allow people who come from different parts of the city to approach shared territory, even if their versions of the same street never quite meet. Meanwhile, the scattered points of shared urban space are connected in these stories not just by characters' experiences but in the flow of narrative language, by plot sequencing and the shifting associations of narrative thought: these neighbourhoods are made coherent as knowable landscapes by the storytelling.

Sometimes these physically dispersed, extended neighbourhoods have a centre of gravity, so to speak: an area of greatest density where familiar streets and landmarks are tightly contiguous and known in detail. This centre provides spatial orientation to the setting, establishing what is near and what is far. It establishes a social orientation too, a class and sometimes racialized and political position from which the focalizing characters or the free-floating narrative voice perceive other residents of their city. Writers and playwrights setting their work in Vancouver draw deeply from established understandings of who is to be found where, in this city: poorer, off-beat, and ethnically marked characters make room for themselves in East Vancouver (in *Blood Sports*, *The End of East*, *The Jade Peony*, *Half-World*, "A Map of the City," and "Two Glasses of Remy," for example); young artists create colourful spaces around one stretch of Main

Street (*The Dissemblers*) while South Asian businesses establish the Punjabi Market around another (“Out on Main Street”); one sort of young, white, liberal, middle-class up-and-comer lives in apartments or co-op housing in Kitsilano (*JPod*, “Dougal Disincarnate,” “City of My Dreams”), another sort owns property on the North Shore (*Girlfriend in a Coma*; 2000), and yet a third, with more money, owns condominiums in Yaletown (*Stanley Park*). The very poor live in the Downtown Eastside (*Unnatural and Accidental Women*, *Bruce—The Musical*). By drawing on these understandings of neighbourhoods as social categories, these writers and playwrights also reproduce and re-shape those categories themselves.¹⁴²

In some cases these centres of gravity are multiple, drawing newly tight connections between otherwise loosely related parts of the city. *Stanley Park*, where Jeremy strides back and forth between Crosstown and the city/park edge, has at least two social poles influencing its social perspective; Jeremy’s close friends in their Yaletown apartment erect a weaker but substantial third. By contrast, in *JPod*, the narrative perspective is so spatially scattered and mobile as to seem altogether decentred. The narrator and protagonist, Ethan, drives around the city, alighting only briefly in North Vancouver, in Chinatown, in suburban Maple Ridge, in residential Kitsilano, at Costco. He sleeps more soundly in his work cubicle than anywhere else, but his Burnaby workplace is so barely grounded that Ethan’s only explanation for its location relative to his other destinations is his remark that,

Through a rare and cheerful accident of freeway planning, I can get from the campus [of his workplace] to my parents’ place by making two left turns and two

right turns, even though they live 17.4 miles away in the gloomy evergreen cocoon of the British Properties. I find this elegant and pleasing. (22)

When people's neighbourhoods are especially physically decentred, as Ethan's is in *JPod*, class and taste supply the orientation that organizes the characters' social lives, while cars and cellphones connect them to one another. But Ethan's car-driving, cellphoning lifestyle is rare in Vancouver literature.

In novels and short stories, the space of social encounter and address where the narrating happens (which in Chapter One I called the implied circle of address), floats unmoored from the actual terrains of the city. Even in the performance space of a play, the social insularity of the theatre auditorium, the interiority of the *mise en scène*, and the theatre site's removal from the particular geographies referred to onstage can seem to detach the immediate social encounter from the terrain of the city outside. But the windows that the narratives and plays open onto the city are spatially and socially oriented in the ways I reviewed in the previous paragraphs. They allow particular lines of sight. They foreground particular geographies and invest interest in characters who are drawn to particular centres of gravity. And crucially, these are not lonely windows peeped through by the secluded reader or the isolated theatre audience-member, as my work here has shown. However invisible and/or actually solitary this reader or theatre-goer might feel herself to be, she peers through these windows onto the city over the shoulders of a primary audience for whom the host narrator or theatre ensemble has deliberately opened the shutters.

Considering the effects and importance of this populated scene returns me to the idea of the structure of feeling that Appadurai calls "locality," an actively produced

feeling that one's social persona(s) make sense in a particular place and that the place and its co-inhabitants reflect one's fit there. As readers or theatre audience-members, we do not fit precisely with the localities imagined by the stories and plays we attend to, and our awareness of this mis-fit may be painful. We may encounter perspectives on the city that are antagonistic to our own; we may witness being shared out among a select circle of addressees certain claims to knowledge that deny our own attempts to know and make sense in the places referred to. At the very least, we must be unsettled by our encounter with perspectives that do not fit our own, even when we deftly accommodate ourselves to their sightlines without pain or self-consciousness: these encounters invite us to recognize centres of gravity other than those we construct with our familiar acquaintances, thus opening to us new perspectives. Or rather, of course, these encounters invite *another* audience to recognition. We are made aware that other communities are forming in the city around us when we recognize our mis-fit at the fringes of the narrative circle of address or in the middle of a theatre audience. These unsettling brushes with other localities may do socially positive civilizing work, so to speak. In producing a sense of locality in dense, diverse urban areas, it seems to me to be ethically necessary to recognize that one stands outside of others' neighbourhood even when occupying the same physical locations. Novels, short stories, and plays can make us feel the complexity of our social lives in place.

The selective inclusion and exclusions of shared local knowledge have especially ugly effects when the local knowledges ignored and marginalized are those of an area's indigenous residents or settler groups who are not white or of Western backgrounds. I

am very aware that among the writers and playwrights I have discussed so far, only Marie Clements claims aboriginal inheritance. And on the composite map of extended neighbourhoods that my work accumulates, large segments of Vancouver are left silent and un-illuminated: these include most of the suburb cities and all the south Vancouver neighbourhoods, as well as the Musqueam, Capilano, Tseil-Waltuth and Tsawwassen First Nations' territories. Also, because I have been interested in the ways that published writing dislocates the reader from the scene of address and the ways that conventional theatres may dislocate their audiences from the cityscape, I have not discussed oral storytelling or site-specific performances; these practices would have offered a new set of perspectives. My project has left a number of important windows shuttered.

As well as showing us the sorts of urban ground imagined by writers and theatre ensembles as shared and unshared, the geographies created and refined in narrative language and theatre performance can also show us how writers and ensembles use locality-constructing address creatively, imagining new communities and making space within pedestrian public terrain for fictional magic. Thus Wayson Choy imagines a sympathetic audience that is close to and knowledgeable about the layout and landmarks of contemporary Chinatown but has not seen it yet from the perspective of historical Chinese experiences. Choy's narrative convenes a meeting of this new community to encourage emotional investment in those historical experiences, and his narrators deliberately, generously, coaxingly assume that this audience is even more oriented to a Chinatown locality than they likely actually are. Joan MacLeod and the Playhouse Theatre Company assume an upper-middle-class Vancouver in need of a laugh at its own

particular millennial and ecological edginess. Sharon Pollock and the New Company construct Vancouverites willing to become self-aware as *the* Canadians who inherit responsibility for the *Komagata Maru*'s treatment. Malcolm Lowry, Ethel Wilson and Timothy Taylor imagine distal but mutually sympathetic communities of aesthetic taste and political sympathies whose unfamiliarity with Vancouver only whets their interest in stories that unfold here. And George Bowering and William Gibson open up strange new spaces within the well-known city, for the sake of those who might enjoy stepping off the nearby edge of the familiar. The eclectic diversity of the social relations imagined by these works—and the impossibility of fitting them neatly into the usual categories for spatialized community—suggest how rich, complicated, and malleable are modern senses of relationality.

The spectre of *uncommon* ground may well have haunted some of my readers, and I would like to address here a few apparitions that have hovered just beyond my purview. In doing so I reflect on my own social position and self-consciousness as a reader and student of Vancouver writing. *Uncommon* might describe what is strange and unheard-of, when it rears its head in the middle of one's comfortable everyday world. The sweet-tempered spies and cosmopolitan criminals that William Gibson imports into Vancouver in *Spook Country* are rather thrilling imagined company for me as a reader, although for Gibson himself their arrival was at first unnerving. Gibson says in interview that he was “anxious” about writing speculative fiction set in his city of residence: “I had no compunctions about what I might do to a future Tokyo or a future New York, but with

Vancouver, I never wanted to have that going on while I walked around in the city where I lived,” he recalls. “But when [the characters] did arrive,” Gibson continues,

I was enormously relieved to realize that each of them, in being a stranger to the city, was seeing their own distinct and different place. What they were seeing isn't what I see, so it turned into this very pleasant and kind of eerie experience of seeing the city for a while through these multiple imaginary points of view.

(qtd. in Wiebe “Writing Vancouver”)

For Gibson, the estranging effect of seeing the city skewed to someone else’s perspective was a welcome dislocation, preferable to discovering that his characters’ world overlapped too much with his own. But his stories’ estranging overlap with my everyday Vancouver is part of their pleasure, for me.

Spook Country’s narrator offers readers familiar with Vancouver the additional eerie experience of overhearing that their well-known city has been tagged with a kind of virtual graffiti called “locative art” by one of the novel’s technologically-savvy artists. With a special visor and a link to the internet, one could see artists’ visions layered over the city landscape. As the novel closes, one of the characters enjoys the view of a “giant cartoon rendition of the Mongolian Death Worm, its tail wound through the various windows” of a Yaletown condominium tower “like an eel through the skull of a cow, waving imperially, tall and scarlet, in the night” (Gibson 371). The *Spook Country* narrator speaks about this virtual monster as if it is already installed, just as Gibson’s narrator in “The Winter Market” mentions the “old condo rack” at an intersection where there has never yet been such a building. These renderings are enjoyable surprises, and

overhearing them casually spoken about gives them the added appeal of a private discovery.

But, more urgently, *uncommon* might mean instead *not* shared. My reading of language and performance as always pitched responsively to an attendant audience's specific knowledge has meant that even narrative treatments of ground as not shared presented themselves as relatively generous introductions to the city: narrators' beckoning welcome to outsiders. But I have also found a few narratives that refuse to mark and honour sharedness, even when they seem to anticipate an audience that actually knows the place too. Taylor's *Stanley Park* is a commodious example; it dresses up the Vancouver I know, adding glamour and a hint of magic realism even to scenes of poverty, thus moving its many references to recognizable landmarks out of reach of mutual recognition. Lee Maracle, who is of Salish and Cree ancestry, has written a number of works set in Vancouver; in her important short story, "Polka Partners, Uptown Indians and White Folks," Maracle offers a different and more challenging example of how narrative might stake out uncommon ground. The style of narrative references to Vancouver in "Polka Partners," like that in a few other Vancouver narratives, is somewhat difficult to characterize, using my method of analysis. I turn to Maracle's story shortly, to offer a preliminary reading of a pragmatics of the uncommon.

Mobile, mainstream, middle-class urbanites like myself may have difficulty remembering that even the public spaces of a city forbid certain behaviours and discriminate against certain persons (cf. Cresswell 8-9). The dispersed neighbourhood enjoyed by *JPod's* Ethan is available to him because of his privilege. As a young, car-owning, white man he can make his home in a "disheveled but lovable three-story dump

in Chinatown” (Coupland 91) and not be punished for crossing racialized borders. Like *The Jade Peony* and other novels more thoughtfully set in Chinatown, Maracle’s story reminds me that racism and poverty confine people within the supposedly open city. And unlike *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, which offered white Vancouverites a similar reminder, “Polka Partners” does so without focusing on the institutions and dominant civic culture that persecute people who do not conform.

The narrator-protagonist of this story, an indigenous woman named Stace whose ancestral home is in the Coast Mountains (Maracle 180), reflects on the generative work she and her friends do as they struggle to produce and maintain a neighbourhood and sense of locality “in the middle of the tired old grey buildings of the downtown periphery” (180) in Vancouver. “When I was a petulant youth,” Stace recalls at the opening of her narrative,

it never ceased to amaze me how we could turn the largest cities into small towns. Wherever we went we seemed to take the country with us. Downtown—the skids for white folks—was for us just another village, not really part of Vancouver. We never saw the myriads of Saturday shoppers battling for bargains, and the traffic went by largely unnoticed except that we had to watch out not to get hit when crossing against the light. Drunk or sober, we amble along the three square blocks that make up the area as though it were a village stuck in the middle of nowhere. (179)

This neighbourhood is tightly circumscribed, occupying just “three square blocks,” and it supports only a “sorry,” meager, feeling of local belonging (186) because of the larger city’s systematic attack on Native ways of life. But Stace does not acknowledge the

wider system directly, even while she foregrounds the meagerness of her resources for maintaining locality. Instead, she recalls her amazement at Native people's ability to re-make urban space to suit their traditional practices of locality. Their neighbourhood-producing work cuts across the routes and routines of the rest of Vancouver, as they cross the street "against the light"; living as a local in this urban village involves not taking notice of the rest of the city unless forced to do so.

The story revolves around Stace's gradual winning-over by an "uptown Indian," a wealthier outsider to the downtown neighbourhood, who convinces some of the locals to start an official community centre. I extend my brief summary of the story's themes, here, in order to give some context for the uncommon ground established by the narrative address. Initially Stace is excited by the community centre idea, but still reluctant and wary:

My imagination ran on about the reality of it, arguing with the impossibility of it surviving. I saw the street, its frail dark citizenry rushing pell-mell towards this dream and imploding at the end of the dream's arrest. For arrest it would. No one would allow the total transformation of this end of town into a real community. Its attraction, its magic, lay in remaining a perpetual half-village that could accommodate sentinels—not people, but sentinels, alone on a bridge, guarding nothing. (187)

One of the lessons for me in Maracle's short story is in this image of a half-village and the suspended, liminal life it supports. Despite the impressive neighbourhood-producing work Stace describes, she and her friends are forcibly stretched between their urban lives and their ancestral lives in a "country" to which they cannot comfortably return (180).

Their attempts at community are beset by the alienating and oppressive forces of a racist, colonial society. At the story's close, Stace's fears are realized. Her eventual commitment to the idea of a fully recognized community separates her from some of her friends and exposes her to crushing disappointment when the centre moves uptown. She feels deeply ambivalent about her only profit from the experience: having been introduced to some white women who do alienating work in offices uptown, she has come to feel that "a common bond of survival was replacing her former hostility" towards them (190). Stace's relationships to her fellow locals in the urban village might have offered her one social context in which to tell her story. In that case, her narrative language likely would have been styled for place-sharing. Alternatively, her ambivalent social bond with the women office workers, which forms tentatively across a racial divide when Stace crosses her neighbourhood boundary into the uptown world, might have offered a context for an edge-setting narrative—or even a city-building one, that introduced the downtown village as entirely new territory to uptown Vancouverites.

Maracle's subtle narrative handling of Vancouver references does not fit neatly into any of these scenarios. A second powerful lesson this story offers me is to be found in how it stylistically claims uncommon ground. Stace's narration is generously self-revelatory and explanatory; her opening sentence, which extends a welcome to anyone interested in hearing about her perceptions as a "petulant youth," establishes her characteristically inviting stance. Yet her narrating does not quite settle into a mode of address that would clearly define for her a circle of primary audience. Her pronoun use in the story's opening paragraph, part of which I quoted above, offers an example of what I mean. She uses "we" and "us" immediately to indicate a set of people she has not yet

named; because of the story title and Maracle's own indigeneity, I interpret the pronouns as referring in general to Native people. Framed by Stace's explanatory stance, these pronouns seem to suggest that she is describing urban Native experiences to a non-Native outsider. On the following page she remarks informatively, "Every urban reserve has its café" (180). But then again, almost as immediately as she says "we" in the opening paragraph, she mentions "white folks," which sets a white audience at a distance, outside of her immediate circle of address. (The pronoun "you" would have had a very different effect.) Stace's address seems to poise undecided between two audiences: like the downtown Natives she describes, it is suspended between two possibilities.

Similarly, her references to Vancouver hold a delicately balance. They seem to anticipate her audience's familiarity with Vancouver's downtown geography, but they do not directly acknowledge that familiarity or admit to the overlap of that knowledge with her own. Stace manages this withdrawal from mutual knowledge by using what Prince calls "inferable" referring expressions almost exclusively. Proper nouns like the Downtown Eastside, Hastings Street, or the Lion's Gate Bridge would have acknowledged a broad audience's recognition. Stace sets aside these names, perhaps in part because to use them would mean adopting the dominant culture's geographical language.¹⁴³ Her inferable phrases—"the three square blocks that make up the area" (179), "the tired old grey buildings of the downtown periphery," "the mountains of my home," "the bridge" (180), "the park across from the café" (181)—are anchored by common nouns that would easily allow an audience unfamiliar with the city to accommodate her references. But meanwhile they indicate very specific locations within a neighbourhood that is the focus of intense public scrutiny in the local and national

media, as well as in academic and artistic circles. The opening paragraph ostensibly allows that “Polka Partners” is set in Vancouver, and I think I recognize the Downtown Eastside in the “downtown” area that Stace names so generally. Her gloss—“the skids for white folks” (179)—confirms my hunch. But she has made me recognize that I am encountering a perspective on this part of my city of residence that is oriented very differently than my own: her phrase, “downtown,” which names her neighbourhood centre of gravity, has meant for me the place she calls “uptown.” The narrative handling of references to this neighbourhood in “Polka Partners” subtly refuses to meet its audience on shared ground: Stace neither quite frames these downtown grounds as already shared with her audience nor quite extends to them an introduction to those grounds.

I mentioned enjoyable surprises earlier, which suggests that I have no repressed familiarity with Mongolian Death Worms to fear. But fearful encounters do crop up in my reading of Vancouver literature and theatre precisely at the point where the common and uncommon collide. Sigmund Freud’s assessment of the *uncanny* as being a particular expression of that collision—uncanniness being a feeling evoked by the unexpected re-appearance of “something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed” (Freud 148)—has influenced recent critical discourse on cities (and cf. Garner Jr. 96, Edwards and Ivison 208 on uncanny apparitions of the city in theatre and fiction). Richard Lehan observes, for instance, that in “romantic, modern, and postmodern thought,”

A sense of being at home in the city was replaced by its opposite—the ‘unhomely,’ expressed as the uncanny and often expressed by the outsider, the other, the mysterious stranger, or the lonely man in the crowd. (xv)

Within the analytical framework of this dissertation, the lonely figure in the crowd is the suddenly self-conscious reader or theatre audience-member who recognizes her own position outside the circle of address. In my own reading and theatre-going experience, the returning repressed has often been my own middle-class whiteness and relative privilege: a position that I have desired to ignore in favour of the vicarious pleasures of identifying with characters and narrators in positions different from my own. I have described elsewhere, for example, my desire to fit in with one jovial, responsive, invested neighbourhood audience at the Downtown Eastside performance of an unpublished play called “Bruce—The Musical” in November, 2008 (Banting “Courting” 17). The play re-enacted the neighbourhood’s historic fight for recognition as a legitimate civic community. In a moment of protest and frustration, one activist character onstage jeered at a miserly alderman who wanted to prevent city council from funding a Downtown Eastside community centre. “Go back to Dunbar!,” the activist shouted, resigning the alderman to a middle-class neighbourhood on the west side of the city—a location distant from his Eastside residence but not far from my own home. Many people around me in the audience laughed in immediate delight at this line. As I caught myself not laughing, I was forced to register my own misfit amidst my friendly fellow audience-members.¹⁴⁴

Similar discomforts have coloured my reading of Eden Robinson’s novel *Blood Sports*. (In this case, the experience has been more private; the theatre’s extraordinary copresence gives it exceptional power for evoking social self-consciousness, as Richard

Eder helped me explain in Chapter Three.) Here, unlike in “Polka Partners,” the principal uncanny discomforts are perhaps dependent on my personal response to what the novel depicts, rather than set up by its narrative style. But *Blood Sports*’s references to Vancouver help bring my discomfort home, so to speak. The novel is frightening because its lovable central character Tom is manipulated, incriminated, and finally kidnapped and tortured by his violent, covetous, drugged cousin, Jer. Robinson makes the story even more nightmarish by handling her narrator’s focalization through Tom’s perspective in such a way that I cannot finally decide whether Tom is victimized in part because of his own lame passiveness and stupid inertia or entirely because of Jer’s cruel cunning. Freud has linked experiences of the uncanny to “the helplessness we experience in certain dream-states” (144), and Robinson manages dread masterfully here. But the discomfiting return I catch myself reacting to is my own suspicion that Tom is complicit in Jer’s violence: I wonder if I recognize in my suspicion a prejudiced set of assumptions about poor addicts (Tom smokes pot) and about the children of women who drink for drunkenness’s sake in the Downtown Eastside (as Tom’s mother does) (Robinson 228-9). *Cycle of violence. Why doesn’t he stop himself?* Assumptions about strangers who live in one’s own city are often linked to our sense of social geography—what I referred to earlier as our established understandings of who is to be found where, in the city—and, for the local reader, stories such as *Blood Sports* recall those assumptions, possibly opening them to examination and challenge.

I find myself suddenly seeing familiar territory from an unfamiliar perspective when I realize that I am experiencing through Tom’s eyes what it is like to make a phone call from “the pay phone under the Carnegie stairwell” (220). The Carnegie Centre is the

community centre that activists finally won for the Downtown Eastside, and the sidewalk beneath the building's front steps is a popular congregating spot for members of a neighbourhood community. I know the corner well, and have spied this pay phone before, although I have never stopped longer there than is necessary to catch a bus; it is one of the sites in the city where uncommon ground is a sharp experience, as I feel how differently fellow city-dwellers occupy their shared ground. Narrative style foregrounds these experiences, by invoking a primary audience's relationship to this particular site and prompting me to consider my position outside but not far from the edges of the circle of address. The narrator's use of an inferable referring phrase, which assumes that this particular pay phone will be immediately familiar to his audience when anchored to a shorthand mention of "the Carnegie," happens to fit closely enough to my own background knowledge of that part of the city that I feel myself drawn close to the set of those for whom this story is personally relevant.¹⁴⁵ But because this closeness contrasts with my distance from the focalizing character's experiences of life in this place, I am unsettled: sharing local knowledge makes differential ways of knowing a place especially striking.

Robinson's narrator describes Vancouver in a style that shifts between taking-for-granted familiarity, as in the phrasing of "the pay phone under the Carnegie stairwell," and introductory description; these shifts too are unsettling. As an example of introduction, an early passage frames part of Tom's neighbourhood of residence (an East Vancouver neighbourhood removed from the Downtown Eastside) for a distant audience, offering a somewhat surprising comparison:

Grandview Park was on the side of a gently sloping hill, and from the top had a postcard view of downtown and Grouse Mountain. Houses crept up the distant blue of the mountains on the North Shore. Unlike Toronto, which could sprawl in all directions on the relative flatness of Southern Ontario, Vancouver was hemmed in by the mountains and the ocean. With space so squashed, downtown Vancouver glittered with skyscrapers and mushroom-like clusters of condos. Grandview Park had a playground shaded by tall trees, a wide stretch of grass near the local high school [...]. (32)

For me, the dominant experience of reading *Blood Sports* is the ambivalent one of recognizing how close the narrator has allowed me to approach certain landmarks—like the Carnegie phone—that I already know well, from a very unfamiliar perspective. The novel’s tendency to treat landmarks as well known lets me draw near to the circle of address, only to be unnerved by how different those landmarks look from Tom’s terrifyingly precarious position. But in the midst of that reading experience I am also abruptly unsettled by the sweeping gestures of this introduction to Grandview Park. Why compare Vancouver to Toronto? Why nod to an audience unfamiliar with either city?

“The novel,” writes Appiah, “is always a message in a bottle from some other position, even if it was written and published last week in your hometown” (223). Appiah attends, as I have tried to do, to the properties of the novel as a medium. He recognizes that novels travel between writer and reader along usually untraceable pathways—picturing a message afloat in a wandering bottle I am reminded of Lowry’s “The Bravest Boat”—and that a novel’s arrival thus provides only markedly indirect and

faceless contact between its writers and its reader. What I have added to Appiah's metaphor is the quality of specific address that characterizes narrative language in novels and in short stories as well, so that they wash up on their readers' shores sounding more like private messages intended for a lover or an enemy (or, to be more accurately descriptive, a friendly acquaintance) than words broadcast to whomever might happen along.¹⁴⁶

Pictured as messages, or as conversations held in public, as I described them earlier, these narratives are not matters of personal identity but of interpersonal *relationship*. Hence I have been occupied with what is common rather than explicitly with difference, although the gradations of relative familiarity that mark the presumed limits of sharedness mean that differentials of local knowledge are denoted just as ostensibly as areas of overlap, in narrative language and in theatre performance. Receiving a message in a bottle we may be unnerved by how close the words come to addressing us personally or given pause by how the address looks past us at someone else, but in either case we recognize our difference as a quality of our relations with the unseen writer and addressee.¹⁴⁷ The similarly unsettling encounter with a social circle that positions us on the outside, however accommodatingly, is what characterizes novels, short stories and plays as particular media of connection and relationship. But these media are also characterized by their audiences' frequent eagerness to imagine their way across the differentials of uncommon ground. That eagerness is precisely what Appiah is interested in. Considering the cosmopolitan case, where we read something set at a great distance from where we live, Appiah writes, "What is necessary to read novels across

gaps of space, time, and experience is the capacity to follow a narrative and conjure a world: and that, it turns out, there are people everywhere more than willing to do” (224-5).

Appiah’s message in a bottle metaphor makes me reflect, finally, on a frustration I often encountered as a child. Casting hopeful bottles into stiller waters than “The Bravest Boat”’s stormy ocean, I would find them returning to me within an hour, never having made it out of the immediate bay. Writing and plays set in Vancouver do make their way to distant audiences, and at those points of reception the indexical force of their Vancouver references and icons loosens from its moorings and becomes compliant with those audiences’ creative revisions. Closer to home, however, they are more compellingly and stubbornly social. The project of engaging with the proximal everyday may still sound for some writers and readers like provincialism, a pedestrian curtailing of fiction’s leap into the unknown, or like isolation from the wider ethics of cosmopolitan sympathies. But locality does not feel like either provincialism or isolation, in Vancouver literature and theatre. It feels crowded but accommodating, uncannily strange and familiar, globally stretched and walking-distance nearby. And it sounds like a rich, extensive, naked, and vicariously thrilling conversation to overhear on public transit.

Notes

¹ Here, as elsewhere in this dissertation, I follow Janet Giltrow in using the term “accommodate” in a technical way. As Giltrow explains, “In a pragmatic sense, language users *accommodate* presuppositions which inaccurately estimate their actual knowledge of the world” (“Democratic” 47). Some of the texts that circulate representations of Vancouver, for example, seem designed to receive hospitably the readership of people who are unfamiliar with the place: they introduce the city at generous length, taking care of these audiences’ need for orientation and overview. Other texts require audiences unfamiliar with the place to “accommodate” references that do not offer such necessary explanation.

² Such imaginative accommodations are not necessarily unproblematic, as Edward Said’s work on Orientalism has shown. Said evokes, as I do, the situation of audiences in one place reading about another place, which they situate across an imagined geographical divide (21). While he emphasizes reading about distant cultures rather than distant physical geographies specifically, he exposes “the Oriental” as a Western idea of cultural otherness that depends upon a perceived geographical difference. Said’s point, that our frequently “very unrigorous” ideas of distant social geographies allow “[a]ll kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions [to] appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one’s own” (20), is similar to the point I am making here. Said seems to feel, as I do, that “There is nothing especially controversial or reprehensible about such domesticizations of the exotic; they take place between all cultures, certainly, and between all men” (24). However, his larger argument is an important reminder that these imaginative accommodations are performed in ignorance and thus possibly in problematic or hurtful ways, based as they are on “suppositions, associations, and fictions” that may well be exploitative or prejudiced.

³ Susan Bennett argues, in fact, that “the compromises and conciliations” that the meaning of an intercultural performance is forced to undergo when translated “*need* to find a language in performance—to draw attention to themselves, as it were” (200, my emphasis). Otherwise, the receiving audience-members may be allowed to make meanings of the performance in ways that un-ethically exoticize the other or elide cultural distinctiveness. Real differences persist between the meaning of a given play in different performance contexts, then, and an ethical intercultural theatre must not allow these differences to be rendered invisible.

⁴ I here purposefully attribute to short stories and plays the same dialogic relation to the language and concerns of their contemporary reality that Bakhtin attributed to the novel uniquely in “Epic and Novel.” In my view these genres are not linguistically and symbolically closed to the present world the way epics are, according to Bakhtin.

⁵ Perhaps most memorably, for literary critics, this point has been made by Bakhtin, by reader-response theorists such as Peter J. Rabinowitz (and, less directly, Wolfgang Iser), by Wayne Booth in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, and by narratologists such as Gérard Genette and, more skeptically, Monika Fludernick (cf. 65)—in slightly different terms, in each case.

⁶ Reading these texts as selectively addressing particular audiences because of the way they represent a specific setting, I do not mean that a text or performance would have to be set nowhere in particular to be “universally” readable, in Devitt’s sense. Since I believe that readers imaginatively make sense even of unfamiliar settings, I do not think that an indefinite setting is necessary for readers worldwide to relate to a novel. Rather, my point is that a specific setting ensures that readers worldwide will each relate to it differently, aware as they are of their own relative knowledge of and proximity to that setting.

⁷ In Chapter Three I discuss the example of Sharon Pollock’s set-in-Vancouver play, *The Komagata Maru Incident*, which received a production in Toronto in 1987. It was received in Toronto, by certain Ontario-based politicians at least, as presenting a story that held some claim on the Canadian imagination. Joseph R. Roach has argued of that the idea of a national theatre audience had a hold on the imagination of theatre scholars, at least, throughout the twentieth century (42). He is not speaking about scholars of *Canadian* theatre in particular, but, assuming some large degree of continuity between the theory inspiring Canadian- and other-theatre scholarship, the same observation seems likely to hold true in the case of Canada. And scholarly ideas have in turn some effect on the general population’s sense of things, presumably; hence the lingering fiction of a national audience for Canadian-based theatre.

⁸ Setting my work in relation to criticism of Canadian literature, even while pointing out that these texts and plays do not often acknowledge the nation as a social context of any importance for their rhetorical work, I

echo a move that Diana Brydon makes in her introduction to a special issue of *Studies in Canadian Literature* (32.2[2007]) on “poetics and popular culture in Canada”: “we are of necessity situating our discussions within a bounded national purview while showing the ways in which contemporary poetics practices strain at or ignore such boundaries. What does ‘Canada’ really mean when transnational communicative networks cross national boundaries?” (7).

⁹ Having grown up in Ontario, I was introduced to Vancouver as a social geography by Douglas Coupland’s novel *Girlfriend in a Coma* when taking my first and only Canadian literature course as an undergraduate student. I came close to rejecting the novel altogether, before I had read beyond the first few chapters, because its portrait of suburban teenagers who could go downhill skiing after school and still have plenty of time to go to an evening house party afterwards seemed to me utterly unbelievable. It seems to me, now, that I almost rejected it precisely because it did not fit into what was then my sense of Canadian contemporary reality. I was confronting for perhaps the first time the real challenges a dispersed Canadian social geography presents to literary texts’ ability to mediate cross-national identification.

¹⁰ Glenn Deer, too, has written about reading Vancouver literature with University of British Columbia students; I was co-instructor, with him, of the “Reading and Writing Vancouver” course he discusses. In Deer’s account of what Dickinson calls resident reading, the city is a semiotic field to be read beside and against the written texts. But even in such comparative and counter-readings, Deer implies that resident readers may recognize themselves in social relationship with other citizens, if only with the writers. “Students were asked to visit a Vancouver location represented in Coupland’s *City of Glass*,” Deer writes, and “then to write their own versions of the visual, spatial, and architectural dynamics of the place, and to discuss how Coupland compelled forms of spectatorship that could be at odds with what they subjectively experienced themselves” (15). This experience of comparing perspectives with Coupland is, in one sense, a social one, mediated by text: the reader/spectator sees herself and Coupland standing “at odds” with respect to each other in relation to a particular local sight/site.

¹¹ Canadian theatre scholars have been occupied with slightly different concerns than Canadian literature critics, in confronting questions of how the theatre might mediate a sense of national or regional community: they do not seem to have been so preoccupied with setting. Scholarship critiquing the formation of national canons of plays bears out this suggestion: Chris Johnson does not mention setting at all as one of the criteria on which canons have been either constructed by Canadian play anthologies or deconstructed by the anthologies’ critics (31). The crucial criteria are, instead, gender, ethnic background, language, and biases towards naturalistic, script-based, single-authored, “mainstream” plays (30-31).

¹² Alan Filewod argues that a theatre that could enact, codify, scrutinize and monumentalize the nation as a whole (4) has only ever been “imagined” in Canada (10).

¹³ Of those plays that Wasserman collects in his two-volume anthology, *Modern Canadian Plays*, which are recognizably set in a specific place, many were created and first performed in a theatre near that place.

¹⁴ The parallel with Said’s Orientalism has decided limits, as I mentioned. MacLeod was remembering her own years growing up on the West Coast as she wrote (Dafoe): MacLeod’s work was not in any simple or blameworthy respect an exoticizing projection. In her case, as indeed in any case where Canadian writers or theatre artists represent places and characters in Canada to other Canadians, the sense of sharing a national culture and space limits the applicability of Said’s theory—even when that sense of shared national culture is felt to be faint or suspicious. But since Joan MacLeod was living in Toronto when she wrote *Amigo’s Blue Guitar* and *2000*, and since it was Ontario theatre companies that first produced these plays, Orientalism offers in some respects a nice analogy for Canadian perceptions of nation-internal exoticism. One of Said’s central arguments is that Orientalist “knowledge” was an invention and product of the West, a set of home-grown ideas about the distant other that its proponents had to work hard to sustain against the contradictions apparent in lived cultural practice in eastern societies, whenever they actually traveled abroad (Said 20, 18).

¹⁵ My notion of “discursive communities” here is largely based on Linda Hutcheon’s. Hutcheon is interested in how ironists and their interpreters may share enough general cognitive and cultural territory to “make irony happen” (92); according to her definition, the discursive communities we belong to are extended (92) groups of people defined by their “complex configuration of shared knowledge, beliefs, values, and communicative strategies” (91). Even though “diversity and mobility will inevitably characterize that sharing,” since no two people ever have precisely the same knowledges and beliefs, and “even though the sharing will inevitably always be partial, incomplete, fragmentary; nevertheless, something does manage to get shared—enough” for them to share certain interpretations (92) of certain

texts, performances, or utterances. The discursive communities I consider, unlike those theorized by Hutcheon, are specifically based on familiarity with places. These communities are imagined by the reader or theatre audience-member as sharing certain knowledge about, perspectives on, degrees of access to and/or intimacy with a certain place. They come to mind for individual readers or audience-members as groups of people to which they do or do not belong, because of the similarities or differences between their relationships with the setting of the text or the play.

¹⁶ The theory of common ground that I draw upon in this dissertation is based on precisely this loose sense of “knowing.” Herbert H. Clark’s term “common ground,” and hence my own, “explicitly covers mutual knowledge, mutual beliefs, mutual assumptions, and other mutual attitudes” (6). Clark and Marshall elaborate: “Which propositional attitude is appropriate—knowledge, belief, assumption, supposition, or even some other term—depends on the evidence [the person in question] possesses and other factors. For simplicity, we will use *know* as the general term, but we could replace it with *believe* or certain other terms without affecting our argument” (11). One of the things I appreciate about this loose sense of “to know” is its allowance that one may hold wrong-headed and ignorant convictions, while believing them to be firmly grounded knowledge, as Said’s discussion of Orientalism importantly points out (18).

¹⁷ I draw this idea of remembered knowledge that is “compounded” with a memory of how one came to know it in part from Clark and Marshall’s discussion of how memory works as if from the cross-referenced pairing of a “diary and an encyclopedia” (54). Clark and Marshall’s point is that we must cross-reference our store of knowledge (our encyclopedia entries) to a log (our diary) of the social circumstances in which we have gathered this knowledge, so that we can estimate whether or not an item from our encyclopedia is common ground shared with a particular person. If Ann and Bob once talked about a man in a red shirt, for example, Bob’s encyclopedia entry for that man must be linked to the diary entry that tells him he spoke about him with Ann, or else he will not later recall that this man is part of his common ground with Ann (cf. Clark and Marshall 54). I am not yet concerning myself here with this social dimension of our diary-tagging of remembered information, but eventually it will be important.

¹⁸ I am thinking, for instance, of Aparna Dharwadker’s discussion of Montreal’s Teesri Duniya theatre in her essay “Diaspora and the Theatre of the Nation,” John Clement Ball’s reading of “transnational urbanism” in Catherine Bush’s novel *The Rules of Engagement*, which is set in Toronto and London, England, Jerry Wasserman’s discussion of the set-in-Vancouver play *Ali and Ali and the aXes of Evil* as “transnational agitprop,” Emily Johansen’s work on “‘territorialized cosmopolitan’ subjectivities” in Dionne Brand’s set-in-Toronto novel, *What We All Long For* (Johansen 49), and Diana Brydon, Manina Jones, Jessica Schagerl, and Kristen Warder’s focus on “transnational circuits of relation, as well as [...] more localized constituencies” (10) in their introduction to a collection of work on “poetics and public culture in Canada.”

¹⁹ All three of these terms—diaspora, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism—involve what Robin Cohen identifies as an aspect of globalization: “a *detritorialization of social identity* challenging the hegemonizing nation-states’ claim to make an exclusive citizenship a defining focus of allegiance and fidelity in favour of overlapping, permeable and multiple forms of identification” (157, italics in original). They involve, in other words, complicated social identifications that stretch across space (and more specifically across national borders) rather than rooting in one single, bounded spot. While their spatial stretch means that, by comparison to being confined within national territory, these identifications are “detrerretorialized,” there is ample room for considering diasporic, transnational, and cosmopolitan affiliations as nonetheless definitely involving relationships to *places* near and far. For instance: borrowing from Paul Gilroy, James Clifford argues that diasporas are “alternate public spheres, forms of community consciousness and solidarity that maintain identifications outside the national time/space in order to live inside, with a difference” (251); this outside/inside spatial arrangement might well take the form of there/here and involve imaginative connections to places near and far. Kwame Anthony Appiah, likewise, theorizes cosmopolitanism in spatial terms of here and elsewhere, in order to avoid repeating the idea of “‘culture’ as the name of the gap between us here and them there” (222). Cosmopolitan reading, he argues, involves “We readers in our settings [...] find[ing] many moments where we share with novels from different settings a sense that something has gone right or gone wrong,” for example (223).

²⁰ These are not the same things, as currently theorized. But Ball’s discussion of “transnationalism” in Bush’s novel focuses on the central character’s coming into a greater engagement with “a sphere of worldly activity—of incipient realpolitik” (Ball 192). Current theories of “cosmopolitanism” emphasize such

ethical sympathies and political investments with people at a remove from one's own situation as being foundational to a properly cosmopolitan sensibility (e.g. Robbins 3).

²¹ Susan Bennett's important book, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*, includes in its second edition a discussion of "intercultural theatre" that offers an excellent theoretical foundation for thinking about how not only performance but also the audience's "horizons of expectations" (171) and "strategies of viewing" (194) combine to mediate social relations between the (distant) culture out of which the performance emerges and the (local) culture where it is received. The expectations and strategies Bennett discusses are equivalent to the knowledges, interpretive perspectives, and degrees of access and personal intimacy that characterize discursive communities of place. But Bennett focuses on culture-specific ways of making sense of performance rather than place-knowledge per se: spatialized relations like 'distant' and 'local' are not a focus of her discussion. And she does not draw on examples from Canadian theatre.

²² Some of the traveling plays Dharwadker discusses also intend to engage "mainstream American audiences" (321) as well as immigrant Indians in the United States; they are "highbrow, elite, metropolitan, complex, [and...] an occasion for collective critical reflection on Indian ideas" (323). She maintains, nonetheless, that these remain "imports immersed in the culture of home, [...] affirm[ing] the 'Indianness' of audiences in the diaspora" (323).

²³ Mock does indicate that Fraser takes care to gloss the Canadian references for international readers of his script, and other commentators have observed that Fraser's plays are frequently re-set to the locations of their performance, as I mentioned earlier (cf. Edwards and Ivison 201). Meanwhile, Mock suggests, the Canadian references are legible even to audiences who cannot recognize their referents because, *as* specifically Canadian indices, they serve as analogies for other sites of marginalization and are thus recognizable to those international communities. "[Fraser] highlights the marginalisation of individuals by setting his plays in globalized Canadian cities," she writes (86-7). Mock reinforces this point in her conclusion: "Fraser's characters are enacting the tensions between homogeneity and heterogeneity, the particular and the universal, the marginal and the dominant; in other words, the very confrontations at the heart of constructing both an Anglo-Canadian identity and a sense of place in the globalised world" (96).

²⁴ Glenn Willmott's argument that rural Canada and its inhabitants might be seen as "living in an invisible city, with its modern modes of production and class-social structure" (qtd. in Ivison and Edwards 10) is based in part on the modernizing effects that print genres, radio broadcasts and other media transmissions from the big cities has on rural subjectivities. If a do-it-yourself media culture is currently emerging with internet culture on the World Wide Web, where bloggers and YouTube posters from anywhere may broadcast the events of their own lives for potentially international audiences, the most powerful media producers are still based in major cities. Events taking place in cities like Vancouver continue to be allotted disproportionate space in news media coverage, according to some rural perspectives, because the numbers of potential audience-members are so concentrated in such cities. See, for example, one reader's comment on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's online coverage of a November, 2009 fire that destroyed several small businesses in central Vancouver. DifficultCurmudgeon wrote "An early morning fire in Vancouver and we get a full report before I'm out of bed. On Saturday and Sunday, Friday's BC news headlines stick around all weekend. [...] A large fire in downtown Vancouver is newsworthy. Yes. It should be covered. But why is it the very top priority of all BC news, I wonder" ("Story Comments").

²⁵ I owe my awareness of *Headhunter* and this passage in particular to Laurie Ricou's 1995 article on Vancouver literature, "Vancouver—Rim of the Park."

²⁶ I say that Anderson "implied" a link between the representation of capital-city geography in a novel and the designation of "we-Filipino-readers" as an audience because I am conscious that this link introduces a slippage in Anderson's argument. Anderson seems primarily to be arguing that novels were among the media that allowed readers to imagine a community analogous to a national one (Anderson 26; cf. also Culler 23). The secondary argument, which is clearly implied in the passage I am citing, is that recognizing their nation represented on the pages of a novel would allow readers to imagine themselves united with a national community of readers. Jonathan Culler has argued, and I agree, that this secondary argument is a weaker one (28, 30) and that Anderson is best valued by attending especially to the insights of his primary argument (38). In citing Anderson as influential, I am not forgetting that his argument about nation and novels have also been the subject of important critique (cf. Bhabha 308-311; cf. also the implied warning in Said's "The Novel as Beginning Intention" [81]).

²⁷ I say so deliberately, conscious that with this generalization I may be repeating the same “erroneous conclusion” about Ottawa’s literary status that Steven Artelle identifies in W. J. Keith’s 1992 book *Literary Images of Ontario*, which observes that “Ottawa remains among ‘the smaller Ontarian cities [that] have not for the most part attracted the sustained interest of literary artists’” (Artelle 33). Artelle convincingly argues for a strong post-confederation literary culture in Ottawa; perhaps it has indeed had a stronger history of interesting literary artists than the other cities I name. My point is that we make these conclusions, correctly or not: our respective maps of world literary settings and their prominence are affected by prejudice, the accidents of canonization, and our eclectic reading lists as much as by actual literary output. Friends continue to ask me if there really is enough writing set in Vancouver to base a dissertation on, and literary journalists (cf. Chong, Wiebe, Marchand) continue to bemoan the lack of a vital literature set in certain Canadian cities, despite its ever-accumulating quantity.

²⁸ Chong’s complaint recalls to mind Hugh MacLennan’s rueful anecdote about the American publisher who suggested he set his books elsewhere than in Canada, in order for them to be saleable. “A boy meets girl in Paris, one thing leads to another and they—well, it’s interesting,” offered the publisher. “But a boy meets a girl in Winnipeg and they swing into the same routine and who cares? [...] for the American public you’ve got to see it’s a fact that Winnipeg kills interest in the whole thing” (MacLennan 117).

²⁹ I am grateful to Katja Thieme for bringing this review to my attention.

³⁰ Stylish clothing, as it turns out, and his own reflection (Gibson 25). As a science fiction novel set in the present time, *Spook Country* deliberately constructs for its readers an unfamiliar new perspective on a presumably recognizable reality. Tito and the novel’s other spooks move about in recognizable everyday geographies, but they are involved in an underground culture that is ordinarily invisible to mainstream readers. The novel’s use of setting is an important part of its play on the recognizable world.

³¹ Seeing his home valley on television, filmed as if it were somewhere else, David Mazel writes about the unnerving “realization that I was watching ‘my’ environment *perform*, that for perhaps millions of viewers it would have a greater reality as something other than itself” (138, his italics).

³² In this group I would include Malcolm Lowry’s short story “The Bravest Boat,” which was first published in the United States and which, like *Spook Country*, addresses itself to an audience whose otherwise broad geographical knowledge stops short at the Canadian border. This argument about Lowry’s “The Bravest Boat” was the subject of a paper I presented at the 2009 Malcolm Lowry Centennial Conference at the University of British Columbia.

³³ Linguistic pragmatics is the discipline, within the philosophy, psychology, and history of language, which understands language to be meaningful only in the social contexts of its actual use by speakers and their audiences. To the pragmatics analyst, a sentence is not meaningful until it is uttered by a language user, and then its unique meaning is determined not by grammar and lexicon exclusively but rather by how these and other factors contribute to the whole utterance’s interaction with its context. Some analysts focus on speakers’ intended meanings in context (e.g. Clark, Prince); others, like me, focus on audiences’ interpretive reception.

³⁴ Clark and Marshall, who defend the possibility of mutual knowledge, argue that people take certain kinds of evidence as guarantees of mutual knowledge, that checking this evidence can be done quickly enough to make real-time language processing possible (34), and that people rely on assurance of mutual knowledge every time they (sincerely) make definite reference to something in conversation (43). Sperber and Wilson (20) and Toolan (200), argue that actual mutuality of knowledge is impossible to ensure. However, they too argue that communication relies on a kind of social contract of cooperation (which they call, respectively, a guarantee of *relevance* and a guarantee of *orientedness to the other*) and on people’s remarkable attunement to each other’s signals.

Notes for Chapter One

³⁵ For example, Janet Giltrow’s analyses of the stylistics of narrative language in certain texts suggest that the “subjectivity” that registers in narrative language need not be assigned to any individual, personified figure (such as writer, narrator, or character). Rather, she construes narrative language as a storytelling medium textured by the shifting (“Mischief”), multiple (“Democratic”), and social (“Mischief,” “Ironies”)

qualities of its subjective style. She sees subjectivity unanchored from specific subjects in narrative language. Giltrow demonstrates, for example, how narrative language may *replicate* (215) polite ways of speaking that exert a social power to include or exclude (“Ironies”), but she does not attribute these politeness moves to an (individual, personified) narrator-figure. Where she does point to authors or narrators, her emphasis is on how they compose or “manage” narrative language “for the benefit of the addressee” (“Mischief 220), not on how they express themselves to particular addressees. Likewise, when Giltrow analyzes how narrative language “materialize[s] the flow of consciousness” (220), she does not attribute this “consciousness” to an individual, experiencing subjectivity. Giltrow’s approach to what she calls the “stylistics of subjectivity” (“Democratic” 73) offers me an excellent model of how to trace pragmatics dynamics in narrative language without forcing narrative language to conform to pragmatics models of a linguistic encounter between embodied, unitary, personified subjectivities.

³⁶ By “free indirect narration” I mean what has elsewhere been called “free indirect discourse,” a “free indirect style” (Genette *Narrative* 174), or “represented speech and thought” (Banfield 12). It is narration in which a third-person character’s thoughts, feelings, expressive idiom, and physical and temporal orientation in the world (as represented by deictics such as *here* and *now*) are presented in the narrative language so immediately as to suggest that the character’s expressive language is being directly quoted, except that no quotation marks distinguish this discourse from the surrounding narration, the character continues to be referred to in the third person, and verb tenses are consistent with the temporal position from which the surrounding narration is spoken rather than consistent with the character’s experience. Depending on how it manifests in the specific text, I read this narrative mode as a complicated layering of the narrator’s and the character’s subjectivities. The slim margin of difference retained between their subject positions by the pronouns and tense suggests that the narrator is empathetically or ironically representing the character’s subjectivity to his/her audience.

³⁷ I am not alone in observing that this is plausible. Narratologist Monika Fludernick agrees with Ann Banfield that certain literary language is grammatically “unspeakable,” but she concedes that, nevertheless, readers interpret literary language using “schemes” and “scripts” of communication in particular contexts: “Narrative ‘instances’ (narrators, narratees, etc.),” she writes, can “be regarded as a product of the reader’s interpretive strategies which are in turn determined by [...] communicative scripts (for narratological discourse)” (65). Cf. also Joan Mulholland (113-114).

³⁸ As Ellen Prince explains, language is marked not only with large distinctions (like the difference of *definiteness* marked by the use of “the” instead of “a”) but also with fine gradations of familiarity. Readers of written language, like listeners to spoken language, can distinguish whether writers or speakers assume that something is totally unknown (“brand new”) to their audiences, known but not yet “on the table” of their shared discourse (“unused”), or known because it has been implied or evoked by previous language by the surrounding situation (“inferable” or “textually/situationally evoked”) (235-6).

³⁹ One further distinction is that between inferables and what Prince calls “containing inferables,” which are referred to in noun phrases that contain reference to the entity from which they may be inferred. A speaker who refers to something with a containing inferable has judged that the reference is not quite familiar enough to be identifiable without being clearly tied to the entity which makes it inferable, and offers her hearer a little extra help.

⁴⁰ “Copresence” is Clark and Marshall’s answer to Prince’s “evocation”. Prince notes speakers’ assumptions that their addressees will recognize their referents as “evoked”—that is, already salient and stand-out—in the textual or situational context. Clark and Marshall theorize that speakers take an extra step. Trying to assure themselves that their references are adequately worded to help their addressees recognize their referents, speakers calculate whether they and their addressees were mutually present together with the object of their reference: Were they mutually aware of the object’s previous mention in the ongoing text of their conversation, and was that moment of mutual awareness recent enough and memorable enough to identify the new reference? Are they mutually aware of the object’s presence in their physical situation?

⁴¹ In this analysis, Giltrow does not interpret the novel’s narrative language as projecting a fictional narrator addressing a specific audience. Rather, she focuses on how these sets of expressions work symbolically as linguistic demonstrations of the social climate of the novel’s “very polite” genteel world (217). And she discusses how the narrative language’s ostensive signals of tacit knowledge organize the reader’s experience:

These polite expressions [constrain] readers, at their most extreme in the withholding of the wedding story [that is central to the plot], leaving readers with the unmistakable sensation of not knowing what Edith did but having to go on as if they do know. (219)

Giltrow is discussing readers' knowledge as what they can know and/or infer about the world of the novel based on its own language. She discusses how readers consult "common knowledge," about things like "travel," to be able to infer for example that a cluster of references to a "brochure," "tourists," and "rates" implicitly indicate the setting to be a hotel. But these are not cases of narrative language referring to specific things (a specific Vancouver hotel, for instance), hence making readers conscious that they know precisely the identity of the thing referred to. My project examines the latter sort of reference; hence I differentiate between implied audience and reader, where Giltrow does not.

⁴² Bakhtin's term *addressivity* also points to the inter-personal orientation of utterances. But while my approach to narrative language is deeply influenced by Bakhtin, I do not use this term to analyze the social inflections of narrative language, for two reasons. The first is that, for Bakhtin, "addressivity," or the "quality of being directed to someone" ("Problem" 62), characterizes texts as whole utterances. Generic and stylistic indices of addressivity must be interpreted together at the level of the whole text, especially since it is as wholes that literary texts enter into public circulation (95, 98). Addressivity is thus more useful for discussing how novels or short stories in their entirety greet particular audiences of readers than for characterizing a narrator's particular address, especially since address often fluctuates along the narrative line of the text. My second reason for not using Bakhtin's term addressivity is that Bakhtin is less obviously interested in the social, interpersonal qualities of the relationship between author and addressee (the intimacy, inclusiveness, attitude, extent of common ground, and differential power of this relationship) than the specifically linguistic intertextuality of the author's utterance with other statements. Bakhtin's concept of *dialogism*, like addressivity, points to an author's "orientation towards the listener and his [anticipated] answer" ("Discourse" 281). But dialogism is a feature of the word—the word's quality of interwovenness with the utterances and anticipated responses of other speakers and writers (284)—not a feature of the social relationship between the author and his interlocutors. Bakhtin's discussion of dialogism in "Discourse in the Novel" might otherwise have usefully suggested a solution to my first problem with addressivity. Since not only whole utterances but passages, phrases, and even individual words within the utterance may be remarked to be dialogic (cf. 284), those individual words might also have been argued, by the same logic, to bear traces of addressivity. But Bakhtin's reasoning in "The Problem of Speech Genres" is right, I think; addressivity—in the sense of a directedness to *reading* others—is better located at the interface between the whole text and the social world than in isolable details of the text. Despite our differences, Bakhtin's addressivity remains the nearest term I have yet found to one that would indicate the quality of oriented-ness to another in narrative language. As J. Douglas Kneale points out, no term for address exists in classical rhetoric, since forensic rhetoric, which he claims the classical terms were designed to describe, is "intrinsically vocative" and was thus taken for granted as being addressed (Kneale 12).

⁴³ Note that Chafe's argument, that knowledge of the train and the track cannot be shared with any addressee, implies that the addressees of narrative language do not share any knowledge with the speaker except that which they acquire through linguistic copresence. That is, addressees only "know" things that the speaker has already told them; since the reference to the train comes at the beginning of Hemingway's story, the addressees can have no prior knowledge of it. At least in theory it is possible, however, for narrative language to construct a scenario where speaker and addressee stand side-by-side, in physical copresence. If that were the case in the story Chafe discusses, "the train" would be potentially well-known by the addressee despite its never having yet been spoken about; but then the story would have to be narrated in the present tense. (Narrating about ongoing events to an audience copresent with the events is unusual in fiction; it is more common in authoritative sports commentary or animal documentaries, which offer informative glosses on scenes that may otherwise be difficult for the audience to parse.) And it happens frequently that speakers refer with proper nouns to elements of setting that have never yet been spoken of in the course of the story; in these cases, they seem to assume that their addressees share these elements of setting with them because of community membership. Chafe only considers linguistic copresence because, unlike me, he is not interested in analyzing audience design for addressees other than the reader.

⁴⁴ "Familiarity" and "identifiability" do not quite mean the same thing; in fact, Chafe's identifiability involves the dimension of sharedness that Prince wants to set aside and that I contrarily add back into her

analytical vocabulary. An “identifiable” referent is one that, among other things, a speaker’s assumes “to be already shared” by speaker and listener. But identifiability could be roughly equated to familiarity: Prince writes of speakers’ assumption that a specific referent will be “familiar to the hearer” (Prince 233-4), and Chafe of speakers’ assumption that the listener will be able to “identify” that specific referent (Chafe 93) (on the basis, Chafe adds, of it not only being (a) shared with the speaker, but also (b) “verbalized in a sufficiently identifying way,” and (c) “contextually salient” [94]).

⁴⁵ Chafe also discusses “reader-oriented narration,” where the speaker’s references are pitched according to the readers’ familiarity with the referents according to their linguistic copresence with the ongoing narration. He notes moments in the Hemingway story where the speaker interrupts his protagonist-orientation, in a move to accommodate readers. Hemingway’s speaker suddenly opts to use indefinite references to refer to storyworld objects that the protagonist is already be familiar with, when he introduces to the story a surprising object that readers might have found disorienting, if the narrative hadn’t acknowledge its newness to them. Chafe comments that even when an author has established a narrative representation of a protagonist’s consciousness, the author “does not, or need not, consistently follow a purely protagonist-oriented strategy.” He may shift to “an alternative strategy,” which is “concerned with identifiability for the unacknowledged reader” (285). “Writers,” Chafe concludes, “have creative license in the manner in which they choose to balance these two alternatives” (286).

⁴⁶ Cordelia haunts Elaine throughout the novel, and Elaine looks for her everywhere in Toronto. Although at one point (422) Elaine apostrophizes Cordelia, turning from self-address to address her absent, long-lost nemesis and friend, Elaine tends to speak about her rather than to her.

⁴⁷ Secret-keeping is rare for this speaker, but it occasionally punctuates her otherwise explanatory style, suggesting a latent power to exclude as well as establishing suspense. (Suspense-building, like narrating generally, is social!) Very early in the novel she hints uninformatively, “I am a believer in [...] sensible names for children, because look what happened to Cordelia” (15). This phrase, “because look what happened...,” presupposes tacit knowledge which no addressee could yet in fact know, if he were relying for her information on what Elaine has told her so far. If he were relying instead on community membership with Elaine—mutual membership in the community who knows what happened to Cordelia, in the case of this reference—he would be an inappropriate addressee, already knowing the story’s punch line. Moments like these emphasize the novel’s portrait of girls who spellbind and control each other by speaking—by powerfully withholding information from each other, by confidentially disclosing select information as secrets, by taunting, or by performing authoritative roles.

⁴⁸ “Subtext” is a rather loose way of explaining the social dynamics of utterances which are directly addressed to some but not all of the audiences involved. There is no actual “text” to such subtexts; putting the social force of utterances into a verbal form is simply an easy way for me to illustrate it in this written paper. A more traditional way of specifying the social force that utterances may have for side-participants is to use “speech act” terminology, and describe my “subtexts” in terms of “indirect illocutionary acts,” as Clark and Carlson do (210). (Indirect illocutionary acts are *indirect* because they act towards the side-participants rather than the direct addressees, and they are *illocutionary* acts because speakers accomplished them by making their utterances.) However, unlike Clark and Carlson’s examples, which are of indirect *informing*, *requesting*, and *accusing* (210-11), it is sometimes difficult to describe adequately the complicated indirect social force of an utterance using a vocabulary of speech acts. I hope that “subtext” is a suggestive interpretive tool, despite its imprecision.

⁴⁹ Giltrow and Stouck’s “The Mischief of Language in *Swamp Angel*” argues that the shifting, mischievous narrative style of Ethel Wilson’s novel creates, for its readers, an experience of the “precariousness of knowledge” and the fault-lines of authority that the novel reveals to be part of a modern, postcolonial epistemology (237). Giltrow and Stouck highlight the shock that readers feel when a narrator, who has been adeptly accommodating and acknowledging their knowledge of the storyworld, suddenly betrays their confidence and—by saying something unexpected or assuming knowledge they do not in fact have—speaks as if to someone else. Giltrow and Stouck’s analysis indicates that readers’ experiences of relationship to the text are sharpest precisely where they are shunted unexpectedly from knowingness to uncertainty. In my terms, that is, they are sharpest when they meet the edge of the “circle” of mutuality.

⁵⁰ I read Timothy Taylor’s *Stanley Park* my first year in Vancouver, shortly after the novel’s publication and just as I was learning the names of streets in my new city’s downtown. Reading it gave me a special sense of contact with another person’s imaginative version of the city, and the novel’s version coloured my own emerging city map. Taylor’s language wove itself into my reading context. Eventually, I was

reminded of how completely Timothy Taylor and I remained strangers to each other when I spied him walking his dog through a park nearby my home. But the novel had invited me to share some ground with the segment of his language and creative vision that wrote the novel, and although that language and creative vision is marshaled by a fictional speaker in the novel I continued to loosely identify the speaker with Taylor.

⁵¹ Using the words “social action” here, I am stepping somewhat outside of linguistics pragmatics to greet new rhetorical theories of genre. “Social action” is Carolyn R. Miller’s term for the move that an utterance makes—a move that its recipients will recognize if they perceive it as fitting into a particular genre. Genres are types of social action (Miller 24). I expect that a genre analysis of the types of social action literary texts and plays achieve by recognizably handling their references to real-world settings in particular ways would be an illuminating extension of the research I do in this dissertation.

⁵² This excerpt is in fact spoken from Naomi’s childhood perspective. As a child she lived in the Marpole house; she can no longer recall it without the pain of loss. But she is shifting out of that childhood perspective at precisely this moment in the narration, because of the pain. Hence I interpret the explanatory gloss (“a comfortable residential neighbourhood”) as appended by her adult narration, despite that the tense markers still index the telling to the time of her childhood.

⁵³ Bakhtin identified this kind of dialogic incorporation of and response to contemporary public statements as being the defining characteristic of the novel as a unique literary genre (“Epic” 6-7, 26; “Discourse” 273).

⁵⁴ These reference points are treated as “given” information, and used to elaborate and identify other more specific place-references. Some of the other references are also phrase as givens, but their givenness is assumed to stem not from an intimate knowledge of Vancouver but from other more general kinds of world knowledge. For example, in the reference “the exhibition grounds called Hastings Park in Vancouver,” the definite article indicates that Kogawa is designing her language for an audience for whom these exhibition grounds are not an unknown. However, the modifying phrase “called Hastings Park in Vancouver” suggests that the identity of “the exhibition grounds” is designed to be *inferable* based on a general familiarity with large cities—they tend to have exhibition grounds—rather than already familiar from prior knowledge of these particular grounds. Similarly, if Kogawa were designing her language for an audience who knows Vancouver well, she might have simply written “the interior,” rather than adding the modifying phrase “of the province.”

Notes for Chapter Two

⁵⁵ The definite references that I identify, using Ellen Prince’s taxonomy, as “inferable” phrasings include “the park of the seaport,” “the giant trees,” and “everyone.” These references fall into what I described in Chapter One as a special category of inferables characteristically used in fiction: they treat items that the audience could not actually have encountered yet as given information, as if confident that the audience will be able to “infer” the existence of those items by imaginatively supplying them. By beginning with these inferables, the narrator of “The Bravest Boat” plunges his audience into a Vancouver scene that is essentially unknown to that audience—as the general pattern of his references to the details of the scene eventually reveals. Predominantly, he refers his audience to objects that are at the focus of his narrative perspective as if these objects were all new to his audience: he uses indefinite references to introduce “a constellation of seven noble red cedars,” “a butcher,” and “a shop window,” for instance. Early inferables, such as “the park of the seaport,” imply that he assumes his audience will be able to imaginatively accommodate the sudden appearance of the story’s topography—he trusts their general sense of what parks and seaports look like—but perhaps also that he wants them to sense their own disorientation in this place.

⁵⁶ Lost Lagoon is a real landmark in Vancouver’s Stanley Park. Like references to San Francisco and Rio de Janeiro, the narrator’s reference to it points to a real place, for those readers who recognize it, as much as it points to a landmark in of Lowry’s fictional Enochvilleport. Strictly speaking, Lowry’s decision to explicitly fictionalize his Vancouver prevents readers who would recognize the city from feeling the social effects of their comparative familiarity with it. But Lowry’s Enochvilleport is very clearly based on his close observation of Vancouver, and his Gaspool is obviously a stand-in for Gastown. Along with

references like the one to Lost Lagoon, which tether his explicitly fictional city firmly to the really existing one, I suggest that this story's clear basis in the author's relationship to the real city invites readers who recognize Vancouver in it to feel the social effects of their lives' overlap with Lowry's. A reader's potential identification of Enochvilleport with Lowry's experience of Vancouver, and hence her potential impulse to compare her own Vancouver with Lowry's by way of her reading of "The Bravest Boat," would be supported as well by the story's intertextual links with other Lowry stories. In "Ghostkeeper," for example, another affectionate husband and wife couple takes a blustery springtime walk around the city park, and in this story the park is specifically located in the real world: it is "Stanley Park, in Vancouver, British Columbia" (139). "Ghostkeeper" also links the characters and the narration of the story quite directly to Lowry's own life, as the narrator addresses a "Margie dear," presumably a version of Lowry's wife Margerie, telling her that the wife character in the story must be dressed in an outfit of Margie's (143).

⁵⁷ For readers who know about Lowry's years spent living with Margerie in a sea-side shack down and across the inlet from Vancouver, those biographical details might suggest that the author's deep feelings about the city and its surrounds make their way detectably into the narrator's perspective when the narrator comments that "nearly the only human dwellings visible on this side of the water that had any air of belonging, or in which their inhabitants could be said any longer to participate were, paradoxically, a few lonely little self-built shacks and floathouses, that might have been driven out of the city altogether, down to the water's edge into the sea itself [...] and all standing, even the most somber, with their fluted tin chimneys smoking here and there like toy tramp steamers, as though in defiance of the town, before eternity" ("Boat" 17).

⁵⁸ Ethel Wilson plays with this quality of removal from the known world when she begins a new chapter in *The Innocent Traveller* with "Once upon a time there was a negro who lived in Vancouver and his name was Joe Fortes" (144). Joe Fortes really lived in Vancouver and is remembered as a minor local celebrity; Wilson uses the fiction formula *Once upon a time* to conjure up a new idea in the mind of her distant, unknowing readers, as well as to parody the buoyantly superficial and fanciful mind of her innocent protagonist, Topaz Edgeworth.

⁵⁹ Graham Huggan's work on mapping and narration in Canadian and Australian fiction reminds me that, as city building stakes out its claims for the authority of its storyteller and the social value of its represented space, it "brings with it obvious opportunities for political manipulation," just as maps do (9). Lowry, Wilson, and Taylor control how Vancouver and its diverse population are represented in their stories, admitting their implied audiences access to (their fictional versions of) the city only by way of their own selective, political perspectives on it. These perspectives may be subject to political critique. Indeed, Arnold Itwaru has critiqued Wilson's depiction of Chinese Canadians living in Vancouver, arguing that their portrayal in *Innocent Traveller* naturalizes their position as servants and as racial types (37), thus exerting a "conformist authoritarian" control over them (38). (In response to Itwaru, Giltrow and Stouck have argued that in *Swamp Angel* the narrator's style undermines her own authority and the presumption of knowing narrative control, foregrounding the sense of "both knowing and not knowing the Other" [236].) Burke Cullen and W. H. New have discussed the passage in *Swamp Angel* where Maggie examines a map of British Columbia in terms that complement Huggan's. Both focus on the map as taking part in a system of imaginative control over landscape, but as exposing the limits of that system as well (Cullen 196-7, New *Land Sliding* 153)

⁶⁰ Admittedly, storytelling always begins with an assumption of some sort of common ground (cf. Clark and Brennan [147-8] on how speakers cannot simply "send" their messages without taking account of their relationship to their audience and the mutual knowledge they possess together). But in the simplest case of "fiction" storytelling this ground is not literally a physical ground, a setting shared by narrator and audience—especially when the storytelling is written and destined for print publication and widespread commercial distribution, in which case the audience might be from anywhere. (Chafe points out that the social and cognitive basis of storytelling is imaginative displacement of attention from the physical place in which speaker and hearer are co-present together into another place and time remembered or imagined by the speaker. Written narrative language reflects this basis in its widespread use of a telling pattern he calls "displaced immediacy" [226].)

⁶¹ Someone once suggested to me at a conference that perhaps Vancouver remains unknown enough as a setting for fiction to be a special case. Possibly those readers who do recognize Vancouver landmarks as places with which they themselves have some sort of lived relationship find the experience of reading

fiction set here so remarkable that they may interpret the narrative voice as especially addressed to a local audience when, if it were set elsewhere, they would not notice nearly the same specialization of address.

⁶² Influential theories of the rhetoric of fiction and of reader response conceive of the primary audience of a written narrative as an anonymous, un-locatable reader, although they acknowledge that the generalized reader assumed by the text is necessarily different from any specific individual reader. Cf. Booth, Iser, Rabinowitz.

⁶³ This experience of disconnection from one's fellow citizens has been argued to be the result of certain characteristics of urban space and the street culture that accommodates them. The sheer size of an urban population reminds you that you cannot know everyone, and the necessity of sharing public spaces of commerce, leisure, and transit with strangers reminds you that in fact you know barely anyone. In *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*, Richard Sennett laments, as well, the phenomenon that Georg Simmel influentially identified in "The Metropolis and Mental Life": that modern urban citizens seek to protect themselves from exposure to the potentially painful provocation of people different from themselves. Sennett argues that urban plans based on a grid pattern, which presuppose that city space could expand outward indefinitely, "neutralize" urban space, evacuating it of any power to organize the social lives of people moving through it and to bring them into engaged social contact with one another.

⁶⁴ "As they confronted these texts," Henkin writes, "city dwellers became public subjects stripped of their particular identities" (12). This was true as well of readers of published texts more generally, newspapers and novels included. But the street reader of signs was, importantly, situated in a specific location while reading (Henkin 10)—a situation that would make him or her aware of the locatedness of this community membership, I would argue. Because these signs might be written and read by anyone who passed by, Henkin argues that "city readers were subjects in a far more inclusive and democratic public" than the "public sphere" imagined by Habermas, a public group "in which remarkable numbers of ordinary people consumed and composed written messages in the public space of the metropolis [...] a broader-based, more boisterous, and more populous public centred in the streets" (13).

⁶⁵ While reading for this chapter, I compiled a rough database of references in fiction to parts of Vancouver. Of all the parts of Vancouver to be treated as if they were to some degree known to the audience—that is, as if they were already evoked or inferable, if not unused, in Prince's taxonomy (cf. Chapter 1)—here are those that turned up most frequently, in ranked order. The top five are part of what I have called the view horseshoe: Stanley Park; Burrard Inlet; the Lion's Gate Bridge; the mountains; English Bay; Granville Street; Chinatown; False Creek; UBC (usually as "the university"); Main Street.

⁶⁶ In Sperber and Wilson's terms, this sense of personal relevance might be explained as follows: narrators assume that the terrain they are treating as common ground is a cognitive environment that is mutually manifest to themselves and their audience. A story that makes changes to or offers new information about their cognitive environment will be compelling (and comprehensible) to their audience because it is relevant to them.

⁶⁷ Vancouver's Main Street is over eighty blocks long, and runs through Chinatown as well as a variety of other neighbourhoods. The Punjabi Market spans a few blocks' length around 49th Avenue.

⁶⁸ *Kush Valley Sweets* does not exist on Vancouver's Main Street anymore, if it ever did. Whereas it is real to the narrator and audience, readers who seek to recognize themselves as sharing ground with these personae are forced to confront the indirectness of fiction as a medium of place-sharing.

⁶⁹ Most of Aubrey's references to specific streets, like the reference to Nelson in this quotation, treat them as unused information—that is, as well known (cf. Chapter 1). But he gives the merest of orienting explanations for Richards Street at the start of his narrative, opening with "Richards Street in downtown Vancouver is pretty interesting or pretty boring, depending on your point of view" (1). This opening takes recognition of Vancouver for granted, while anchoring Richards Street in the city's downtown for Aubrey's audience. Given the rest of the story's casual assumptions of local knowledge, however, I read even this introductory gesture as claiming Richards as common ground—if ground at first somewhat outside of the audience's immediate purview.

⁷⁰ According to a Wikipedia entry on High School football championship winners in the 1940s-60s, "King Edward High School no longer exists and was demolished to make room for the expansion of Vancouver General Hospital. The school was located on 12th Avenue and Oak Street in Vancouver, BC, from 1905 to 1972."

⁷¹ Jook-Liang is more discreet than her brothers about the relevance of her stories to her audience, quietly assuming its relevance in references to mutually known places instead of explicitly claiming it. Jung-Sum occasionally breaks into a colloquial, oral narrative style, one which emphasizes the inter-personal sociality of his address, as he recounts an intimate story of his own budding gay sexuality. He is personable: “Some of my friends got to meet him, too, but Frank tended to have a temper and a mixed-up kind of English and Chinese, so that *there were misunderstandings, I guess*” (112, my emphasis). Sek-Lung, the youngest of the narrators and the one most assimilated into an English-speaking world, addresses his audience directly, locating them in the Vancouver he knows. Speaking of his wind-chimes his Grandmama used to make (not being master of Chinese terms of relationship, Sek-Lung refers to their Poh-Poh as Grandmama), he says, “Hers were not ordinary, carelessly made chimes, such as those you now find in our Chinatown stores, whose rattling noises drive you mad” (145). Later he describes a blue notebook Meiying gives him by saying that it is “the kind you can still buy at the Five and Dime” (233). Gender, relative age, and degree of assimilation seem to inform the different degrees of these characters’ forthrightness: if, as I conclude, *The Jade Peony*’s narrators address an apparently non-Chinese audience, or at least an audience which does not know the history of life in Chinatown, it is perhaps fitting that Sek-Lung’s gestures of address are most overt.

⁷² In their recollections of their neighbourhood, the children indicate that people of a variety of ethnicities lived together in Chinatown. Their neighbours in the “damp shacks” Jook-Liang described, whom she imagined struggling for survival alongside her own family, were Jewish, Polish and Italian as well as Chinese (51). And Sek-Lung’s classmates at Strathcona Elementary were, in his words, “an unruly, untidy mixed bunch of immigrants and displaced persons” (180) whose “dialects and accents conflicted” and “skin colours and backgrounds clashed” outside the classroom, although their Scots-Canadian teacher united them as new Canadians inside it (184). While *The Jade Peony*’s narrators’ Chinatown was not a racially homogenous neighbourhood, though, it was uniformly a neighbourhood of immigrants and immigrants’ children—people who felt that their degree of belonging to an English-speaking, white Canada (in Vancouver) was painfully in question.

⁷³ These narrators frame the world outside of Chinatown as being the rest of Canada, not just the rest of Vancouver. Whether Chinatown and its inhabitants were properly considered part of Canada or not was a matter of debate between Jook-Liang and her immigrant grandmother (37, 191).

⁷⁴ Interestingly, a similar stylistics of deliberately, generously padding otherwise knowledge-presuming proper nouns turns up in the oral histories transcribed in a project called *Opening Doors: Vancouver’s East End*. In the late 1970s, Daphne Marlatt and Carol Itter, two young, white artists and writers who lived in the area, collected life stories and neighbourhood histories as told by residents of Strathcona, the mostly low-income, immigrant, downtown Vancouver neighbourhood that subsumes Chinatown and the downtown eastside. The edited interview transcripts published in *Opening Doors* show frequent examples of speakers using full, formal proper nouns introduced by definite articles when referencing landmarks that, I presume, they were not sure their interviewers would recognize.

⁷⁵ These novels extend *The Jade Peony*’s map of known territory even further, however, stretching it—however thinly—southward to Shaughnessy in both novels, substantially westward to Point Grey and Kerrisdale in *Disappearing Moon Café*, and deep into the West End of downtown Vancouver in *The End of East*. The larger size of the territory assumed known in these novels owes to the narrators’ accounts of their contemporary experiences of Vancouver in the 1990s and 2000s: their narrators Kae and Sammy are the grandchildren of immigrants and apparently experience greater comfort, moving around Vancouver, than *The Jade Peony*’s second-generation children. In *The End of East*, Sammy’s grandfather does not dare to enter Stanley Park, “where he stands and stares at the white families strolling along the water” (17); her father plunges into it but is soon pushed out by racist white people (78); but Sammy walks comfortably along the Stanley Park seawall, which she likes because it makes her forget her East Vancouver roots (13).

⁷⁶ Park Royal, which stands at the commercial hub of West Vancouver, on a prominent corner of the highway leading through the conjoined suburb cities from downtown Vancouver proper, is a recurrent feature of the common grounds assumed by almost every fictional narrative set in north-shore Vancouver—many of which were written by Coupland.

⁷⁷ Douglas Coupland’s conception of Vancouver consistently extends the city southwards across the American border. “Bellingham & the Border” gets a page’s worth of attention in Coupland’s non-fiction introduction to Vancouver, *City of Glass*, as a twice-yearly shopping destination for “Vancouver mothers” (15). Knowledge of a rather different trade route makes Vancouver’s harbour part of a regional common

ground that includes points along the Juan de Fuca Strait and the American seaboard in Bertrand W. Sinclair's story "The Golden Fleece." The shipping-minded narrator in this story assumes that the Marquesas, the Aleutian Archipelago, the California Coast and Ensenada, Mexico are all common ground along with Vancouver's Coal Harbour, Burrard Inlet, Brockton Point, Narrows, Point Atkinson, and Capilano mountain range.

⁷⁸ Daphne Marlatt's writer-narrator figure in *Ana Historic* also looks down at Vancouver from a North Vancouver household. She looks down "from the frame [of] her bedroom window, past the dark conifers at night, the quiet blocks of houses closed for sleep, dreaming [her] future overtown in lights, city-brilliant across the harbour" (97-8). From there she imagines the mental life and perspective of a historical Vancouver resident, Mrs. Richards, who herself looks up across early industrial Vancouver at the mountains (40). Marlatt's text, however, is so much more concerned with the processes of writing and imagining history than Coupland's, so much more private in address, and so much less interested in specific North Vancouver locations for their own names' sake, that her use of a North Shore perspective on the city is not as remarkable as Coupland's for the purposes of my discussion. Meanwhile, the list of fictions whose narrators or characters look up across the Inlet at the mountains from Vancouver proper includes, for a start, Bertrand Sinclair's "The Golden Fleece," all of Ethel Wilson's Vancouver fictions, *Disappearing Moon Café*, *The Jade Peony*, Lee Maracle's "Polka Partners," *The End of East*, and Zsuzsi Gartner's "City of My Dreams."

⁷⁹ In their ability to see 1970s-era Vancouver as embryo-new, innocent, and full of potential for peace, Coupland's narrators betray their own privilege and—I would argue—their white, middle-class naïveté. No Vancouverite who identified him or herself with aboriginal or otherwise racialized and marginalized local populations could so easily frame the city as innocently dreaming of peace. As *The Jade Peony* attests, long before the 1980s (indeed, from the first moments of its colonial birth), Vancouver had already established its capacity for "civil" violence. Meanwhile, and not incidentally, the narrators betray their own suburban peripheral position with respect to the city centre: the city's darkness is invisible behind its twinkling lights from the perspective of their distant mountain slopes.

⁸⁰ In thinking here of texture, I am influenced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's work, which defines texture as a level of organization just below the level of structure (16) and, more importantly, an intrinsically interactive sensual property; she uses texture to think about relationality in a way that attends to the density, sensuality, and ongoing historical specificity of relations between bodies—and between bodies and things (13-17).

⁸¹ As I have noted, Robert Alter maintains throughout *Imagined Cities* that "the notion of an urban community with a coherent collective purpose dissolves" (49) in the canonical urban novels he discusses. Of Charles Dickens's writing, he does allow that "The coziness and cheeriness of the Dickensian world are quite genuine, and he [Dickens] continues to imagine in novel after novel a small sustaining community of the kindhearted within the urban wasteland" (50). But, he implies, Dickens's characters experience London as a place where there are definite edges to the small worlds of common ground: "one should also note that his representation of human solidarity characteristically sequesters in protected little enclaves within the larger urban scene" (55).

⁸² For example, one argument against the gentrification of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside is that many residents say they would not feel comfortable living either in a spruced-up version of the neighbourhood or in any other part of Vancouver, either. Although many of the neighbourhood's affordable housing options have not been properly and humanely maintained, quality of life is, in one respect, better there for some of the residents than it would be in upper-middle-class neighbourhoods like Kerrisdale or Kitsilano: at least as part of the caring and unpretentious community of the existing Downtown Eastside, they can live among others who share their struggles with poverty and marginalization (Wendy Pedersen and Jean Swanson, *Gentrification Walking Tour, Heart of the City* festival, Nov 2, 2008).

⁸³ Indeed, the first outcome can be given an even more strongly negative cast. As analysts such as Michael Bennett argue, powerful mainstream society can build walls around others, as well as themselves: discrimination has led to a "spatialization of race" in American cities, constructing the "overwhelming social barriers" segregating racialized and impoverished city-dwellers in inner-city "ghettos" (70-73). As for the second outcome, Georg Simmel influentially argued that city-dwellers' indifference to others was a necessary coping strategy in the face of an overwhelmingly various and populated urban world (12). But many analysts have lamented this indifference as a sign of social breakdown and a medium of

marginalization (cf. Sennett's search for a way to arouse conscience [132] and sympathy [141] among strangers).

⁸⁴ Considering Tim Cresswell's arguments in *In Place/Out of Place* about the power dynamics deciding rights to space, and Nicholas Blomley's arguments in *Unsettling the City* about conceptions of public and private property, I might alternatively have decided on my list of especially public spaces by reviewing parts of the city where homeless people stake themselves out, temporarily, to solicit donations. In Vancouver, closed-roof shopping centres have not been managed as public spaces, in this sense. In Cresswell's discussion of homelessness, in fact, he makes a slightly different point. He recounts a New York city mayor's efforts to prevent homeless people from sleeping, defecating, or staking out shelter in public spaces such as "parks like Tompkin's Square, [...] the sidewalks of Fifth Avenue, and [...] the floor of Grand Central Station" (4). These behaviours, Cresswell points out, were considered private acts and therefore inappropriate in public spaces. (Implicit in Cresswell's argument, too, is the argument that homeless people are themselves considered inappropriate in places like Fifth Avenue or Grand Central Station because they are not successful participants in a capitalist civil system.) While Cresswell's specific example reminds me that homeless people are often expelled from precisely the kinds of places that I am listing as relatively "public," his argument in general supports my assertion that especially "public" places might be identified by the presence of homeless people in Vancouver. Their presence is only barely and briefly tolerated in these places, but it is definitely not tolerated elsewhere. The dominant ideology in our society, and its powers of enforcement, would hustle a panhandler out of a private bedroom, a quiet residential street, or a park in an exclusive neighbourhood much more quickly than they would urge him away from the curb of a downtown boulevard. The homeless are never comfortably "in place," in Cresswell's sense, but we consider them more in place in more public spaces than more private ones.— While pursuing indices of publicness, I am of course primarily aiming for a theory of the qualities that would prompt city-dwellers to imagine a particular feature or space within the city as widely shared. The barely-tolerated presence of homeless people offers only a slippery index of likely-shared ground, I acknowledge, because they live on the margins of mainstream society. But common ground, as I am theorizing it, may at its limits be experienced precisely as a spatialized encounter with one radically other than oneself, with whom one admits no other social bond.

⁸⁵ As readers who know Vancouver well have pointed out to me, this narrator and his audience's relation to the street name "Belmont" is odd: this street, apparently so comfortably known to them by name, is a small, residential side street, not likely to be well known by residents who live at some distance from it. Here Bowering rather freely employs the gesture of local referencing, incorporating into the story's circle of narrative address the social texture that comes with common ground, without bothering to make the references themselves persuasively accurate to his Vancouver readers' experience of the city. The oddity of this detail would be inaccessible to a reader who does not know Vancouver, I presume; for me, it feels like a signal that Bowering is not interested in cultivating a special place for bystanding Vancouverite readers.

⁸⁶ The truncated noun phrase ("the Market" for "Granville Island Public Market") is an effectively precise reference, despite its semantic minimalism, precisely because it conveys a strong expression of the narrator's certainty that the landmarks are mutually shared. The short noun phrase implies that this Market is the *only* market the speaker could possibly mean, because it is the only one so thoroughly mutually shared as to be referred to by a short form by this narrator to this audience. Chafe argues that a referent is judged "identifiable" if it is 1) shared by speaker and listener, 2) "verbalized in a sufficiently identifying way," and 3) salient in the context of speech (94). Clark and Marshall would add that the speaker and listener's common ground is crucially important to what can be judged identifiable: even if a referent is shared in effect, speaker and listener cannot treat it as shared unless they have mutual assurance of this sharedness (16). The particular relationship between speaker and listener is an important factor in determining identifiability, then: in one circle of address, "the Market" might not be sufficiently verbal; in another, anything more verbose would be a confusing (or rude) denial of how very mutually known that particular market is.

⁸⁷ In 1985, Vancouver readers would have known Fairview as a place that had gone through a period of "dramatic change" in recent decades (City of Vancouver). "From the early 1920s to the early 1960s, Fairview Slopes was zoned for 3 storey apartments," reports the City's website, and one character in SKY Lee's *Disappearing Moon Café* reports that during the 1940s it was "a white, working-class neighbourhood," to which one young couple moves to escape Chinatown (177). But during the 1970s the

neighbourhood underwent substantial city planning and was rezoned for residential and commercial use, on its eventual way to becoming the dense middle class neighbourhood of today. Meanwhile, during the 1970s the City began redeveloping Granville Island, and the Public Market that is re-envisioned in Gibson's "The Winter Market" opened in 1979, "soon followed by the Maritime Market, Emily Carr College of Art, theatres, artists' studios, craft galleries and restaurants" (City of Vancouver). So Gibson's short story was written in the wake of changes to the area that refreshed its residential landscape, retaining density and planning for "a social mix that reflected the City's income and social composition" (City of Vancouver)—changes that also introduced to it an emphasis on professional studio arts. The urban density and arts practice in Fairview circa 1985 were thus newly visible elements of the neighbourhood, and might have offered Vancouverite readers of Gibson's story a way of seeing how, in an eventual future, the neighbourhood could become an "arty-slum tumble."

⁸⁸ Interestingly, Saul assumes at least as intimate a knowledge of the city of Toronto, on the part of his audience, as of Vancouver. He expects that his audience will immediately recognize and relate to the major Toronto streets Yonge, Gerrard, and Avenue Road, and to the Toronto neighbourhood Yorkville. It is difficult to say whether this means that, in practice, Chong imagines that a cosmopolitan audience would recognize major Canadian city neighbourhoods, despite his theory of Vancouver's smallness, or whether it means that as first-time novelist he resigned himself to writing for a (less than cosmopolitan?) broadly Canadian audience.

⁸⁹ Meanwhile, William Gibson says that his own relationship to Vancouver—and to fiction-writing—also affected his willingness to set fiction in Vancouver, but in his case it made him reluctant to do so (Weibe D5).

⁹⁰ Perhaps because the address in each case is structured as a novel or short story, I have not found examples that address themselves across nearer, narrower gaps, such as a city boundary-line for example. Fiction-telling for public circulation may depend on a sense of mass audience, thus making an address to people in the fields or hills beyond the city less likely than an address to people in centres elsewhere.

⁹¹ Neighbourhood has been one focus of analysts' discussions of located urban social relationships. Avery M. Guest and Susan K. Wierzbicki begin their article on "Social Ties at the Neighbourhood Level" with the statement, "The degree of social interaction among neighbours is a key indicator of the strength of localized communities in urban society" (92). But Guest and Wierzbicki find that while the strength of neighbourhood social ties is not declining over time as speedily as some theorists have predicted, and while neighbourhood-based social ties remain important for certain demographics, there is nevertheless indeed an overall decline (108) in the kinds of neighbourly relations that might have exemplified relationships of common ground. They point out that this decline is readily understood as happening because "developments in high-speed motor transportation and indirect electronic communications have enhanced the possibility of social ties over long distances" (92).

⁹² Giltrow and Stouck, who note that the narrator of *Swamp Angel* addresses herself with local authority to an audience who is "unfamiliar" (235) with Vancouver (and the rest of British Columbia), consider the possibility that the narration of this novel is motivated by a colonial concern to refresh England's imperial awareness of these places.

The speaker is motivated to seize readers' attention on behalf of Hope, and Vancouver itself, places liable to slip into oblivion, so far are they from the centre [...] This may be a colonial motivation, one sensitive to the limits of the metropolitan scope, suspecting that the village and even the small city have slipped beyond its range, or that the scope itself has shrunk, with the disappearance of the Empire and its intelligence of its peripheries. (235)

Giltrow and Stouck also note that the disrupted, uncertain flow of narratorial consciousness expresses a "colonial experience" in its record of "the shock of not-knowing—a decentering on a smaller scale, amongst the materials of Self and Other" (235-6). Further, they identify a shift toward "postcolonial" expression (237) in the narrator's undermining of her audience's certainty, arguing that

Each change of [narratorial] focal length shocks the presumption that the world is managed and contained—the kind of presumption prevailing amidst a small colonial elite, a class thoroughly indemnified in its isolation, yet paradoxically undone as well in that remoteness from the imperial centre. (236)

⁹³ According to David Stouck in *Ethel Wilson: A Critical Biography*, Wilson's actual reading audiences were certainly less narrowly circumscribed than the implied audience I identify. Her novels and short

stories were published in Canada and the United States, as well as England. They were translated into European languages and reviewed in India. Stouck records that Wilson regarded a positive review in *The Times of India* as “reveal[ing] a common humanity” (252)—a globe- (or at least Commonwealth-) -wide cultural community, not a strictly English one. And he reports that she abhorred calculated novelistic addresses to a particular audience, quoting her as saying, in response to arguments for a particularly national address, “I feel very strongly that the writing of Canadians should and must be Canadian in aspect, but not deliberately so, with a dreadful conscious eye on the potential reader, Canadian or otherwise” (170). But Stouck also notes that Wilson was especially excited when her writing was well received “at home,” in England (128). “Wilson,” he writes, “began to feel increasingly that her real audience was in England, where an appreciation of language and style was so much stronger than in North America” (146).

⁹⁴ Another example of Wilson’s precision, in setting her characters’ consciousness and experiences in specifically Vancouver landscapes, is in “The Window.” The window in question, which is Mr. Willy’s “emancipation” from the staid, trivial society of his wife in England (197), which reveals his Vancouver guests as participant in the same trivial society he had tried to abandon, and which is his own spiritual testing-point, looks out onto a specifically Vancouver view. The mountains that appear to Mr. Willy beautiful, wild, and empty of people, and the sparkling extension of the city on the North Shore, visible at a distance from his waterfront home in Kitsilano, are visible to him because of Vancouver’s location and topography. The demand for a view of precisely this landscape has shaped Vancouver’s built environment, Berelowitz argues, skewing the shape of skyscrapers and orienting residence and office windows north, like Mr. Willy’s, against the southward-facing preferences more typical to buildings in the northern hemisphere (25-7).

⁹⁵ I am using the terms “colony” and “frontier” loosely, for the Canada that Ethel Wilson’s narrators speak about had become a nation by the time of their narration, and most of the characters in her stories experience Vancouver as a “quickly growing city” (“Window” 196). In *Swamp Angel* the expanding city is a centre in its own right, and Maggie travels outward from its Capitol Hill (*Angel* 8), into the blank, wild spaces on its maps (73) and into a back-country “hinterland” (61) perhaps more accurately described as frontier-like. Indeed, Giltrow and Stouck observe a “postcolonial” consciousness (Giltrow and Stouck 218) articulating the narration in this novel, and they distinguish this mentality from the colonial one (235-6). But *The Innocent Traveller*, which was Wilson’s second novel and the one with the strongest autobiographical echoes suggesting her own family’s experience of arrival in Vancouver, brings characters to Canada from England. Upon their arrival in “the West” (*Innocent* 92), Vancouver seems to them a “new little frontier town” (122). For these characters, even a love of their adopted home does not displace a devotion to the English royal family, and they continue faithful correspondence across the “six thousand miles” dividing them from their friends in Europe (88). The narrator, moreover, offers her audience an early image of Vancouver that aligns its discovery and literate civilization with the birth and colonizing arrival of her central character, Topaz. When Topaz is growing up in an English boarding school, the narrator tells them that “the wind was blowing, too, among the great undiscovered pine trees in the yet unnamed place far away where some day Topaz Edgeworth would live and die. In this place Topaz would some day write and receive many letters, but no one could yet send letters there. This place was still silent and almost unknown” (36-7).

⁹⁶ David Whitson, whose account of Canada’s position “at the periphery of the centre” I cited in my Introduction, argues that the organizing committees of major sporting events need to convince citizens of the proposed host city to see their city differently—to see it *as* a player on the world stage—as part of their wider project of re-framing the site for international attention (1221-2). Whitson’s account suggests, then, that local and international perceptions of a given setting are reciprocally linked.

⁹⁷ The edge-space between city and park is mapped in detail in both *Stanley Park* and “The Bravest Boat,” as I have said, and is thoroughly allegorized as a hinge-point (between the powers of money, sophisticated tastes, and corporate culture on one hand and the refuge of poverty, earthiness, and spirituality on the other, in the novel, and between the powers of corrupt, hellish banality on one hand and the solace of beauty and natural, human goodness on the other, in the story). Taylor’s novel closely notes the various slopes of the Lost Lagoon terrain, its various features both organic and man-made, and the precise sequence of the different segments of this area as it shades from city to park—street, gutter, curb, grassy slope, trees, bench, stretch of water, pathway, bridge, park roadway, forest edge, forest. As a resident of Vancouver, faced with this novel’s record of close local observation, I find it tempting (and *almost* possible) to pinpoint the very bench Jeremy sat on at Lost Lagoon, and the very street façade where The Monkey’s Paw ought to be.

⁹⁸ As a Vancouver neighbourhood name, Crosstown first appeared in major Vancouver newspapers in 1994 (Laurence D8), where it was used—once—to refer to a group of artists who dubbed the Victoria Square neighbourhood where they lived “Crosstown” (or “X-town”) in 1992 (cf. also Thomas). To date, it has appeared six times more in the *Vancouver Sun* and *Province* newspapers, once with reference to Timothy Taylor’s novels’ settings, and all but one of these appearances date to 2006, the year when a major residential building re-development, the Bowman Lofts, was completed in the neighbourhood. (By comparison, the neighbourhood name “West End” appears 303 times in those papers during the same time span.) Moreover, when journalists use the name “Crosstown,” they offer their readers extra orienting detail about the neighbourhood, as if uncertain whether their readerships would recognize its referent. For example, in 1999, Tony Wanless wrote in *The Province*:

Neglected by the city, ignored by most shoppers, overrun by drug dealers and users, the ‘Crosstown’ area of downtown Vancouver is once again in revival mode. The commercial area—officially known as the Victory Square area—roughly encompasses Hastings, Pender, and Cordova streets and cross-streets west of Chinatown. [...] It’s not exactly Gastown or [Toronto’s] Yorkville of old, or Old Montreal, but it could be, many merchants feel. (A36)

Vancouver developer Robert Fung used similar language and imagery in his 2006 opinion piece in the *Sun*, and he too located the neighbourhood for his audience by referring to it as “Crosstown, the Victory Square neighbourhood” (L1). The name “Crosstown” is not, I believe, currently much more widely used than these examples indicate. It turns up very rarely in major Vancouver blogs—appearing in only one post on Rebecca Bollwitt’s Miss604 blog, for example, while the same blog refers much more frequently to the “West End.” In a recent 1.5-month timespan, the location “Crosstown” was referred to 16 times in real estate listings on popular buy/sell website Craigslist Vancouver (often combined with the word Downtown), while “Gastown” was used 183 times in a similar timespan and the “West End” 524 times. Even the “Downtown Eastside”, which has unfavourable connotations in the real estate market, was referred to on the same website twice as often as was “Crosstown.”

Notes for Chapter Three

⁹⁹ I reconstruct these performances from the documents that remain in archives and in the memories and published accounts of people involved. I have consulted, among other things, production photographs and videotapes (where these exist), set designs, archived posters, press releases, and other promotional materials, newspaper reviews, histories of the theatres, brochures advertising the theatres, maps of the city space surrounding the theatres at the time of the plays’ performance, and members of the producing company in informal interview.

¹⁰⁰ Individual spectators are present to the actors only as members of the collected audience, not as individuals, in all but the most intimate of performance spaces. Nevertheless, as a group, audiences are not only present together in the theatre with the actors but “mutually co-present” in Clark and Marshall’s terms: they are reciprocally aware that they recognize their presence together in the room. This mutually recognized copresence, so much more directly implicating and engaging than anonymous and distanced reading of a book, allows theatre audiences the certainty, which readers of fiction lack, that the ensemble producing the play is searching for common ground with *them*.

¹⁰¹ Perhaps among those twentieth-century theoreticians who advocated for abandoning the idea of a divided reality it is most famously Bertolt Brecht who argued that “The conception of a fourth wall which invisibly separates stage and audience, thus creating the illusion that what happens on stage is really happening, without any audience, must of course be dropped” (qtd. in Brownstein and Daubert 52). Some theatre productions would continue to support an analysis such as Gaylord’s, to an extent. But if theatre audiences ever experienced the performance space as absolutely divided into two realities (which I doubt), I am convinced by Susan Bennett’s argument that western theatre practice has come increasingly since the mid-twentieth century to acknowledge and experiment with the interconnection of these two worlds (21).

¹⁰² As audiences are aware, actors make up only part of an *ensemble* of people who design a play and decide how it will approach its audiences: the producing ensemble may also include playwright, director,

production company, and stage crew; set, costume, sound and lighting designers; and, perhaps, an artistic director who commissioned the play or some major sponsors who made its production possible. But the actors are metonymic representatives of this entire production ensemble; they embody and enact the performance it collectively designed. I recognize that “ensemble” has other meanings in theatre discourse, including the group of repertory actors employed by a theatre company for a given season. My use of the term ensemble here is meant to recall that, from the perspective of the audience, everyone involved in producing a play works with a single, collective intention.

¹⁰³ Accounting for theatrical audience design in this way requires me to modify Clark’s theory of audience roles (as co-written with Carlson and with Schaefer), which is based on the paradigm of face-to-face conversation. Whereas Clark and Schaefer argue that a speaker bears certain responsibilities towards all participants in a conversation, including the responsibility to ensure that the side-participants can understand everything that is being said (251-2), producing ensembles cannot be held responsible for ensuring that every audience-member of a play understands everything—or “gets” all of the local references, for example. An ensemble’s evident intention that the play is for the actual audience over-rides the audience design implicit in the styling of their references (and other pragmatic cues), so that even if the audience-members are not individually accommodated exactly, they will still be positioned as side-participants.

¹⁰⁴ I use the term “local knowledge” here, where I have not in other chapters, because the theatre encounter anchors the social dynamics of common ground so firmly in proximal physical space that ideas of locality become important. Clifford Geertz’s anthropological notion of “local knowledge” is a contrastive term, designating the things that insiders know, in a bounded community that produces its own meanings, but outsiders do not (e.g. 167). I am using the same term rather differently, here, using the word local to point to proximal location; I will deal somewhat later with the question of where “local” place fades off into something more distant. But, as my correspondence with Arjun Appadurai’s concept of locality will shortly reveal, when people realize that their local knowledge is actually common ground it takes on some of the potentially exclusionary and contrastive qualities of Geertz’s notion.

¹⁰⁵ Another important example would be municipal political events: platform speeches, public meetings, rallies, protests, and marches may very effectively construct local ground as at once common and contested, when the speeches and gestures involved index parts of the city. School and university classrooms (such as Peter Dickinson’s [cf. “Cities and Classrooms”] or Glenn Deer’s [cf. “Reading Differently”]) and public forums (such as the Vancouver Public Space Network’s “Where’s the Square?” meetings in 2008-2009) are likewise sites for the imagination and critique of existing and possible common grounds.

¹⁰⁶ In “In Whose Interest? Transnational Capital and the Production of Multiculturalism in Canada,” Katharyne Mitchell offers one of many examples of the ways distant and corporate interests shape Vancouver’s social geography by managing urban property. Among other instances of debates over “foreign” uses of private property in Vancouver, Mitchell discusses the conflict between the interests of international capitalism and local housing advocates when a particular condominium block was marketed (and sold) solely to people in Hong Kong (222).

¹⁰⁷ Local comedian, actor and playwright Jason Bryden’s play *The Dissemblers* (co-produced by Playwrights Theatre Centre and Touchstone Theatre at the PTC studio theatre in May, 2008) lampooned one such neighbourhood-based local identity: the hip, design- and fashion-conscious Vancouverites who live, work and spend time along a certain segment of Main Street, according to popular wisdom. Twenty blocks of Main Street, from just north of Broadway (9th) to perhaps 28th Avenue, have developed in recent years into a trendy commercial area, and this span of Main Street has been produced as a “hipster” hangout: a place to buy, and wear, certain styles of (usually expensive) off-beat, locally-designed or vintage clothing, to eat trendy or vegetarian foods in well-designed minimalist, retro, or kitschy restaurants, to listen to or perform indie music, and to otherwise participate in consuming and creating a hipster culture that, despite its international influences, is locally grounded in Main Street. This hipster culture, which is perhaps as often ascribed to neighbourhood residents by critics claiming not to be hipsters themselves as it is appropriated by any self-proclaimed hipster, has indefinite boundaries—both in its cultural and its geographical provinces. It is sometimes perceived as mixing to some degree with a local artists’ scene that is also associated with Main Street, partly because of hipsters’ evident interest and investment in avant-garde and independent creators of style and design and partly—perhaps—because of geographical coincidence. However little or great is the actual overlap between the hipster culture, which, in its attachment to the commercial establishments along Main, is to some degree a culture of consumption, and

its neighbouring Eastside artists' community, popular perceptions often imagine a link between the two groups. Writing less than a year before the date of *The Dissemblers*'s setting, for example, commentator Tara Henley compounded participation in the art scene with hipster style in her description of the young people crowding a show at one artist's studio: she called them "Main Street art-nerd/geek-chic scenesters."

¹⁰⁸ In his discussion of urban practices that "unsettle" distinctions between private and public property, Nicholas Blomley offers multiple examples of (mostly grass-roots) activities that re-make city spaces, orienting them to suit the production of locality. To name only two examples, he points to the "localism" of surfers who claim certain beaches for locals (Blomley 18) and to the creators and users of community gardens, who "argue that community gardening produces truly public spaces," but ones "predicated on localized community, democratization and interaction" (19). An important historic example of a community's sense of locality motivating changes to urban form is the Strathcona Property Owners and Tenants Association (SPOTA)'s successful fight in the late 1960s to change municipal policy and influence plans for the renewal of their inner-city urban neighbourhood. According to writer Daphne Marlatt, who interviewed SPOTA members, "The executive of this association, supported by the whole neighbourhood, threw off all the old images of immigrant powerlessness, unconsciousness, ignorance (many of them were second and third generation Canadians), took the mandate to act for their neighbourhood into their own hands and, working *inside* the structure of Canadian politics, approached both federal and provincial governments with a sophisticated political strategy. They formed a working relationship with City Hall in order to govern the rehabilitation of their own neighbourhood, and on the federal level they changed policy about urban renewal [...] Strathcona, as a neighbourhood of immigrants, has tended to conduct its daily life on the basis of collective action (mutual help) and self-reliance in the face of government 'aid'"

("Afterwards" 8). Strathcona's grass-roots production of locality continues to inspire critics of top-down urban planning: in *Common Ground in a Liquid City: Essays in Defense of an Urban Future*, East Vancouver-based urban critic Matt Hern argues that a vital, sustainable way of living must be driven by small groups of citizens working together to shape their neighbourhoods. Among other examples, Hern cites the Strathcona Community Gardens as a diverse, accessible public place of a kind that could only have emerged organically, through the slow accretion and compromise of a variety of individual initiatives.

¹⁰⁹ "The task of producing locality (as a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of situated community) is increasingly a struggle," Appadurai writes. "There are many dimensions to this struggle, [including]: (1) the steady increase in the efforts of the modern nation-state to define all neighbourhoods under the sign of its forms of allegiance and affiliation; (2) the growing disjuncture between territory, subjectivity, and collective social movement; and (3) the steady erosion, principally due to the force and form of electronic mediation, of the relationship between spatial and virtual neighbourhoods. To make things yet more complex, these three dimensions are themselves interactive" (189).

¹¹⁰ In each of these Vancouver plays, shared geographical knowledge is assumed to extend at least to the city limits—a broader expanse than the extended neighbourhoods which novels and short stories often assume (cf. Chapter Two). Some of the "local" knowledge claimed by these plays is of sites well outside the city—the "Cariboo country" in *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (Ryga Ms 3, 9) or the regional cities Nanaimo and Victoria in *2000*, for example. Meanwhile, however, local knowledge is always focused on landmarks clustering, however sparsely, around a central setting. In general, the farthest-flung places referred to are occasionally if not frequently traveled to by Vancouverites, and the references to these far-off places generalize large areas with single names rather than indicating even coarsely-differentiated streets and landmarks.

¹¹¹ Susan Bennett's discussion of tourist audiences for site-specific theatre argues convincingly that the distinctions between insider and outsider audience sub-groups are more evidently performed in site-specific pieces that allow audible, mobile responses from the audiences ("Peripatetic" 12-13). "Conventions of spectatorship," she writes, "are much more tangible in this kind of performance reception [which is] a very long way from the passive behaviours of audiences hailed by the fourth-wall removed realist theatre" (13).

¹¹² According to Christopher Innes, the stage directions in Ryga's published script call for elements of setting, stage choreography and characterization that were originally designed by members of the Playhouse ensemble, in collaboration with Ryga (159). Many of the elements of staging that so emphasized the ensemble-meets-audience social encounter are therefore already familiar to readers of the script and critical writing about it. I recite, however, a few of the elements of the performance which bear especially on the play's production of a "neighbourhood" not explicitly localized in Vancouver.

¹¹³ As Ryga's published script records, the backdrop was a "mountain cyclorama" overlaid with "a darker maze curtain [suggestive of] gloom and confusion, and a cityscape" (Ryga 37). I cannot be certain that the cyclorama's mountain imagery was not overtly iconic of a Vancouver horizon, and for Playhouse audiences the combination of even a vaguely depicted mountain range and cityscape may have evoked the specific geography of their lives outside of the theatre. But the legacy of this original stage set suggests that it did not obviously represent Vancouver: Ryga's stage directions do not note any local specificity; surviving photographs of the performance do not feature the backdrop at all, showing instead the characters dramatically spot-lit on a dark stage; and later Vancouver re-mounts, like the fortieth-anniversary production at the Firehall Arts Centre in December, 2007, have opted for abstracted backdrop imagery.

¹¹⁴ Some of these scenes returned Rita and the audience to her remembered childhood in a rural reserve, some of them recollected her increasingly painful and alienated experiences in the urban landscape of "the city," and some of them drew her repeatedly into a courtroom, where she was interrogated by a Magistrate. The set was not decorated, although one reviewer observed that the stage floor was symbolically "painted to resemble the 'butt of a cut tree'" (Richards qtd. in Gygli 304). The performance space was precisely a symbolic one, with a circular ramp, running around the outside of the stage, trapping Rita at its centre to underscore how impossible it proves for her to find her way out of the city and back to her family home.

¹¹⁵ I base my discussion of *Ecstasy's* scripted lines on the original production rehearsal script (cited here as a Manuscript), viewed courtesy of the George Ryga fonds, Special Collections, Archives & Special Collections, Libraries and Cultural Resources, University of Calgary Library. This script contains fewer stage directions than the published version, and I base my analysis of staging and setting largely on the published script, presuming that important setting and staging decisions were consistent between them. These two scripts suggest that the Vancouver and Ottawa productions of the play were largely the same, although there are a few significant differences.

¹¹⁶ Critics such as Pell assert that the audience was white and middle-class [246], and the play has habitually been celebrated for having made white audiences newly aware of their privilege and complicity (cf. Drew Hayden Taylor quoted in Pell 247). Whether the Playhouse audiences in 1967 were entirely white is hard to say, although I assume that there must have been at least a few people of other ethnicities in attendance. But in any case, Ryga's play does powerfully "cast" the audience as white.

¹¹⁷ According to the published script, the Ottawa production apparently added a moment of direct confrontation that does not appear in the Vancouver rehearsal script: Jamie Paul singles out an audience member to say, "You think I'm a dirty Indian, eh? Get outta my way!" (Ryga 57).

¹¹⁸ For some audience-members their incorporation into the play might have felt claustrophobic and upsetting, since the performance foreclosed their ability to protest their construction as homogenously, guiltily, white and free—even while it invited them to see Rita sympathetically and her persecutors with aversion. The audience-members were incorporated into the play as white Canadians, not as individuals. This, perhaps, was one of the sources of the play's troubling power for its premiere audiences, that they experienced the coercive power of a social system (here the theatre) to lock them into a role without regard for their individual politics and personalities. And they were made to recognize, meanwhile, that outside of the theatre they were the ones enabled and protected by a system that forces Indians into the roles of misfit, criminal, victim, and martyr.

¹¹⁹ Barbara Pell, for example, writes that the play depicts "the martyrdom of a young Native girl on the streets of Vancouver" (246). Pell goes on, however, to discuss the play in terms that generalize this setting: "white society," "the Native peoples," "the reserves," "the modern city" (248).

¹²⁰ *Ecstasy* became an "instant classic" (Innis 162) of Canadian theatre after its Playhouse premiere because it so successfully compelled its original audiences to recognize themselves as part of the nation-wide social system whose faults it condemned. It is not surprising that the original production managed to compel audiences in Vancouver to recognize themselves as Canadians, given that it took place during the Canadian Centennial year: national institutions had had a century to train citizens from all regions to recognize themselves as national citizens, and the centennial celebrations emphatically promoted this national self-recognition. As Jamie Portman puts it, referring to the Playhouse premiere, "*Rita Joe* happened during Centennial year when Canadians were anxious to look at themselves"—that is, to look at themselves as Canadians (qtd. in Wasserman "Introduction" 14).

¹²¹ An early advertising brochure for the "Queen Elizabeth Theatre and the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse"—which staff at the UBC library archives estimate to have been published in the mid-1960s—declares that the purpose of the Queen Elizabeth Theatre ("with the smaller Playhouse attached to it") is to be "the prime

focal point of the community”: to be, in other words, “the showcase—and the meeting place—for today’s society.” While this declaration suggests that the Theatre’s primary service was to a specifically Vancouver-based civic community, there are hints even here of ambitions beyond the local. The word “showcase” implies that Vancouver cultural productions will be shown off to an audience beyond the city boundaries. And “today’s society” suggests a metropolitan, or even national, reach.

¹²² Bloomfield explaining that the play’s first act “document[ed] the environment white people have created for the original citizens of our country.” Although here Bloomfield kept consistent with the play’s construction of an abstracted, urban Canadian landscape—a generalized national “environment”—he also hinted that a specific Vancouver reality inspired Ryga’s thinking. “Statistics inform us Vancouver has an average of 20 Rita Joe’s [*sic*] a year,” he wrote, at once framing the character Rita as an abstracted type and the play as illustrating a locally-observed statistical reality. This line about “20 Rita Joe’s” stuck with subsequent productions of the play: it also appears in director David Gardner’s program notes for the Playhouse’s 1969 remount in Ottawa. In asserting *Ecstasy*’s inspiration from a specifically Vancouver reality, Bloomfield was perhaps recalling that the Playhouse’s artistic director Malcolm Black had commissioned the play to be “based on a newspaper item about a Native woman found dead in a skid row rooming house” (Hoffman and Ratsoy 4).

¹²³ One unequivocally Vancouver-specific reference in *Ecstasy* is recited by the Magistrate when Rita Joe is charged with prostitution: “Special constable Eric Wilson has submitted a statement to the effect that on June 18th last he and special constable Schneider approached you on Fourth Avenue at nine-forty in the evening” (Ryga Ms 18). When recognized as locally specific by members of the Playhouse premiere audience, the reference to Vancouver’s “Fourth Avenue” would have tightened for them “the city’s” fit to Vancouver and made a brief point of local community membership in the theatre. Indeed, in the 1960s, Fourth Avenue was a local reference likely to trigger associations that would probably be inaccessible to audiences elsewhere, because certain segments of west Fourth Avenue were widely known as gathering places for young hippies. The street was associated with a drug-experimenting, drop-out culture, to the alarm of Fourth Avenue business owners and “square,” middle-class Vancouver (cf. “What Happened”; “Great Bus Stop Bust”; “Hippie Runaways”). Importantly, when the police locate Rita Joe on Fourth Avenue, the Vancouver audience’s knowledge of this context would have been called into play, and the density and vividness of this set of associations might have drawn extra attention to the specific localness of this reference and their community membership. However, the policeman’s purpose in referring to the specific street is not primarily to gesture at community but to claim his own authority, rationality, and correctness. The “Fourth Avenue” reference aligns local knowledge with white authority’s sense of freedom and belonging in the city. And it highlights Rita Joe’s powerlessness in her own lack of orientation. Rita is not local to the city, despite her long stay here, just like Jaimie Paul, for whom the bridge he mentions is new and nameless (he calls it “a bridge”).

¹²⁴ The Vancouver premiere production tended to produce an even more abstract social geography. Especially in the first act, the place where Rita Joe has ended up upon leaving the reserve is more vaguely established than in the Ottawa production. But Ryga’s handwritten changes on the Vancouver production script suggest that the developing play was gradually refining a city versus reserve geography, and the second act of the play sets up the city/reserve divide quite clearly.

¹²⁵ This example makes particularly clear the similarity between the idea of neighbourhoods with internal, rather than external, contexts and W. H. New’s formulation of “region” as the nation’s internal margin (“Beyond” 17).

¹²⁶ In her playwright’s comment in the house program, Pollock spoke of “Our attitudes towards the non-white peoples of the world and of Canada,” implying that she understood the play’s audience to be white Canadians. And her note in a study guide to *Incident* (presumably offered to teachers who would bring their students to see the play) asserted that problematic racial tensions of the *Komagata Maru*’s history continued to exist “in Canada” at the time of the play. Meanwhile, the Playhouse staff’s background note in the program shifted easily from framing the *Komagata Maru* as a British Columbian incident (“The problem of Asian Immigration to British Columbia had its origins in the gold rush [...]”) to framing it as Canadian (“Gurdit Singh [...] chartered the *Komagata Maru*, a Japanese ship, to bring some of his oppressed East Indian country men to the promised land of Canada”). Reviews of the New Company production tended to take up the play’s concerns as Canadian or, more rarely, British Columbian, depending on the reviewing publication’s respective audience. Bob Allen’s review in the *Province*, which

at one point claimed that the play said “things of particular importance to Vancouverites,” opened with a reflection on specifically Canadian racism (9); apparently Allen did not see conflict between the two domains. Meanwhile the *Province* photograph’s caption referred to the incident as “one of the most shameful events in B. C. history” (9, my emphasis). Much of the scholarly writing about this play interprets it as addressing its audience as Canadians, rather than especially as Vancouverites (cf. Kelly 268-9, Grace and Helms 86, and Belliveau’s discussion of Knowles and Nunn 97), although Ginny Ratsoy and James Hoffman’s introduction to the play for their anthology of British Columbia plays unsurprisingly takes it up as addressing British Columbians.

¹²⁷ A document composed by Christopher Wooten, then-director of the VECC, indicates that the VECC agreed to place 300 seats in the theatre for the run of *Incident*, 175 of them on the main floor of the auditorium (Christopher Wooten’s summary of a production meeting, dated December 9, 1975. In the City of Vancouver Archives). This suggests that audience-members in the back row of the floor seats would likely have been no more than 9 rows back from the stage.

¹²⁸ It is located several residential blocks off of Commerical Drive in East Vancouver. In the mid-twentieth century, the mixed-income Grandview/Woodlands neighbourhood centred on the Drive became home to successive waves of immigrants from Italy, Eastern Europe and Asia. And “Grandview’s first East Indian residents [...] made the community home” in the late 1960s (“History & Heritage”), a few years before *Incident* premiered. If, in 1976, before the emergence in Canada of official multiculturalism, the VECC was not yet known specifically for staging plays and concerts reflective of local cultural diversity, it was at least known for hosting new and experimental work. By selecting the VECC as the venue for the New Company performance of *Incident*, the Playhouse contributed to the VECC’s reputation for experimental theatre. A 1976 pamphlet, advertising the Playhouse’s 1976-77 season, referred to the New Company’s offerings as “New Plays...Odd Plays... and Extraordinary Plays!!!” in contrast to the Mainstage’s “Great Classics, Modern Classics, Contemporary Plays.” Like the Vancouver Playhouse, the VECC was supported by national and provincial as well as municipal governments (“Our Story”). But in its Grandview/Woodlands location and in its experimental reputation it may have presented itself to audiences of *Incident* as more likely to engage local audiences as local community members than a “civic” or “regional” theatre such as the Playhouse.

¹²⁹ As Sherrill Grace and Gabrielle Helms put it, the play’s audience was “constructed as spectators in a work that presents the very act of spectatorship as an objectification of others that facilitates their dehumanization and mistreatment” (93). And, like the audiences of *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, who were confined to sitting silently while David Joe constructed them as “animals,” *Incident*’s audiences were compelled to recognize their construction by the Woman as those people (“they”) who “rejoice[d] on the shore” when the *Komagata Maru* was dispatched to return to India. By framing their social position as spectators in the performance space in this way, *Incident* addressed its VECC audiences as symbolic inheritors of the legacy of white Vancouver’s 1914 racism.

¹³⁰ One reviewer commented that “the real action of the play is happening elsewhere” than onstage (Green 20). I would argue that the “real action” of the play was rather the claustrophobic inter-action and exchange of gazes between ensemble and audience-members.

¹³¹ One part of *Incident* did evoke a shared neighbourhood rather straightforwardly. This was the brothel setting at centre stage, a carefully delimited representational space, where actors played out a naturalistic scene representing the historical figure William Hopkinson, a Vancouver-based official in the Canadian Department of Immigration, and several companions imagined for him by Pollock. These characters occasionally discussed their daily lives in Vancouver, and by doing so they made numerous references to specific landmarks. Apart from helping to construct these characters realistically, their references were often expressly designed to convey the historical events. This part of *The Komagata Maru Incident* seemed to anticipate that its VECC audience shared fairly extensive ground on the basis of community membership with the ensemble and the characters. A prostitute named Evy recounted to the other characters having taken a tram ride through the city: coming “round by the creek” she had seen a Sikh man beaten in a lineup for employment; she had noticed hostile-looking white men standing “staring out at that ship” from “the end of Burrard” (Pollock 113). Her references and other gestures towards the city were performed casually, as if the ensemble expected the audience to know the city already and to easily infer the geography of the *Komagata Maru*’s siege from those few references. (Indeed, the references are so casual that I find myself wondering whether I have inferred the geography right, when I guess that Evy’s references likely indicated False Creek and the northern end of Burrard Street, downtown, where it abuts the Inner Harbour.) The

New Company ensemble seems to have hoped that naming the places would therefore help to guarantee the immediate relevance of this history for their audiences: assuming a “sympathy of locality” rather like that I discussed in Chapter Two, these references assumed that the audience would be interested in the events that had occurred in the harbour, Burrard Street, and the Reserve *because* they had a prior relationship to those places (if only one of name-recognition) and because they were so nearby. Accordingly, the Vancouver *Province* reviewer, Bob Allen, claimed that the play said “things of particular importance to Vancouverites” (9). Evidently, for Allen at least, the play asserted that history of the *Komagata Maru* was especially important to them because of their locality. However, Allen also opened his review with a reflection on specifically Canadian racism (9); this was not an exclusively proximal locality. These naturalistic scenes were contained by the more presentational frame of Pollock’s play and their localism diminished accordingly, it seems to me. Also, as I will explain in my discussion of *2000*, naturalistic staging has only limited power to command mutual recognition in the theatre.

¹³² I am grateful to the Playhouse Theatre Company for giving me permission to view this archival tape.

¹³³ Indeed, while we might see the characters as developing and maintaining their own senses of locality as part of their daily routines, but they do not do so deliberately or, more importantly, ostensibly.

¹³⁴ In an audience talk-back session following the videotaped performance, audience-members asked the cast what Janine got out of her relationship to her boyfriend, congratulated Margaret Barton on her portrait of Nanny (she “reminded me of three or four people I know,” said one), confessed to not having understood the ending, and declared themselves profoundly moved by Susan Hogan’s performance; such comments, which made for the majority of the audience’s contributions to discussion, engaged with the play in non-local ways. (Torontonians audiences of the same performance might have conceivably have made the same comments; their lack of local knowledge would have had no bearing on these parts of the play.) Which of the play’s rhetorical emphases will register for each individual audience-member seems to depend largely on what elements of the performance most resonate for him or her. For some of the Playhouse audience-members, the production’s attempts to engage them as knowing locals was evidently striking; for others, those attempts were perhaps not important or even pointedly noticeable.

¹³⁵ In personal communication, director Patrick McDonald tells me that when Morris Panych directed *2000* at Toronto’s Tarragon Theatre the year before its Vancouver premiere, Panych had the actress playing Wyn address the audience directly from the front of the stage, stand-up comic style. Dean Paul Gibson, director of a 2009 production at the Vancouver Playhouse of MacLeod’s *Toronto, Mississippi*, likewise had that play’s central character Jhana deliver her closing monologue directly to the audience, from the front of the stage. Staging decisions like Panych’s and Gibson’s capitalize on what I consider an overtly social style in the characteristic narrative flow of MacLeod’s monologues.

¹³⁶ I owe to Reid Gilbert’s review of two set designs by MacDonald the germ of this idea, that the *2000* set could be taken as pointedly representing artificial (that is, human-made) designs based on natural objects, rather than as representing those natural objects themselves, albeit in an abstracted, stylized way. Gilbert writes that the “idealized tree forms” of MacDonald’s set offer “a more satisfactory conclusion than the undefined, Native eco-spirituality offered by the play itself: the old lady escapes into the idea of the forest [...] Rather than leaving sterile domesticity for the undergrowth [...] she leaves a forced minimalism for the embracing simplicity of an universal design” (Gilbert 70).

¹³⁷ The set was intended to be recognizably local in its design. MacDonald recalls that for “the Vancouver production the director Patrick McDonald wanted the location on stage to look very West Coast. I combined the concept of abstract images as in paintings by Lawren Harris with the clarity and simplicity of Japanese design by using geometric shapes and dividing the stage space architecturally into two levels” (qtd. in Rewa 208). Perhaps, for some of the audience-members attending the show, MacDonald’s design would have seemed to quietly imply an expectation of local community membership: as Vancouverites, you will recognize these references to West Coast architecture. One of the reviewers saw “Emily Carr clouds” as well as “Group of Seven geometric pines” (Armstrong B7) in the stage set, which indicates his perception of a locally-developed style in the backdrop, since Carr lived much of her life in Victoria, British Columbia and, famously, painted scenes from the Pacific Northwest. The paintings of Lawren Harris and other members of the Group of Seven are not so firmly associated with West Coast imagery, however. Harris moved to Vancouver in his 50s and became an important figure in the city’s artistic circles, encouraging among others Carr, Arthur Erikson, and B. C. Binning (the latter two of whom would go on to design houses that are considered definitive examples of West Coast modernism). But Harris’s most famous landscape paintings are not of the West Coast; they feature images from northern Ontario and

the Rocky Mountains. Especially as staged in combination with the Playhouse house program's "Notes about the Play and Playwright," which offered a more broadly national frame for performance space than the local one suggested by much of the rest of the production—they note, for example, that "Throughout Canadian history, the wilderness has provided a profound influence on our art and our literature"—the stage set's abstract backdrop may not have produced such a pointedly recognizable icon of the West Coast as the director intended.

¹³⁸ In November, 2008, a theatre company called Theatre in the Raw produced a play called *Bruce—The Musical* in a community centre not far from the Firehall. *Bruce* sought to remind local residents of one important historical effort to frame the Downtown Eastside as a neighbourhood, by telling the life story of Bruce Erikson, an activist and politician who had fought for official municipal neighbourhood status and a community centre. Theatre in the Raw shared with the playwright, Bob Sarti, a concern that people were forgetting that history (see Banting "Courting"). As Appadurai points out, locality is a construction that requires constant maintenance.

¹³⁹ In 1988, a man named Gilbert Paul Jordan was tried and convicted of manslaughter in the death of Vanessa Buckner, and a connection was established between him and the serial deaths of a number of other women. The *Vancouver Sun* dedicated several full-page spreads to splashy and sensational coverage of the man and his deeds. (It dedicated substantially less space to listing facts about his female victims' deaths, and Clements was inspired to write by her fury over newspaper's imbalance of attention.) By the time *Unnatural* opened, Jordan was out of jail on parole, and on November 4, 2000, the day of the play's official opening, the *Sun* ran an extensive interview and large photograph of him (Beatty A1). The Firehall's archives do not record which pages of newspaper coverage were posted on the lobby walls for playgoers to browse before entering the performance space, but I presume that the full-page spreads from 1988 were posted, as well as the contemporary interview. Clements did extensive newspaper research while writing the play, and *Unnatural* closely paraphrases the text of some of the 1988 articles.

¹⁴⁰ Simply by arriving at the Firehall Arts Centre to watch the plays, the audiences moved through the very neighbourhoods featured onstage. In this respect at least, the ensemble could actually rely on their audience having some familiarity with the neighbourhoods, for their journeys to the theatres would have summoned to mind their respective prior experiences of those neighbourhoods and offered them the additional experience of a theatre-going evening there. Where some of the audience-members might have nevertheless arrived at the plays with only the passer-through's limited and personally un-invested awareness of those neighbourhoods, however, *Unnatural* assumed a more extensive and invested local knowledge.

¹⁴¹ In 2005, the "About Us" page of the Firehall Arts Centre's website asserted that the Firehall's programming was intended to reflect the diverse neighbourhood population's interests, as well as those of "Canada's diverse and dynamic cultural mosaic." In 2009, the Firehall no longer emphasizes a local programming mandate—the "About Us" page now advertises a season celebrating "the richness of Canadian and global culture" (www.firehallartscentre.ca/aboutus.html, accessed Aug 7, 2009)—although Spencer's address to potential sponsors still emphasizes local community outreach. Financial pressures may have forced this change of marketing strategy. Spencer writes that "it is increasingly difficult to encourage audiences to attend our many and varied high quality productions and presentations," implying that this is because of the "continued deterioration of the [Downtown Eastside] neighbourhood" (Spencer "Support Us").

Notes for Conclusion

¹⁴² City-building narratives have the most scope to re-work what I am calling received ideas about neighbourhoods: Timothy Taylor's creative production of Crosstown is an important example. Other narrative modes position themselves as offering touchstones for their audience's recognition, so they tend to adopt ways of speaking about landmarks and neighbourhoods that seem keyed to received understandings. Their narrative objects are dialogically interpenetrated, Bakhtin might say, with the discourse of others (cf. "Discourse in the Novel" 284). But certainly even their dialogue with current maps of the city's social geography is creative, their re-inscriptions of neighbourhood character influencing

(rather than slavishly reproducing) the very discourses they engage. My own sense of this city as a differentiated social space has been influenced strongly by my reading and theatre going.

¹⁴³ Stace does use a few proper nouns. For a reader like me, they keep the cityscape described by the story pinned tightly to a recognizable Vancouver. She uses all but one of them to name places *outside* the three square blocks of her neighbourhood: Vancouver itself, Prince George (184), False Creek (193), “uptown Granville” street (201).

¹⁴⁴ Re-reading now my published narrative of that experience of self-recognition, I am struck by how I unconsciously structured the narrative around an uncanny projection of a *double* for my own sense of unbelonging (cf. Freud 141). I recount overhearing an audience-member behind me in an intermission line-up prejudicially discounting the large audience actually in attendance at the play, wondering aloud to his companion, “The music is so good and the show is so well put together, but the topic is so regional. I mean, who is the audience for this?” (Banting “Courting” 17). I describe looking around for the speaker, hoping to find that his clothing or comportment “would mark him as an outsider to the Eastside” (17), only to later realize that “I wanted to see the man standing sorely and snobbishly apart from the crowd so that I could see myself standing comfortably within it” (17).

¹⁴⁵ Unlike some of the other works I have discussed, the narrator in *Blood Sports* is not discernably gendered. I use masculine pronouns in my discussion here because the story at this point is so closely focalized by Tom’s perspective.

¹⁴⁶ Influenced as I am by pragmatics theory, integrational linguistics, and the work of my colleagues in language studies at the University of British Columbia (among them Janet Giltrow and Shurli Makmillan), I am not interested in the connotations of the word “message” that suggest a code model of language use. A message in a bottle—or a novel—comes as a discrete parcel of words, but those words are meaningful only in their contexts of production and reception.

¹⁴⁷ I owe the inspiration for this idea to Janet Giltrow, who theorizes that we experience subjectivity (our own and others’) precisely in the moments where communication fails.

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Appendix: Prince’s “Familiarity Scale”

This table represents Prince’s “familiarity scale.” Prince’s terms are in the left-hand column; I gloss them in the centre column. Examples, in the right-hand column, are intended to suggest some of the ways that these varying degrees of assumed audience familiarity can be marked stylistically. They are drawn from Atwood’s *Cat’s Eye* (A) and *Kogawa’s* *Obasan* (K). When the example includes extra words for the sake of clarity, I have underlined the relevant referring phrases.

Table 1. Prince’s “familiarity scale” with examples

In descending order of assumed familiarity		
textually evoked	familiar because already present in discourse	pronouns: it, he, she, they, that, which repeat occurrences of salient place names
& situationally evoked	familiar because already present in context	references to the narrator or situation of telling “ <u>This</u> is where Eaton’s used to be, <u>here on this corner</u> ” (A 111)
unused	already known but new to discourse	“Due south is <u>the CN Tower</u> ” (A 366) “the Vancouver Hastings Park prison” (K 17) “Kitsilano [...] Stanley Park [Third Avenue]” (K 20)

(Table continues on following page)

In descending order of assumed familiarity (continued)		
inferable	inferable from something already evoked	<p>“‘What a beauty,’ <u>the RCMP officer</u> said in 1942, when he saw it” (K 21)</p> <p>[inferable from context of Japanese evacuation, evoked on the same page]</p>
containing inferable	refers to a noun phrase containing the entity from which it is inferable	<p>“the corner of King and Spadina” (A 37)</p> <p>“the church at Third Avenue” (K 20)</p> <p>“the grating wind that cut up from the lake between the flat-roofed dowdy buildings that were for us the closest thing to urbanity” (A 8-9)</p>
brand-new anchored	unfamiliar, but referred to in a noun phrase containing a known entity	<p>“a street corner in Vancouver” (K 47)</p> <p>“Marpole, a comfortable residential district of Vancouver” (K 49)</p> <p>“the place they called the Pool was not a pool of water, but <u>a prison at the exhibition grounds called Hastings Park in Vancouver</u>” (K 77)</p>

(Table continues on following page)

In descending order of assumed familiarity (continued)		
brand-new	unfamiliar	<p>“<u>Ghost towns</u> such as Slocan – those old mining settlements, sometimes abandoned, sometimes with a remnant community” (K 77)</p> <p>“past <u>a cemetery</u>, across a <u>ravine</u>, along a <u>wide curving street lined with older houses</u>” (A 45)</p> <p>“some copper-green statues of men on horses” (A 37)</p> <p>“Chinese emporia, wicker furniture, cutwork tablecloths, bamboo wind chimes” (A 43)</p>