

variety of critical angles. The collection opens with two theoretical papers, representing contrasting yet complementary perspectives on issues of region and regionalism. Frank Davey argues that region and regionalism should be situated in reference to ideologies—such as the nation-state, colonialism, and globalization—rather than by geographical locators. Marjorie Pryse demonstrates how regionalist writing by women and non-dominant men employs strategies of resistance, challenging the dominant culture and inviting readers to experience and identify with the position of the disenfranchised Other. Focusing more closely on textual issues, David Martin draws on examples of “local color” American fiction from the late nineteenth century to illustrate the conflicted aims and results of the observer narrator’s study of regional life, and by doing so draws parallels between the approaches and concerns of regionalist fiction and anthropological work. Alison Calder asks “What is so compelling about prairie realism?” Her answer shows how extant and highly influential theories of “the prairie” and attitudes towards a select body of texts valued as prairie realism rest on assumptions of documentary authenticity that effectively deny the prairie writer access to the imagination. Issues of the possibilities of representation, geography, and feminism form the basis for Wil Verhoeven’s study of Aritha Van Herk’s discursive practice in her fiction and non-fiction. Jeanette Lynes explores the compatibility of the regional and the postmodern in an examination of Wayne Johnston’s *Human Amusements*, and Richard Pickard’s essay examines the regionalism of three British Columbia writers in the context of postmodernism and the positioning of region in global monopoly capitalism. As a re-evaluation of regionalism in Canadian and American writing, this collection of essays provides a comparative approach to the issue within a continental framework by looking at a broad range of writers, and by exploring regionalism on both sides of the border in light of the central political, cultural, literary, and theoretical debates of our times.

## Toward the Ends of Regionalism

WHAT IS twentieth-century Canadian regionalism? Historians, economists, and political scientists have attempted in their various disciplinary ways to answer this question, but not many of us in literary studies. Here attention has been almost entirely on specific regionalisms, in effect allowing the concept itself to be taken for granted. To the various articles and books offering studies of prairie fiction, west coast poetry, Maritime fiction, or Western writing have been added anthologies variously titled or subtitled *The Atlantic Anthology*, *The Prairie Experience*, *Western Windows*, *West Coast Seen*, *Prairie Writers on Writing*, *An Anthology of Prairie Poetry*, *The Maritime Experience*, *Allong Prairie Lines*, *Maritime Lines*, as if terms like “prairie,” “maritime,” “west coast” or “Atlantic” themselves signalled unproblematical categories. The few resistances to regionalism that have emerged from these have tended to be conducted on humanist/individualist grounds—like George Amabile’s objection that the notion of a “prairie voice” is “conformist and prescriptive” (94)—and have thus offered little toward the studying of regionalism as a social construction. What I want to do here is consider both region and regionalism not as locations but as ideologies. In the process I will try to situate regionalism and its literary manifestations in Canada among some of the institutions and processes that help shape contemporary ideologies—including the nation state, colonialism, and globalization.

Roger Gibbins begins his 1982 study of regionalism in Canada and the United States with the observation that the term means something different in the two national cultures: in Canada it is understood as a kind of geographic sectionalism, he suggests, and is both “lauded and lamented”; in

the U.S. it has been usually perceived as an "integrative phenomenon" that can amalgamate sectionalisms and facilitates their interaction with the national culture and economy (4). Janine Brodie begins her 1990 study *The Political Economy of Canadian Regionalism* by pointing out how frequently Canadian social scientists have confused and interchanged the terms region, regionalism, regional differences, and regional disparities, and have especially confused region and regionalism as terms that both reflect some necessary determination of culture by geography and landform. Brodie argues, and I would strongly agree, that both region and regionalism are social creations, the first constituting a territorial definition of geographic space based on a selection of possible differentiating criteria—a territorial definition that can change as national political policies change, and the second constituting an interpretation of social interests that gives geographic location priority over such other possible interests as gender, ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, and race.

I begin with the observations of Gibbins and Brodie because it seems to me that in Canadian literature the understandings of regionalism are, firstly, as a form of geographic sectionalism that segments the literature into regional isolations; secondly, as a kind of geographic determinism that renders the characteristics of these isolations inevitable; and, thirdly, as the product of intuitive regional self-recognition, and have formed a substantial part of the mythological ground of literary criticism. These understandings have been reflected in semantic slippages that have gone considerably beyond those Brodie identifies among region, regionalism, and regional disparity. In Canadian literary criticism regionalism has often been virtually equated with place, as if any signs of specific places in a text directly signalled regionalist ideology. Regionalism has been equated with *hinterland*, with suggestions that writing acts done in so-called "hinterland" situations might necessarily be regionalist, and with disregard for the complex intranational and international power relationships that make any hinterland-centre analysis simplistic. It has been tied to mimetic aesthetics, when it might as easily—given the kinds of writing the various regions of Canada have produced—have been linked to romance, satire, parody, or fantasy. It has been placed in binary opposition to transcendence, usually in a context which implies that both transcendence and the opposition itself are non-political.

I begin with Gibbins and Brodie also because of the clear link both scholars make between regionalism and nation-state ideology. Regionalism

is a concern or phenomenon of nation states, a potential part of its intranational power negotiations. A phenomenon that can be divisive and/or integrative, regionalism becomes part of a national politics, Brodie suggests, when national policies result in regional economic differentiations that in turn occasion the national deployment of arguments of regional self-interest. I begin with them as well because I see Canadian literary regionalism as inextricable from political and economic factors and, given the literary criticism so far, as in some need of being re-situated in relation to these.

### Regionalism and the Nation State

Unlike other formulations of interests, regionalism operates within the nation state as a kind of territorialization—and I use Deleuze and Guattari's term deliberately in order to place their analyses of political ideology in the background of the arguments I am making here. Specifically, regionalism operates as a transformation of geography into a sign that can conceal the presence of ideology. The individual called to by regionalism is invited to hold certain restraining and shaping beliefs not because of political difference, but because such beliefs are perceived as "true" or "natural" to the inhabiting of a specific geography. In turn, geography acts as a metonym for social identification, enabling in Canada the production of Westerners, Maritimers, northerners, or Cape Breton Islanders, as categories that can override other affiliations.

Yet these regionalist identities are also relative constructions. That is, we would not be here discussing Canadian regionalism were there not also a nation-state called Canada. To some extent regionalism responds to and mimics the homogenizing call of the nation-state, a call made to its citizens as a counter to ethnic, religious, and local loyalties that preceded the formation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of the early nation-states. However, regionalism is not merely one of the possible responses to the unifying strategies of the nation-state, but also a differential term that requires a specific other that is larger, encompassing, but similarly geographic in conception. The nation-state has multiple others—other nation-states, internal political formations, and in recent times multinational or "global" affiliations. The region appears to have mainly the nation-state as its other—this appearance, in fact, is part of regionalist ideology. Differences internal to a regionalism—and I will have more to say about these later—are usually effaced and recuperated by it as contrib-

ning to itself: hence we have Maritime women, Atlantic labour histories, prairie populism.

While nation-states are clearly as much if not more geographically defined concepts than are regionalisms, geography usually *seems* more important to regionalism than to the nation-state. The nation-state calls to both its citizens and its borders—defending the latter under the metaphors of integrity and engaging the former under metaphors of community. Regionalism appears to have before all else its geography, calling not to citizens but to people who live in that specific geography.

One of the illusions that a regionalism will often, therefore, incorporate is that while the nation-state is an abstract concept, with exchangeable citizenships and shiftable borders, regionalism has a concrete ground in the geography that it invokes as its region. Strong regionalisms develop narratives and figures that imply the geographic inevitability of the cultural manifestations that partly constitute the region, as in Kreisel's positing that the literature of the Canadian west began "with the impact of the landscape on the mind" (173), Kroetsch's arguments in his infamous essay "Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction" that the prairies have encouraged particular kinds of maleness and femaleness (notably he does not say masculinity or femininity), or Frye's arguments that the "garrison" literature of central Canada had begun with immigrants experiencing their journey up the St. Lawrence estuary as resembling the Biblical Jonah's being devoured by a whale. Regionalisms develop the appearance of having "natural" boundaries—an inside and outside—as if these boundaries were beyond culture. Appeals are constructed to the landscape and climate to explain cultural forms and customs. What is often obscured in these various constructions are the politically oppositional aspects of regionalism: that regionalism is cultural rather than geographic, and represents not geography itself but a strategically resistant mapping of geography in which historic and economic factors play large but largely unacknowledged parts.

Far from being a geographical manifestation, a regionalism is a discourse which contains not only narratives and re-written narratives, but also terms and figurations that generate their meanings differentially within it. As a discourse, it represents a general social or political strategy for resisting meanings generated by others in a nation-state, particularly those generated in geographic areas which can be constructed by the regionalism as central or powerful. However, it is important to note that it is usually also a strategy for resisting other meanings generated in its own

region—meanings such as nationalism, feminism, class, ethnicity, localisms, or race. The reliance of regionalist ideology on environmental determinism, on a belief that the landscape has—or should have—effects on the personalities and perspectives of its inhabitants, leads to the assumption that these effects should have greater importance to the individual than do other possible grounds of identity. In the most popular versions (and regionalism is always strongest in its most popular versions), landscape makes the west-coast subject easy going or laid-back, and makes a prairie subject transparent and authentic. In a David Adams Richards novel attention to the land can give characters endurance and survival opportunities, and even intuitively appropriate morality. In E.J. Pratt's early poems the Newfoundland tides "run / Within the sluices of men's hearts." "Red is the sea-kelp on the beach," he writes, "Red as the heart's blood, / . . . / and salt as tears" (2). In a nation-state such an ideology would threaten with irrationalisms of earth and blood the unending political negotiations necessary to polity. In a regionalism, however, because this ideology is popularly concealed beneath touristic images of landscape and inarticulately authentic individuals, there appears to be no ideology.

So far I have mainly discussed regionalism as a particular ideological response to the nation-state. But, equally, a regionalism should be perceived as a production of the nation-state and as partly serving the nation-state's interests. In economics, the myth of geographic determinism allows a national government to avoid responsibility for regional economic downturns, and to use the band-aid of equalization payments instead of investigating ways in which national economic practices create regional economic differentiations. In politics, it allows a national government to deter or limit the growth of transregional ideologies, playing regionalism, for example, against native rights, or against feminism. In culture, regionalist geographic determinism has allowed centralizing critics like W.J. Keith to produce regionalisms as being too specific to be mainstream, and to select for national canonicity—usually on humanist or internationalist grounds—only regional artists who can be constructed as exceptions to this regional specificity.

The most visible and recent regionalisms in the Canadian nation state have been Atlantic/Maritime and Prairie. By visible *regionalisms* I mean those most frequently constructed in anthologies and criticism, and most successfully publicized and commodified as regionalisms both outside and within the geographic areas they claim to regionalize. But successful

regionalisms are not necessarily visible regionalisms. In literature at the very least, Southern Ontario regionalism has been successful largely by being invisible, by resisting precise territorial definition, and by passing itself as the Canadian nationalism (a passing which other regionalisms may also aspire to), or as an internationalism. Regionalisms can also be internally successful without meeting similar external success. This usually occurs when the regionalism is more a self-production than a production of the nation state. West Coast regionalism has been much more successful internally in constructing and marketing a "west coast" or a "Pacific" than it has been in constructing these as restricted parts of a national consciousness, or in constructing them in literature as special parts of a national canon. In terms of national canonicity, however, British Columbia writers end little worse off than prairie writers. Like prairie writers, the writers of British Columbia who have been accepted even peripherally as parts of national canonicity have done so mostly on transregional terms—modernism (Wilson, Webb, Birney, Blaser), magic realism (Hodgins), postmodernism (Bowering and Hodgins), feminism (Marlatt and Thomas); while the most self-consciously regional—Howard White, Gerry Gilbert, Peter Trower, Barry McKinnon—have remained largely unknown outside B.C.

Anglo-Quebec writers, through the efforts of editors and critics like Linda Leith and Ken Norris, have also succeeded in constructing themselves as quasi-regionalist, but have not yet succeeded in disseminating this construction with much effect nationally. In part, this lack of success would seem due to the nation-state's need for there not to be an Anglo-Quebec regionalism that could affront or outrage Francophone separatists in their continuing attempts to territorialize francophone culture within Quebec's provincial boundaries. The work of Anglo-Quebec writers that circulates easily outside of Quebec—like that of Gail Scott, Neil Bissoondath, or Mordecai Richler—does so on the basis of other affiliations. Moreover, while Anglo-Quebec tries to present itself as a regionalism nationally, i.e., under the sign of its Quebec location, it presents itself as a linguistic community provincially. The Anglo-Quebec attempt at regionalism offers another instruction in the ideological/cultural dimensions of regionalism.

Within Canada Anglophone-Quebec is a geographic subdivision of the linguistic entity Anglophone-Canadian, rather than a subdivision of a territorial entity. The boundaries of the subdivision, Quebec, however, despite francophone attempts at territorialization, remain political before they are

geographic. Moreover, Anglophone-Quebec can make no exclusive claims to territory, nor arguments that geography per se has determined its culture, except in the sense that this geography has been the site of a particular social and political history. One might well translate some of these characteristics of Anglo-Quebec into questions about other Canadian regionalisms, for example asking whether Prairie Canadians can make an exclusive claim to territory (Roger Gibbins has argued here that aboriginal peoples have historically stood aside from prairie regionalism), or whether prairie regionalism's boundaries have not also usually been more political than geographic.

Throughout the Canada of the 1990s it is apparent that in the contemporary industrial nation-state regionalism as a strategy operates within a large interplay of power relations. In parts of a nation-state where, because of historic or economic factors, nationalist or linguistic identifications are readily available, these can either negate a potential regionalism or (as in the case of Ontario and in much of Quebec) become virtually identical with it. Here strategies of resistance to, dissent from, or difference with dominant national ideology cannot take the landscape as ground or metonymy because it has already been taken as a ground for identity by national narratives and iconography. In other spatial parts of the nation, however, regionalism, while available as a discourse of dissent or difference, competes with other discourses, like those of feminism, humanism, ethnicity, or race. For example, a northern regionalism has not developed significant power in Canada because it has remained racially a white figuration, and unable to compete with the discourses of race and ethnicity which structure the Inuit and Dene figurations of land and politics.

### Regionalism and Colonialism

Regionalisms can share many of the self-constructions of colonies, although in saying this it is important to note one or two large differences. Colonies usually have clearly defined boundaries, ones in which geophysical markers are consistent with political ones, and which enable the colony to imagine itself separate from the colonizing power. Regionalisms, despite their foregrounding of geography, rarely have a concurrency of geophysical and political boundaries. They thus find themselves both within and without the larger society which they experience as oppositional to them.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, colonies are political formations, in the sense that they are characterized by internal political differentiation, debate, and process. But

regionalisms, although they can have political consequences within the nation-state itself, and interact politically with other nationally contending ideologies, are usually not in themselves political, and have arguably had anti-political effects. Regionalisms propose necessary commonalities that are beyond debate. If regionalisms begin to develop internal differentiation and debate, or to develop institutions to accommodate internal debate, they also begin to include other grounds for identity and individual subjectivity than those of geography, and begin to cease to be regionalisms—a process which appears to have had something to do with the quick decline of regionalist political parties like the Western Canada Concept Party in the 1970s, or the Progressive Party in the 1920s and—if I am following Roger Gibbins's recent arguments (1995) correctly—with the impending decline of the Reform Party. (Reform's failure in the 1997 federal election to expand its representation east of Manitoba, but success in retaining and gaining seats in western Canada, would suggest, according to Gibbins's theory, that it has not yet attempted the political party's task of brokering diversity; it has remained regional by remaining beyond or above non-geographic contentions.) A single-issue party, when that issue is perceived as constructed by landscape, is supportable within the region beyond or across politics. When the party becomes political, encompassing and attempting to accommodate diverse views in order to extend its membership to other parts of Canada (muting, in the Reform case, the call for greater Western representation in federal institutions), it loses its regionalist character.

In Canada, regionalisms tend to exist alongside political movements, occasionally interacting with them, and to be non-identical with provincial boundaries which define and organize non-federal political process. Both "Prairie" and "Maritime" regionalisms extend across three provinces; "Atlantic" regionalism competes conceptually with "Maritime"; British Columbia is not synonymous with "West Coast" regionalism; in fact numerous regionalisms compete here—West Coast, Vancouver Island, up-Island, Interior, Okanagan, Cariboo, Kootenay, Northern, Rocky Mountain, with the latter pretty well straddling the Alberta-B.C. boundary. The fluidity of these boundaries was particularly noticeable in the 1993 federal election, when Manning's Alberta-born Reform Party took 46 of the 58 seats in B.C. and Alberta, but only 5 of the 28 seats in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Again, it should be noted that this characteristic of regionalism—the conflicts between its geographic and political boundaries

—serves the interests of the nation state, enabling it to weaken regionalisms by calling to the regional inhabitant in terms of other ideological affiliations.

In the contemporary Maritime provinces, a major feature of the recent "regionalism" debates among revisionist historians and political journalists has been this understanding that regionalism as an ideology prevents or conceals internal political differentiation and activism. The journal *New Maritimes* in 1981 embarked on a program of making known the internal political conflicts of the Maritime provinces: the efforts of blacks in Nova Scotia and of Miqmaq to retrieve their children from residential schools, the labour struggles in fisheries and manufacturing, and the attempts to establish an effective CCF presence. The fact that most of these efforts ended in failure was made secondary in most of the *New Maritimes* accounts to the desire and vision which motivated the efforts. P.A. Buckner's introduction to his 1986 essay collection *Teaching Maritime Studies* argued the need to replace stereotypes or myths of the Maritimes as a place of political patronage, government corruption, and public conservatism with research that could detail such things as regional and class differences and militant labour movements within the three provinces. Buckner later suggested (1988) that the very concept of "Maritimes" was an homogenizing and essentializing label that has obscured historical and local diversity. E.R. Forbes, in his 1989 study *Challenging the Regional Stereotype: Essays on the 20th Century Maritimes*, set out to confront a number of stereotypes including characterizations of Maritime workers as lazy, of businessmen as timid, of its governments as too short-sighted to emphasize education, and of the culture overall as powerless in the face of national and international economics. The 1986-7 Bell lectures of Acadia University, published as *Beyond Anger and Longing*, were characterized by their editor as proposing that older Maritime responses of anger at non-Maritimers and longing for a return to a lost golden age were counter-productive because they did not make people aware of how they can "actively and collectively create their [own] circumstances" (Fleming 12). All of these publications called for a recognition of political differentiation and conflict within the Maritime region, and recognition also of a history of local initiative, small scale entrepreneurship—although as Alex Dick has argued in an unpublished paper, through their acceptance of the term "Maritimes" and their tendency to seek the binary opposites of the laziness and powerless stereotypes, all have also tended to replace one nostalgic mythology with another:

Though a contention of Maritime revisionism is the diversity of the region, isolated community action is still used to exemplify a general picture of the "Maritimes." It is then used to advocate an association between the region as a whole and certain eternal verities which the region is supposed to hold, derived by the historian from the historical data. Thus the regional significance of small community action is exaggerated by appeals to mysterious influences for which that community, in its isolated struggle, cannot account. Other [revisionist historians] concede the failure of the independent force of the community in the face of more impressive discourse and systems. Either way, the subject—the people of the Maritimes—is rendered powerless. (8-9)

A literary parallel to these historical and cultural studies is Gwen Davies's essay anthology *Myth and Milieu: Atlantic Literature and Culture*, with its irreverent re-examinations of the work of Helen Creighton, Lucy Maud Montgomery, and Frank Parker Day.

Recent historical writing and cultural writing about Western and Prairie regionalism have reflected some similar interest in replacing mythologies with political, economic, historical, and ideological differentiation. Roger Gibbins's studies have presented prairie regionalism as a social and political phenomenon, as a kind of strategic territorialization within a nation state which has accompanied a perceived sense of the powerlessness of the prairie provinces in national politics. George Melnyk has emphasized historical differentiation within prairie regionalism—a fur trade regionalism succeeded by agrarian and post-agrarian regionalisms, although interestingly, at the end of his *Beyond Alienation: Political Essays on the West*, he calls for the establishment of yet another collective western identity: one of "revolution" and "new beginning" (121). In literature there has been some movement away from regionalist understandings like "west" or "prairies" toward political ones based on provincial boundaries—particularly in anthologies like Fred Stenson's *Alberta Bound*, Robert Kroetsch's *Sundogs: Stories from Saskatchewan*, Geoffrey Ursell's *Saskatchewan Gold*, or Joan Parr's *Manitoba Stories*. Wayne Tefs's introduction to his short story anthology *Made in Manitoba* contains no reference to prairie regionality or to any commonality among the contributors: his references are instead to "gender, geography [that is, the internally differentiating geography of

Manitoba], ethnicity, type, author's wishes, permission fees." In other anthologies, however, like Dennis Cooley's *Inscriptions: A Prairie Poetry Anthology*, Daniel Lenoski's *A/long Prairie Lines: An Anthology of Long Prairie Poems*, and Birk Sproxton's *Trace: Prairie Writers on Writing*, regionalist constructions have persisted. Even here, however, there are fractures. For example, numerous contributors to *Trace* implicitly resist the priority the anthology gives to the "prairie" category—by foregrounding in their essays other categories like gender or ethnicity.

The major characteristic that regionalisms share with colonies is the sense that power over them resides and is wielded elsewhere. In all the large Canadian regionalisms can be found strong resentments toward what the regionalist advocates perceive as the oppositional other, whether this be the Atlantic belief that "Ottawa" has mismanaged Atlantic fishstocks, a Maritime belief that strangers have taken over Maritime cities and their commercial institutions, a prairie resentment that federal elections are decided before the polls close in Manitoba, or a West Coast conviction that Francophone Quebecers recurrently control the national political agenda. A related phenomenon that links regionalisms and colonies is a sense of being unable to change where power resides. For regionalisms, this inability is related to a belief in the region's separation from political process. In the case of the Prairies, of course, the region did begin its existence under the 1870 Manitoba Act and the Crow's Nest Pass Agreement of 1897 as a colony, in the sense that these ensured the region would be a non-industrialized producer of staples and consumer of manufactured goods for Ontario, which was being rapidly industrialized under the shelter of the tariffs of Macdonald's National Policy. The latter policy, together with the building of a national railway network, after 1890 also transformed the Maritime provinces into economic colonies of Quebec and Ontario by its attracting of Maritime bank headquarters and industries to Ontario and Quebec cities that, because of their relative proximity to the new West, were beginning to develop commercial and industrial concentrations.

A third characteristic Canadian regionalisms share with colonialisms is a desire for indigenous or originary grounding of the regionalist ideology. This desire corresponds to the second stage of Frantz Fanon's theory of the evolution of the literatures of colonized peoples, and can be preceded by Fanon's first stage of derivativeness and apprenticeship. The tension between these stages can be seen in Dennis Cooley's *The Vernacular Muse*,

where Cooley attempts to totalize much prairie poetry as derivative of British modernism (Fanon's stage one) and to favourably contrast against that an oral poetry that was indigenous by being colloquial, "resistant," "joyous," "subversive," "immediate," "anecdotal," and often marked by verbal excess and ungrammaticality (Fanon's stage two). In prairie literature elsewhere it is manifest in the appeals to the primeval landscape like those made in Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* and Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear*, or to aboriginal subjects whom white settlers can emulate or even become, like the characters in Newlove's "The Pride" or Laurence's *The Diviners*. (Again such developments serve the interests of the nation-state and national canonicity by allowing the construction of the regionalist culture as atavist and nostalgic.) Fanon's third stage of a "fighting literature," out of movements toward democracy and a diversity of subject positions, is, I suggest, impossible within an ideology of regionalism because once such a political engagement is achieved, individuals will no longer be constructing themselves as preponderantly regional subjects. While Melnyk's call for "revolution" resembles rhetorically Fanon's call for a "fighting literature," there is very little recognition in Melnyk of the ideological diversity in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan—a diversity that includes feminist, lesbian feminist, aboriginal, urban/rural, ethnic, and class differentiations and cross-differentiations—that any western "revolution" would have to engage and focus.

### Regionalism and the Global Economy

For a regionalism to prosper and persist within a contemporary capitalist nation-state some commodification of that regionalism must occur. This commodification could be gastronomic, as in the case of France's Provençal, Breton, and Basque regions, geographic and touristic as in the case of "Supernatural British Columbia," or mytho-cultural, as in the case of Anne of Green Gables. This commodification usually represents a solidifying of Fanon's second stage: the colonial attempt to recover indigenous images and practices. Ideally there are not only products to trade—cod flippers, sockeye salmon, perogies, buffalo meat—but also foundational narratives and images that can be told and sold. But without a certain level of infrastructural development within the communities that share a regionalism, it is difficult for the inhabitants of a regionalism to participate in a commodity-success—and the commodification of the regionalism may

serve only to enrich national cultural industries and to prop up national canonicity. Much as large parts of the Atlantic fisheries, the Alberta oil patch, and the B.C. forests have become owned and developed by multinational corporations, simply because the capital for developing these resources has been available mostly elsewhere, many of the narratives and images of a regionalism have been commodified and marketed by individuals and institutions who have at best a tenuous relationship with the regionalism. I am thinking here of how Pratt's early images of Newfoundland fishermen with saltwater in their blood became part of his general standing as a Canadian poet, professor at Victoria College, and author of such national and multinational texts as *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe*, *The Titanic*, and *Behind the Log*, or of how Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House* has become the nationally canonical prairie novel through being published in 1941 by a New York publisher (with all its specifically Canadian signs suppressed) and, because it was out of print and cheaply available to the New Canadian Library series, re-published in 1957 by McClelland and Stewart (see Lecker 173-4).

While to some extent the commodification of regionalism that gained strength in the 1970s, particularly in the western provinces, may have seemed to have been a product of the foundation of the Canada Council and its efforts to include criteria of regional equity in its grants to magazine and book publishers, it was at least as much a result of the provincialization of regional economies during this period. The 1970s saw not only the waning of the economic power of the Canadian nation-state, as several provinces began replacing their east-west Canadian ties with north-south continentalist ones, but also a waning of prairie regionalism per se, as Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, along with Quebec, embarked on provincial economic policies separate from each other and from those of the nation-state. These new initiatives involved more complex class structures than had the old agrarian independent-farmer economy—capitalist investors, skilled urban workers, a professional class of engineers, economists, and technicians. They were accompanied by a sense of cultural self-consciousness often seen in colonies about to become nations—a self-consciousness that looked to history and mythology as a ground for the attempts at new economic identities—and by the building of cultural infrastructure: arts councils, theatres, publishing houses. Much of the cultural production, however, as I noted in a 1988 essay on "prairie" poetry (*Read-*

ing *Canadian Reading* 213-30), was nostalgic: poems, novels, and plays that ignored urbanization and the new class complexity, and that attempted to recover the lost nineteenth century lives of settlers and native peoples.

In some genres, like popular history, tourist writing, and pictorial history, there were numerous small-scale attempts to commodify and industrialize old regionalisms. One sees this most clearly in British Columbia and Newfoundland, in photographic books on local scenery, geography, and history—shipwrecks, sealing adventures, ghost-towns—that have for the last three decades been locally produced and sold within tourist industries.

This commodification allowed the reterritorializing of regionalisms as marketplaces, inside which a journal like *New Maritimes* or publishers like Oolichan, Douglas & McIntyre, Thistledown, Western Producer Prairie Books, Acadiensis, or Breakwater could construct readerships, and even begin internal political interrogations. A book like Tef's *Made in Manitoba*, with a blue band foregrounding the word *Manitoba*, is explicitly directed to Manitoba readers, despite the small print of "22 Great Canadian Stories" above. This commodification often didn't mean that the press published only books of regional interest, but that a plurality of its titles, and often its better-selling ones, foregrounded regional signs. Oolichan's 1994 catalog included, for example, among seven new releases, a book on Parkville, a town on Vancouver Island, one on west coast transportation patterns, and a poetry collection titled *Love in Alaska*. From its backlist the press offered *Salmon Canneries: British Columbia's North Coast*, *Trout Tales and Salmon Stories*, *Aboriginal Title in British Columbia*, two books on the history of Vancouver Island coal mining, a book on Port Alberni, a collection of writing from the Malaspina College magazine in Nanaimo, a book on the history of B.C. religious communities, and a children's book elaborating the coast Indian figure Klee Wyck. Across the country in New Brunswick, Goose Lane Editions led off its catalogue with *Comforts of Home: Small Inns, Cottages, and Bed & Breakfasts of Atlantic Canada*, *Roads to Remember: The Insiders Guide to New Brunswick*, and *A Hiking Guide to the National Parks and Historic Sites of Newfoundland*.

Commodification is one of the most widespread techniques for cultural competition and survival in the new late-capitalist global economy. It is itself not new—the cultural stations of the European Grand Tour had cultural commodity value as much to the young upper-class eighteenth-century tourist recording his stops in watercolours as they do to this

century's middle-class tourists with their cameras and postcards. What is new is both the participation of numerous regionalisms in self-commodification and the way in which this process has in many ways continued the regionalist displacement of political action. What has been contributing to the latter is the eclipse of national-state power by global economic institutions, and the accompanying eclipse of political institutions by economic ones. When the largest economic forces are housed outside of nation-states and their democratic institutions, the possibility of effective political participation—already problematic for the regional subject—is diminished. Citizenship becomes replaced by an emphasis on economic relations and values. Commodity acceptance in world markets becomes a source not only of regional economic prosperity, but of cultural legitimation. Regional mythologies that appear to impede the recoveries of history and politics become solidified—like Anne of Green Gables, or the festival image of Louis Riel—into salable folklore.

One unfortunate consequence of this is that the positive force of regional affirmation—its enabling of contextually local evaluations of practices and products, including political and literary practices—is endangered by commodity fetishism. I am thinking here of Southwestern Ontario painter Greg Curnoe, whose insistence on his own regionality involved not the invention of totalizations of Southwestern Ontario, nor regional chauvinism, but rather the assertion that local particulars and practices could be invested with as much value as those particulars and practices that occur in politically or economically powerful places. Expressed as a regionalism, regional affirmation is not always friendly to the local or the particular—as the critical debate over Maritime and Atlantic representations currently shows. One of Curnoe's achievements was in being able to break Ontario-centred Canadian nationalist totalizations by asserting from both personal and family positions (like Women's Press and Sister Vision Press have done from gender and race positions) dissenting particulars which themselves leave open the possibility of further difference.

It is with these different political and cultural potentials of Canadian regional affirmation and regionalism that I will end. The two or three most successful Canadian regionalisms have historically encompassed and effaced sectionalisms and localisms (Alberta foothills, Cape Breton Island) too weak economically and institutionally to assert themselves. They have resisted and effaced rival ideological bases of identity. Yet except for



Ontario regionalism, they have also offered some ways of resisting even larger national totalizations, and in literature, with the gaining of provincial publishing infrastructures, have been able to assert alternate non-national canons and criteria for canonicity. To more fully serve the ideological diversity of the inhabitants of their regions, however, Canadian regionalisms have needed, like Curnoe's affirmations of "region" (he edited for several years an irregularly appearing journal titled *Region*), to become regionalities—open to internal differentiation by other ideologies—ideologies both of the sectional kind that provinces and powerful cities can offer, and of the transnational kind, such as gender, race, and ethnicity. As regionalities, affirmations of region can have powerful and legitimating interactions with other ideologies, helping both to historicize and contextualize them. One of Maritime scholarship's recent important contributions to the understanding of colour and race in Canada has been the identifying of the historically specific experiences of blacks in Nova Scotia from the eighteenth century onward.

Earlier literary and cultural criticisms, in their frequently uncritical acceptance of *regionalism* as a critical category, have contributed to the politically oppressive functioning of the term. Even when constructed as resistances to nation-state ideological dominants, successful Canadian regionalisms—presenting themselves as inherently natural—have become new dominants, serving particular class, race, and gender interests, and constraining social/textual dissent and change. Criticism would be well advised to treat regionalism with the same skepticism it directs toward other ideologies—substituting in its own discursive practices "regional" for "regionalist" and "regionality" for "regionalism."

Again, this is not to say that the social and geographic contexts signalled by "region" are inconsequential. To the contrary, it is because of the contextualizing and historicizing power of regional constructions that it is so important that they be discursively available outside of processes of social domination. The increasing globalization of economic power, which is being accomplished without a corresponding globalization of democratic politics, is placing an intensifying demand on regions and the constituent provinces or departments of nation-states to act as strategic political and cultural sites for democratic resistances to global assumptions. With what cultural productions are Canadians likely to be able to resist the productions of Disney, CNN, the Booker Prize, and the six or seven multinational book and video publishers that currently control 80% of the global

market? With ones produced by Toronto media, productions that increasingly resemble those of the multinationals, or ones produced in Toronto suburbs and subcultures, and in Winnipeg, Moncton, St. John's, Halifax, Edmonton, Victoria, or London-Ontario? Such resistances will require regional or local effort to support regional institutions, especially theatres and magazine and book publishers, as aspects of political representation, as well as a continuation of regional efforts to acknowledge competing and intersecting ideologies and internal difference. For literary criticism such developments would make even more important the recognition that regions and places are not inevitably regionalisms but rather contexts in which specifically marked varieties of textuality differ and negotiate.

#### Notes

1. This is an ambiguity France has tried to create for its colonies in recreating them as overseas departments with representation in the French Chamber of Deputies and Senate—making them politically part of France while geographically and historically distinct from it.