

DÉPARTEMENT DES LETTRES ET COMMUNICATIONS

Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines

Université de Sherbrooke

**A Comparative Post-Colonial Reading of Kristjana Gunnars' *The Prowler*
and Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said***

par

I-1743

Rémi Boucher

Bachelier es Arts en Études anglaises

**Mémoire présenté pour l'obtention de la Maîtrise es Arts
en Littérature canadienne comparée**

**Sherbrooke
Décembre 1999**



**National Library
of Canada**

**Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services**

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

**Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada**

**Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques**

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-61717-3

Canada

Composition du jury

**A Comparative Post-Colonial Reading of Kristjana Gunnars' *The Prowler*
and Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said***

Rémi Boucher

Ce mémoire a été évalué par un jury composé des personnes suivantes:

Winfried Siemerling, directeur de recherche

(Département des lettres et communications, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines)

Roxanne Rimstead, lectrice

(Département des lettres et communications, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines)

Robert Edwards, lecteur

(Département des lettres et communications, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines)

DÉPARTEMENT DES LETTRES ET COMMUNICATIONS

Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines

Université de Sherbrooke

Une étude comparative post-coloniale du roman de Kristjana Gunnars,
The Prowler, et du roman de Robert Kroetsch, *What the Crow Said*

Par

Rémi Boucher

Bachelier ès Arts en Études anglaises

Mémoire présenté pour l'obtention de la Maîtrise ès Arts
en Littérature canadienne comparée

Sherbrooke
Décembre 1999

Composition du jury

**Une étude comparative post-coloniale du roman de Kristjana Gunnars,
The Prowler, et du roman de Robert Kroetsch, *What the Crow Said***

Rémi Boucher

Ce mémoire a été évalué par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

**Winfried Siemerling, directeur de recherche
(Département des lettres et communication, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines)**

**Roxanne Rimstead, lectrice
(Département des lettres et communication, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines)**

**Robert Edwards, lecteur
(Département des lettres et communication, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines)**

Résumé

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths et Helen Tiffin ont déjà souligné que plus du trois-quart de la population du monde aujourd'hui a été influencé par le phénomène du colonialisme. Cette influence a comme résultat de séparer le monde en deux catégories : le centre colonisateur et la périphérie colonisée. Ces catégories créent une structure dychotomique dans laquelle le centre infériorise, par un processus d'altérité, l'Autre périphérique. Pour surmonter cette infériorisation, l'Autre colonisé commence souvent par imiter les modes d'être du centre. La décolonisation est donc un moyen de redéfinir la subjectivité du colonisé en dehors de ces modes d'être.

De plus, la décolonisation devient problématique lorsque cette structure dychotomique initiale est fusionnée, ce qui est le cas dans des pays tels que le Canada, l'Australie et la Nouvelle-Zélande. Ces pays ont une histoire a priori colonisatrice, mais aujourd'hui leur réalité est celle de colonisés, ce qui rend le processus de décolonisation problématique. Néanmoins, ces pays ont produit une littérature et des théories post-coloniales qui remettent en question les courants théoriques basés au Tiers Monde.

Toutefois, il devient difficile dans un tel contexte de déterminer exactement ce qui est et ce qui n'est pas de l'écriture post-coloniale. Le post-colonialisme devient donc un point de vue théorique, une stratégie d'écriture et de lecture. De ce point de départ, j'ai choisi de lire deux textes canadiens postmodernes, *The Prowler* de Kristjana Gunnars et *What the Crow Said* de Robert Kroetsch, selon une optique post-coloniale du Second Monde. Par le biais d'une stratégie de lecture à trois étapes (qui étudie, dans chacun de ces romans, l'évolution d'une première étape coloniale, à une seconde étape de découverte et finalement à une dernière étape d'appropriation à l'intérieur d'un mode d'être post-colonial), j'ai pu étudier ces oeuvres au-delà de la critique actuelle postmoderne et j'ai pu souligner leurs éléments post-coloniaux.

Abstract

Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin have noted that more than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism. What this does is split the world into categories of belonging: the colonial centre and the colonised periphery. These categories create a binary power structure in which the central/imperial subject inferiorises, through a process of alterity, the colonised/peripheral Other. In response to this inferiorisation, the colonial Other at first imitates the centre's colonial modes of being. Decolonisation, then, is an attempt to redefine the colonised subject outside of these modes.

Decolonisation does become problematic when the initial binary power structure is fused, as is the case in white settler societies such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These societies have a history of colonisation but their present-day reality is that of a colonised people, which problematises the process of decolonisation. Nonetheless, these countries have produced exciting post-colonial literary and theoretical work, which challenges current Third World based criticism.

However, working within such a context does create the problem of determining what makes up post-colonial writing. Post-colonialism, then, becomes a theoretical stance, a reading and writing strategy. From this starting point, I chose to read two postmodern Canadian texts, Kristjana Gunnars' *The Prowler* and Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said*, within a Second World post-colonial perspective. Through a three-stage reading strategy (which reads both novels as evolving from an initial colonial state of mind, to a stage of discovery, and then finally to a stage of appropriation within a post-colonial mode of being), I have approached these works outside of mainstream postmodern criticism and highlighted their post-colonial aspects.

CONTENTS

GENERAL INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1: Post-Colonial Space and The Second World

- 1.1 Post-Colonial Criticism as Reading/Writing Strategy 11
- 1.2 Post-Colonialism and the Second World: Strategies for Resisting the Binaries 18
- 1.3 Discovery and Appropriation: Redrawing the Maps 25

CHAPTER 2: Post-Colonial Reading of *The Prowler*

- 2.1 Island of Periphery: The Magic is Elsewhere 31
- 2.2 Discovering Out There: Border Crossings 40
- 2.3 Appropriating a Home: Love and Prowling in a Space of One's Own 46

CHAPTER 3: *What the Crow Said*: Robert Kroetsch as Trickster in a Post-Colonial Canada

- 3.1 Reading Sub-Versions: Postmodern vs. Post-Colonial 53
- 3.2 Colonisation of Space: Ice Monument to Human Folly 59
- 3.3 Going Beyond Big Indian: Transformations of the Self and the War Against the Sky 65
- 3.4 Back to 'Normal': Trickster and the Business of Appropriation 71

CHAPTER 4: Comparison of Strategies: A Discussion within the Second World

- 4.1 Strategies of Discovery 77
- 4.2 Strategies of Appropriation 84

GENERAL CONCLUSION 92

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 98

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The moment of discovery of the Americas was, as Margaret Turner puts it in her book *Imagining Culture*, a disappointment (3). The search for a Western route to the riches of the Indies came up somewhat short of success. Instead of finding gold and spices, Europe came face to face with an enigma whose echo can still be heard today in Northrop Frye's famous question: where is here? The unexpected continental land mass effectively blocked all direct routes to the Orient, and forced both science and theology¹ to rethink their conceptions of space. The world was turning out to be a lot bigger than science had speculated.

In that unknown space beyond the reach of European maps lurked a challenge greater than anyone imagined: how do you go about representing and understanding difference on such a scale? The chasm that lay between Europe and the indigenous people of America was much wider than simply an ocean. It was rooted in the moment of contact, determined by that first defining instant when European thought systems tried to cope with an alien Other. Columbus had an unshakable faith in the accuracy of his maps, so the indigenous people of the Americas were misnamed Indian, and their land was misplaced and displaced to the Orient: "Afterwards I shall set sail for another very large island which I believe to be *Cipango*, [...] at all events I am determined to proceed on to the continent, and visit the city of *Guisay* where I shall deliver the letters of your Highnesses to the *Great Can*, and demand an answer, with which I shall return" (Columbus 118). This

¹ At the time both were very closely related to the point where certain scientific revolutions had a heretic element to them. We just have to think of Galileo and his discoveries, such as the telescope, which confined him to house arrest.

mistake in representation of Otherness, difference, was to be the first in a long list of misplacements by European perceptions.

The process of representing difference, alterity, is a double-edged sword: as we try to express the difference itself, we only end up expressing similitude. To describe something, there are two ways to go about it: "Faced with an incomprehensible and multifaceted alterity, the European theoretically has the option of responding to the Other in terms of identity or difference" (JanMohamed 18). Otherness then can be described in terms of similitude, and in this case, eventually becomes an expression of the self. In his book *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes describes how a logical deduction on Martian flying saucers leads not to a discovery of an Other, but rather a description of one's self: "Probablement que si nous débarquions à notre tour en Mars telle que nous l'avons construite, nous n'y trouverions que la Terre elle-même, et entre ces deux produits d'une même Histoire, nous ne saurions démêler lequel est le nôtre [...] À peine formée dans le ciel, Mars est ainsi *alignée* par la plus forte des appropriations, celle de l'identité" (42).

What is interesting in Barthes's remark is that he demonstrates how alterity works as a mirror, reflecting from the projection of the Other an image of the self. One other way that alterity works, is in the construction of a subjectivity through an Other. On this, Hegel writes: "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (111). The self needs an Other to realise its own existence. Hegel's position is complicated at best, but the idea of the Other as mirror is expressed: "Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*. This has a two-fold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self" (111).

This said, I would like to turn my attention back to the misplacement of space via the

act of discovery of the Americas. The first thing that can be said of this moment and its consequences, is that however innocent the initial mistake might have been, its repercussions are anything but innocent. Christopher Columbus sailed West and found something he could not cope with. He continually tried to replace what he saw within the maps he had and within Marco Polo's descriptions of the Orient (Todorov 17). He never found the Great Kahn nor China, but what he managed to do marked European experience in the Americas forever: "Le premier geste qu'accomplit Colon au contact des terres nouvellement découvertes (donc le tout premier contact entre l'Europe et ce qui sera l'Amérique) est une sorte de nomination étendue : il s'agit de la déclaration selon laquelle ces terres font désormais partie du royaume d'Espagne" (Todorov 35). This action of (re-) naming and appropriating space was to be, arguably, the starting point for every European expedition to America. Put otherwise, the act of colonisation is at the heart of any expedition of discovery.

Furthermore, colonisation — be it by Columbus or anyone before or after him — involves two distinct things: the taking of space and the (re-) naming of space. They are both colonial acts and very aggressive in nature. They involve a remapping of both physical and mental spaces to a familiar sense of self. Otherness is smoothed out through appropriation. The naming of space is an integral part of this appropriation and furthermore, it finalises the process by putting an indelible tag on it. By naming a foreign space as something familiar, that space ceases to be foreign and begins to resemble home. The process of naming also establishes the boundaries between here and there, home and elsewhere, self and Other: "In a new place, and in its literature, the Adamic impulse to give name asserts itself [...] Writers in a new place conceive of themselves profoundly as namers. They name to create boundaries. They name to establish identity" (Kroetsch, *Treachery* 41).

But what happens to this displaced space down the road? What happens to the

markers of colonialism, the colonial mappings of space and identity, once their use is gone? What happens when the “discrepancy between an imported vocabulary and a land too large for that vocabulary” (Huggan xiii) becomes alienating to those who call that land home? The problem originates from that first moment when Europeans tried to come to terms with a difference they did not have the means to understand. Instead of coping with the difference, Europeans arguably just bulldozed over it. In a general fashion, the effects of this can be felt through the literatures that have sprung from the colonised countries, which can be seen as “a basically European society spreading itself across a very un-European landscape” (Harrison ix). European maps — be they physical or cultural — were applied to an un-European environment. These maps have a tendency of covering up instead of discovering or uncovering what is already there. But as long as you consider yourself European, all is well.

What are the problems, then, when the colonials, the white settler populations, become estranged from their colonial centre? My questioning goes to a point in time where the colonial no longer identifies himself or herself² with the centre, no longer clings to the memory of empire and tries to identify himself with a new self that is no longer tied to the imperial centre, whatever that new self may be. A historical turning point in colonialism is the First World War, which was for the colonial subject, “the destruction and the loss of [the colonial society’s] European centres, cultural, political, and economic” (Kroetsch, *Treachery* 23). What’s left to do for the colonial is to try to rid himself of his colonial heritage: “The mapping. The naming. The unlearning so that we might learn: the *unnamed* country. How to see the vision, how to imagine the real” (Kroetsch, *Treachery* 17). The process of going beyond the colony is one ingrained in learning, in discovering. George Lamming recounts the shock a Trinidadian feels when he first realises the existence of the English worker: “This sudden bewilderment had sprung from

² From now on, for the sake of brevity, I will use the masculine version of pronouns but this choice doesn't efface the fact that colonial and white settler populations are both male and female. This choice is entirely arbitrary and does not wish to promote any form of homogenisation.

his *idea* of England: and one element in that *idea* was that he was not used to seeing an Englishman working with his hands in the streets of Port-of-Spain” (13). Once you’ve begun to question your ideas of reality, then the possibility of seeing other versions of reality opens up to you. You begin to resist the received notions of colonialism. Resistance is the beginning of change; it’s also the heart of what is post-colonialism, of going beyond colonialism.

Before going any further, I would like to clarify some of the terminology I’ve been using and also that which I will use here throughout my thesis. I have discussed here a general genealogy of the colonisation of the Americas and its subsequent effects, but the subject is a little too vast for me to continue as it is. It needs some tightening up. Colonisation can be studied under many different angles, from its direct effects at the moment of conquest, to the ongoing economic and cultural conquests of the twentieth century. What interests me here is that colonialism, the act of discovering and appropriating the new world, is arguably the determining factor of the Americas: “any understanding of the new world’s subsequent cultural history and production rests on that point [conquest]” (Turner, *Imagining* 6).

What interests me is the effects of colonialism on the subsequent cultural productions, more specifically literary production. I propose to study here the effects of the colonisation of space within the Canadian postmodern/post-colonial literary context. But more than just the colonisation of space, I will look at the resistance to this colonisation, of the colonial mappings of space and place. In other words, I choose to look at a very specific point in Canadian literature, a point that is somewhat beyond discovery and colonial literature and which has become, in a sense, post-colonial. The object of my study, then, is a comparison of two arguably post-colonial texts: Kristjana Gunnars’s *The Prowler* and Robert Kroetsch’s *What the Crow Said*. What I hope to achieve through this comparison is to highlight the modes of resistance to colonial power that both authors

employ, either directly or indirectly.

The specific brand of colonialism that interests me, besides the colonisation of space itself, is not one of direct conquest, but one much more subtle. It is that of the colonial power as myth, permeating thought and culture. Myths, as George Lamming explains, are “the source of spiritual foods absorbed, and learnt for the future” (13), they colour the relationship the colonial has with the centre and with his peripheral ‘home’. Nothing else could ever be as good as the centre. The myths begin “with the fact of [the colonial centre’s] England’s supremacy in taste and judgment: a fact which can only have meaning and weight by a calculated cutting down to size of all non-England. The first to be cut down is the colonial himself” (Lamming 14). Myths of the centre’s supremacy are so ingrained within the colonial’s frame of mind, that subconsciously they permeate even the literature in the colony. This is true of colonial literature. Post-colonial literature, on the other hand, is consciously aware of the permeating effects of colonialism and is in a position to resist these myths, to subvert them.

Another term that needs to be clarified within the context of my study, is space. Space can be seen on many different levels: physical, exterior, interior, bodily, spiritual, discursive, textual; and these are but a few. Like colonialism itself, space as a subject is quite vast. But what interests me is the colonisation --- and the resistance to this colonisation --- of space within the text. Space, then, is examined here in its textual dimension. It inhabits the text. But nonetheless, within the text there can be found a number of different types of spaces. The space that interests me here is discursive, that is space as it appears through language: which words are used, how space is described, in what context. On one level, all space within a text is discursive, but on another, space can be described for itself --- as in traditional realist fiction --- or for the effect it produces. It is this discussion of the effect of the words used to define space that interests me, more than the depiction of space itself.

But space here has also been colonised, and is in the process of being decolonised. The colonisation of space, as I have mentioned before, is an aggressive act. It functions in two steps: first, there is the discovery of 'new' space; and then, there's the appropriation of that space through the actions of claiming and naming. The process of decolonisation, of going beyond colonialism, is also equally aggressive. On one level, decolonisation is quite imitative of colonialism. It is a kind of re-colonisation: re-discovering and re-appropriating space that once was colonised. On another, post-colonialism tries to rid itself of the modes of appropriation of colonialism. It tries to go beyond the repetition of certain binaries: oppressor/oppressed, coloniser/colonised, centre/periphery.

Throughout my thesis, I will be using the term appropriation. But this term has a negative history of connotative meanings that I have to explore before being able to use it. At first glance, appropriation is part of colonialism as I've described it here. To use it, then, even in a post-colonial context as I propose to do, is to drag along a whole history of colonialism. It is an ingrained part of the colonial act and perpetuates the binaries of colonialism. If we look at this from a literary standpoint, the re-appropriation of literature that goes on in the decolonisation of a culture is done firstly through the recuperation of pre-colonial, pre-contact, oral literature, and secondly through the "mimicry and parody of the dominant discourse" (Griffiths 240). The second part of this re-appropriation is imitation, or what many critics call mimicry. This is done to re-inscribe local discourse within the larger English literary context, but it does perpetuate the forms of colonialism to a certain extent.

But appropriation doesn't involve just land or literature. There's another kind of appropriation that I would like to talk about: the appropriation of voice. In the process of subverting mainstream or dominant discourse, writers sometimes use native or aboriginal voice. A problem of authenticity arises from this, that is native voice is

appropriated by a non-native speaker. Instead of decolonising, it is colonisation all over again. This is especially true in a white settler culture which has broken away from its former colonial centre. That culture identifies itself with the native culture it once colonised, and appropriates a native voice.

These are just some of the problems that come with a term such as appropriation. It is a word heavily loaded with negative connotations. If I want to use it in a post-colonial context, the word itself has to be decolonised and restated. The sense of appropriation that I will expose in greater detail in my first chapter, the one that I will be using throughout my thesis, is not one of claiming or taking, but rather a process of constantly re-assessing and re-evaluating your position vis-a-vis place, space, language, literature, and truth-claims. This process of appropriation does work towards a certain ownership of these things, but it is in constant flux or evolution. There are no firmly fixed paradigms, such as "This is here", "That is Other", "I am self". This denial of stability is one of the possible ways out of the oppressor/oppressed binaries, and offers a way out of the repetition of old forms and to some extent of colonialism itself.

There is one last term that I would like to discuss before going any further: strategy. There are a few kinds of strategies that need to be differentiated, in order to make things as clear as possible. But before discussing the different types of strategies, a question: what makes a strategy any different from a technique? Well, both terms apply to reading and writing --- you can have a reading strategy and a reading technique. Both are also constructed in nature but a technique is somewhat less flexible. Furthermore, a technique is extremely precise and is concerned with a very fine part of a process, whereas a strategy is much wider and can itself have a few techniques under its wing. An example of this is a painter who wants to depict a rose bush. There are many strategies he can choose from, and within these strategies there are different techniques regarding the paint he uses, his brush strokes, and the way of looking at the rose bush. Let us say that a

painter wants to depict the rose bush in a realist fashion; in that case, the techniques that he could use would greatly differ from a cubist or an impressionist depiction of the same rose bush.

Now, if we turn to the different kinds of strategies, there are four that I would like to discuss: identity, post-colonial resistance, writer, and reader. Firstly, identity strategies are the different ways one can produce, or come to the creation, of either a personal or a national identity. Identity strategies are not limited to the text: they can be political, economical, geographical, etc. The construction of an identity is always a process which is negotiated: it is not a self-evident fact, existing out there to be found, it must be worked out. Secondly, post-colonial resistance strategies are the different ways or modes of resisting colonial power. These strategies can vary enormously, all depending which colonial power is being resisted and through which medium. Post-colonial resistance ranges from hunger strikes to textual parody and canon deconstruction. It is political in nature and has a lot to do with identity strategies, although post-colonial resistance is more caught up in the taking apart of colonial identity mappings than in the construction of identity per se. Next is writer strategies. Writer strategies are all the different approaches that an author has to the text. They are the conscious decisions that the writer makes throughout the writing process. The writer chooses his or her tools carefully in order to produce the desired effects upon the reader. These strategies go from simply wanting to express, as realistically as possible, everyday reality, to the complex deconstruction of textual functions and the received idea of the text. Last is reader strategies, which are the sum of the ways one can go about reading a text. Reading strategies vary from one book to the next, from one genre to the other, and also depending on the period in time, on the reader. All depending on the viewpoint, a single book can be read in completely different fashions. Reading a text as either postmodern or post-colonial produces two completely different interpretations of that same text. The same can be said of a realist or a

structuralist reading of a text. The strategy that the reader adopts during his reading produces the meaning of the text. Reader strategies, as well as writer strategies, can incorporate identity and post-colonial resistance strategies.

In regards to the thesis itself, what I propose to do here is to read two texts — Kristjana Gunnars's *The Prowler* and Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said* — and look at how space is colonised and/or decolonised in them. In other terms, I want to apply a reading strategy to these texts, more specifically a post-colonial reading strategy, and see how the two novels compare to each other. In terms of the thesis, this translates into the following chapter divisions. The first chapter will look at existing post-colonial theories and narrow down the field to the precise type of post-colonial resistance that I, as a reader, will be using. Also in the first chapter, I will define the reading strategy that I will apply to both Kristjana Gunnars's and Robert Kroetsch's texts. Chapter 2 and 3 will be the application of the reading strategy itself to Gunnars's and Kroetsch's texts, respectively. The fourth chapter will be devoted to comparing both *The Prowler* and *What the Crow Said*. Finally, I will sum up the findings of my thesis in the last chapter, which will act as a general conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

Post-Colonial Space and the Second World

1.1 Post Colonial Criticism as Reading/Writing Strategy

Generally speaking, by the end of the Second World War, the notion of empire had taken a serious beating, even more so after the Algerian and Indochinese wars. Countries who had once held colonies throughout the world saw them gradually slip through their fingers. The process of decolonisation, of questioning the right a foreign power had to rule over another country, had begun. Native populations insisted that they too were just as able to govern their country, that they had a voice that could be heard and that counted. This process of decolonisation increasingly valorised the peripheral 'here' over the centrist 'there', and it also took on many different guises which are now found under the general heading of post-colonialism.

But before going any further, a question: what is post-colonialism? Stephen Slemon remarks that "'Post-colonialism', as it is now used in its various fields, de-scribes a remarkably heterogeneous set of professional fields, and critical enterprises" ("Scramble" 45). In other words, there are many different forms of colonial power, and an even greater number of ways to confront that power. The field of post-colonialism is enormous and is not limited to politics, but reaches out into economics, history, geography, sociology, literature, art, drama, criticism, media, film, etc. To study it, one must make a decision as to what part or type of post-colonialism one wants to engage. It is somewhat of a political decision, involving that you choose sides. One cannot agree with everything that is out there and everything does not necessarily fit with one's idea of post-colonial resistance, nor does it fit with one's particular colonial situation.

What I would like to do here is look at a couple of post-colonial positions in order to find the exact mode of post-colonial resistance that interests me. As a starting point, I would like to begin with Edward Said's *Orientalism*, in which he elaborated his interpretation of a certain form of European cultural mapping of the Orient. In it, he writes that "[t]he Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1). He argues that the European idea of the Orient, the myth of an exotic place, became the Orient. This is true not just for the Europeans, who saw the Orient as "one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (1), but also for some of those who lived there who saw the Orient through a colonial eye.

The European idea of the Orient is what is at the heart of the cultural mapping of the Orient in the West. This mapping, or cultural colonisation, is much more deeply ingrained than simply a political colonisation. Politics change, leaders and empires change, but a myth is quite different. Once a myth has become part of a culture, it becomes very difficult to change it or to get rid of it. The Orient, or the Americas for that matter, becomes an "object of European desire [...] determined by the expectations imposed upon it" (Turner, *Imagining* 4). The problem with this cultural mapping is that it is not limited to the colonising culture, the mapping itself may overflow onto the colonised subject. The colonial sees himself through European perceptions and creates a sense of identity by this. This is what Edward Said explains in his book: he tries to show that the Orient is a European idea and has a lot more to do with Europe than it does with the Orient itself. Said resists European notions of the Orient. By his resistance and deconstruction of the field of Oriental studies, he allows the possibility of reinscription of the Orient within an Oriental perspective. In order to formulate a true sense of identity the colonial must try to see himself without the European looking glass, or at least be aware of European cultural mappings.

However, this is just part of the problem. The other side of the problem a colonial must face, is his own perception of the colonial power, of the colonial Other. The colonial has to deal with not only the European vision, or myth, of himself, but also the myth of Europe itself. No matter what one reads or knows about the colonial Other, the idea of the Other is one that is quite difficult to change (Lamming 13). Post-colonial resistance begins with the resistance to these myths.

Orientalism is a good starting point for developing a post-colonial perspective because it effectively deconstructs Western colonial mappings. From this point, I will now turn to Homi Bhabha in order to build from this initial deconstruction. First of all, Bhabha suggests that "Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest and social authority within the modern order" ("Postcolonial" 437). In this statement, Bhabha posits the problem of colonialism in the political arena, and chooses culture as his battleground. For him, post-colonialism is first and foremost political. It is a form of political emancipation that spreads into the cultural field to further the decolonisation process. The battle is one waged with "uneven forces" -- a kind of David and Goliath, but which is David and which is Goliath is not always clear. Of course the colonial power is the one who is directly under attack by post-colonial criticism, but the strategies of resisting that power are equally important: "As a mode of analysis, it [the postcolonial perspective] attempts to revise those nationalist or "nativist" pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition" (439). Power binaries tend towards repetition of old forms. One has to be careful not to repeat colonialism itself while resisting it. Bhabha in a sense is taking up one of the points that Frantz Fanon makes in *The Wretched of the Earth*: "decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men. Without any period of transition, there is a total and complete, and absolute substitution" (35). Although Fanon does support a violent reversal of roles in the act of substitution,

there is nonetheless a danger in simple substitution. Decolonisation, then, could lead to the substitution of one colonialism for another. This then is a form of neo-colonialism which inevitably arises unless the “whole social structure [is] changed from bottom to top” (Fanon 35). Fanon uses the example of Cuba which arguably became a colony of American mobsters after their independence from Spain.

Another point that Bhabha takes up that I find worthy of note, is just to whom the term postcolonial refers to: “a range of contemporary critical theories suggest that it is from those who have suffered the sentence of history --- subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement --- that we learn our most enduring lessons for living and thinking” (“Postcolonial” 438). What Bhabha is implying here is that the source of post-colonial resistance lies within the Third World and within the victims of slavery. These are the people who traditionally have not been heard. They are the subaltern. From a literary standpoint, the notion of a voice of those who have no voice is quite interesting because it challenges the received notions of the text, of what a story should be about, and how it should be written. Post-colonial resistance begins in the margins, with the so-called voiceless who come out to speak.

One last point that I want to discuss here is Bhabha’s *post-colonial perspective*. Let me say first that it has as much to do with the resistance to modernism as it does with the resistance to colonial power. Bhabha begins with the idea that the *post-colonial perspective* is grounded in criticism, either literary, historical, or sociological. This said, he equates the homogenising effects of colonialism with the ideals of modernism. The exact form of modernism that I am referring to here is not the same as Baudelaire defined it, that is by “the ephemeral, the fleeting, the contingent” (13), or as Ezra Pound would say: *make it new*. The version of modernism that I want to discuss here is that which extends from the project of Enlightenment: “The project of modernity founded in the 18th century by the philosophers of the Enlightenment consisted in their efforts to develop objective science,

universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic” (Habermas 8). So by looking at the project of modernism as an extension of the project of Enlightenment, modernism can then be seen as a sort of cultural coloniser, imposing its standard on art and society through global homogeneity and cultural hegemony. Modernism becomes part of the colonial myth in the way it sees the world as one nation. And so to resist colonialism one has to resist, in a sense, modernism’s ideals. It would be easy here to see post-colonialism as a subset of postmodernism (Slemon, “Scramble” 45), but that would be a mistake. First, post-colonialism is not postmodernism, and second, there are many other ways in which colonialism has been resisted that does not involve a postmodern perspective.

Nonetheless, Bhabha’s notion of post-colonialism is closely tied to that of postmodernism. To the postmodern deconstruction and subversion of discourse, Bhabha adds “the concept of reinscription and negotiation” (458). What this does is not only take apart the primacy of colonial, centrist, discourse but it tries to reinscribe the outside voice, the (sub-) version, as equally if not more authoritative. In a purely postmodernist deconstructive mode, a writer would want to show the constructedness of all truth-claims. The post-colonial writer on the other hand, doesn’t want simply to deconstruct truth-claims. He has a political agenda which is to have his voice heard. The post-colonial writer wants to reinscribe, in the stead of deconstructed centrist truth-claims, a marginal sub-version. This creates a negotiated or mediated relationship between the (former) coloniser and colonised. Bhabha’s *post-colonial perspective* tries to see what the margins have to say. It is a form of deconstructed politics: that is a political sphere that doesn’t have traditional centrist truth-claims as a starting point. Politics are negotiated, each term reviewed from a different angle, from a different notion of truth.

Homi Bhabha is one of the better known post-colonial critics in the field today, but he is not the only one. I would now like to turn to another perspective on post-coloniality,

that of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. Together they wrote a thought-provoking book called *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. They begin by stating that the colonial experience has shaped the lives of “more than three-quarters of the people living in the world today” (1). This seems pretty much self-evident in the political and economic spheres, but the ways in which colonialism has influenced the peoples themselves, their conceptual framework, is better attained through the arts (*Empire* 1). As a starting point, this differs slightly from Bhabha who does not make the same distinction. As opposed to Bhabha, Ashcroft *et al.* put literature and the fine arts as the key ways of getting into contact with the effects of colonialism on the perceptions of the colonised peoples. Post-colonial criticism, then for the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, becomes pretty much intertwined with literary criticism: “Post-colonial writing and literary theory intersect in several ways with recent European movements such as postmodernism and poststructuralism” (155). This insistence upon the literary may not be the only way of approaching post-colonial theory, but it happens to be the authors’ area of interest. Post-colonialism itself is a multidisciplinary field that resists colonialism from a variety of theoretical standpoints, but Ashcroft *et al.* do have a word of warning against the appropriation of certain theories into post-colonial discourse. They warn against the “tendency to reincorporate post-colonial culture into a new internationalist and universalist paradigm” (155); in other words this warning is against the repetition of colonialism.

Another point that they make in the book is that post-colonialism, in their case, is a reading practice, a way of engaging a set of texts. For example, the resistance to European literary canons is a work of re-reading them, of looking at them from a different angle. Canon revision is not just the simple act of substituting one canon for another, it is an active and engaged way of deconstructing the whole artifact that constructs the canon. This point of view --- post-colonialism as a reading practice --- is also shared by Stephen

Slemon, in "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Strategies for the Second World." This version of post-colonialism parts somewhat from earlier forms, like the more activist criticism of Homi Bhabha, by centring the debate on textual practice instead of on the political arena. The mode of resistance here is textual and it attacks colonialism not as a physical or political entity, but rather as a myth. Here I am referring to the fact that the European text is often parodied because of its central position in the colonisation process: "Literature was made as central to the cultural enterprise of Empire as the monarchy was to its cultural formation" (*Empire* 3).

What is interesting in this is the focus on the literary that these authors give to post-colonialism. They suggest that postcolonialism is a mode of thinking and writing. This is also the point of view of Stephen Slemon who writes: "The Second World, that is, like 'post-colonial criticism' itself, is a critical manoeuvre, a reading and writing action" ("Unsettling" 38). Here, Slemon is arguing in favour for an ambiguous category: the Second World, which I will further discuss in the next section. But what is important to note here is that post-colonialism is not limited to, as Bhabha argues, the Third World. Post-colonialism here then takes on a much larger meaning. You do not have to be part of those who *have suffered the sentence of history* to be able to rethink your position vis-a-vis the literary canon, for example. I do not think that Bhabha would argue against this, but a certain elitism of the Third World is implicit within his argument. I believe that decolonisation originates in the margins, be they political, economic, cultural, or intellectual. Post-colonialism on the other hand, can be seen as an ongoing struggle to come to terms with the myths that inhabit everyday life. The struggle is waged on the level of culture through the act of writing: "writing, is fundamentally a cultural activity; every kind of writing therefore bears the marks of a culture, and in this case, a colonial culture" (Mohanram 5). Post-colonial writing is then a way of trying to get the markers of colonialism out of it.

1.2 Post-Colonialism and the Second World: Strategies for Resisting the Binaries

A substantial part of post-colonial criticism is concerned with the relationship that decolonised countries have with their former colonial centres. It is often an opposition between the First World and the Third World, but what exactly is intended with these notions of First and Third Worlds? The worlds theory has little to do with geography. It is not a dividing up of the world into three equal parts. What the worlds theory does have a lot to do with is economy and technology. Most definitions put the Third World in the shadow of the First: the Third World is portrayed as always trying to catch up technologically and culturally with the First World. It also brings up the notion of hegemony: ideally the Third World would become the same as the First and the world would be a place where everything is the same: economics, culture, artistic ideals. This is a very modern vision of the world.

But the Third World is not just an underdeveloped version of the First. This sort of definition has a tendency of subsuming the difference in cultures and in representation of Otherness that exists between the First and Third Worlds. This difference is not one that is likely to be bridged, no matter the advances in technology or in economic production that the Third World countries realise. Cultures do not follow the same evolutionary pattern as does technology. There is not a unique model of cultural evolution that the rest of the world should follow. If the border, then, between the First and Third World is drawn up by economics, the crossing of that border is not as simple as learning a new mode of production or coming up with new technologies.

A different starting point for a definition of difference between First and Third Worlds is needed, especially if we don't accept the fact that the Third World is one that wants to become just like the First. As I said before, modernism and the ideal of Enlightenment have a tendency of levelling existing differences, which negates Third World cultures. So

another way of categorising the Third World would be from a political point of view. One such view would suggest that previously colonised countries make up the Third World (Mohanram 7). From this point of view, a Third World country has to turn into a colonising force in order to become part of the First World. But then does the term post-colonial apply to a nation who thus comes out of the Third World and works towards becoming part of the First? Such a premise would imply that Third World nations want to become like those who colonised them and repeat a whole history of subjugation. It would also imply that the First and Third Worlds are and remain “in a binary structure of opposition” (Bhabha, “Postcolonial” 439). But, as I mentioned in the previous section, postcolonial discourse is one that resists colonialist power relations. It is, as Helen Tiffin points out, “an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them” (“Post-colonial” 95). Resistance, in its various forms, is at the heart of post-colonialism. But resistance is not everything: Ella Shohat argues that “postcolonial is not merely the theory of resistance, but rather, the term also carries with it the historical truth of a nation under domination” (Mohanram 8). That historical truth is one that no Third World country can forget. It also is one that reminds such nations of the dangers of repeating the colonial process.

I believe that in order to represent fully the difference between both Third and First Worlds, the definition has to be reworked. That is for me, the definition is a hybrid which incorporates all that I have discussed here. The Third World is historically determined by the modernist view of hegemonic social and economic evolution. In addition to this, the Third World is a space that has been appropriated and colonised, which is now somewhere in the process of decolonisation. I insist on the fact that the Third World is hybrid because firstly, it tries to rid its space of the colonial Other, and secondly, it also tries to work its way out of its comparably impoverished economic situation. Economic, political, and cultural domination are all part of the dead weight the Third World carries

along with it.

I want to insist on the fact that the Third World is historically determined by colonialism, by political, economic, and cultural domination. The reason for this is that I do not want to restrict the definition of post-colonialism to a Third World perspective. I believe that there is more to post-colonialism than just the Third World. Post-colonialism does have a lot to do with the Third World and a lot of post-colonial theory originates from there, but post-colonial theory and production is not limited to the Third World. What post-colonialism does exclude is Europe and the notion of Empire. Helen Tiffin posits the project of post-colonial literature in the investigation of "European textual capture and containment of colonial and post-colonial space and [in the intervention] in that originary and continuing containment" ("Post-Colonial" 97). Post-colonialism is the resistance to colonialism in all its various forms. It is not limited to the Third World just as colonialism does not limit itself to Third World countries. However, colonialism outside of the Third World is somewhat of a tricky subject.

But before approaching this question, I would like to discuss briefly the subject of post-colonialism in literature and also different modes of literary resistance. As I have mentioned before, colonialism works on many levels. Cultural colonialism establishes itself on the level of myth and one of those myths is that of modernism and cultural hegemony. One of the privileged ways of countering that kind of cultural colonisation is through literary production. Furthermore, one of the modes that this colonialism perpetuates itself on the level of literature is through modernism and modernistic literary production. There are different strategic positions one can adopt, but I would like to concentrate here on a postmodern mode of colonial resistance. However this mode is not purely deconstructionist and does differ slightly from a purely postmodern mode of literary production: "Whereas a post-modernist criticism would want to argue that literary practices [...] expose the constructedness of *all* textuality [...], an *interested* post-colonial

critical practice would want to allow for the positive production of oppositional truth-claims in these texts” (Slemon, “Modernism’s” 5). One of the possible bases of post-colonial resistance lies in postmodernism. This is not saying that post-colonialism is a subservient part of postmodernism or that all post-colonial writing is postmodern, it is to say that post-colonialism can use postmodern tools in its resistance to colonial power. I do not want to privilege one mode of resistance over another, but because of the authors I have chosen to study here — because their writing is clearly postmodern — I will, from now on, concentrate on a postmodern mode of colonial resistance that is first and foremost textual and literary.

Coming back to the subject of First and Third Worlds from a literary viewpoint, Bill Ashcroft *et al.* write that “the literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island Countries, and Sri Lanka are all post-colonial literatures. The literature of the USA should also be placed in this category” (*Empire 2*). Most of the countries in the list are easily identifiable with the Third World and thus their literature can be seen as post-colonial, but a few pose certain problems: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. All of these countries have been at one point in their histories a British or a European colony (France and Spain did hold certain portions of North America as colonies). If we put aside the United States — mainly because of the cultural and political colonisation they have been responsible for in the latter part of the twentieth century, and also because of their place at the top of the global political and economic arena --- these countries are somewhat hard to place within either the First or Third Worlds.

From a certain point of view, the literatures of these countries are colonial. A post-colonial discourse could originate from native populations who have been colonised and who are more easily placed within the Third World. But what of the white settler

populations of these countries? In what sphere of influence should they be placed? This is where the problem of placing these countries within the world's theory originates. Critically speaking, the literatures of the white settler populations of these countries, which account for the majority of the literary production, are often placed within the First World because of their colonising past. Critics such as Homi K. Bhabha often overlook white settler discourse as being possibly post-colonial. There is the assumption that these literatures are part of the centre, but they are not. The literatures of Britain, The United States, and Europe are at the centre. Canada for example is definitely marginal despite the critical recognition its literature has received over the years.

The problem is that "critical taxonomies, like literary canons, issue forth from cultural institutions which continue to police what voices will be heard, which *kinds* of (textual) intervention will be made recognizable and/or classifiable, and what *authentic* forms of post-colonial textual resistance are going to look like" (Slemon, "Unsettling" 31). Post-colonial theories decide what post-colonial resistance should be. If we take Bhabha for example, he places post-colonial literary production with those who *have suffered the sentence of history*. The problem is that the sentence of history can be felt just about anywhere. One does not have to be part of a Third World country to be the victim of injustice and exploitation. Resistance literatures originate in just about any country, even in the colonial centres. One just has to look at the work Emile Zola did resisting the industrial slavery of the French working man by the bourgeoisie, to see that oppression is not solely the lot of the colonial. It is just that post-colonialism, unlike the term resistance, applies to a political space that has already been colonised.

Another problem with a position such as Bhabha's is that it does not take into account what happens within a colony that has a majority population made up of white settlers. It is true that, at first, the colonists were European, but once they settled into the country they began to grow away from Europe. They became part of the periphery, on the

outside of the cultural and political arena. They stopped being Europeans and became colonials. Their literatures began to write back to the centre, and their politics started to cast away its colonialism. But these white settler populations are, to this day in many cases, still actively colonising native populations by their laws and regulations, and by appropriating native land and putting the natives into reservations. Countries such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are in an ambivalent position between the First and Third World, not belonging entirely to either. Alan Lawson has called the space these countries inhabit the Second World (Slemon, "Modernism's" 3).

The acceptance of the existence of the Second World depends mainly on your definition of post-colonialism, and it also depends on your willingness to accept the fact that not everything is black and white, that there is a lot of grey out there. Stephen Slemon writes:

I would want to preserve for 'post-colonialism' a specifically anti-colonial counter-discursive energy which *also* runs across the ambivalent space Alan Lawson called 'second world' societies --- a discursive energy which emerges *not* from the inherent cultural contradictions that necessarily marks transplanted settler societies but rather from their continuing yet subterranean tradition of refusal towards the conceptual and cultural apparatuses of the European imperium. ("Modernism's" 3)

As a political space, the Second World is very ambivalent. It seems to be part of the definitions of the First and Third World without truly being one or the other. But this ambivalence is not a problem. Authors such as Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha argue "persuasively for the necessary *ambivalence* of post-colonial literary resistance, and [...] emplace that resistance squarely *between* First- and Third-World structures of representation" (Slemon, "Unsettling" 37), but they do not seem to notice that they are arguing for the Second World as an interesting space for post-colonial resistance. They

have the tendency of placing Second World countries within the First World. This displacement and “consequent jettisoning of Second-World literary writing from the domain of the post-colonial” (Slemon, “Unsettling” 33) perpetuates the binary relationship between the First and Third Worlds, by continuing the idea of a hegemonic literature.

Homi Bhabha argues for ambiguity in order to resist power binaries (oppressor/oppressed, here/there, self/other), but at the same time he risks perpetuating them. Stephen Slemon argues that such binary divisions are “not available to Second World Writers, and that as a result the sites of figural cultural contestation [...] have been taken *inward* and *internalized* in Second-World post-colonial textual practice” (“Unsettling” 38). The contestation, the resistance itself to colonial power is inherent to the Second-World text. The ambivalent space of the Second World text occupies a privileged place in the resistance to binary relationships of power. It is not the only mode of post-colonial resistance, but the Second World text, by its ambivalent nature, is quite apt to go beyond the repetition of the same binaries of colonialism and thus truly resist the notions of Empire.

1.3 Discovery and Appropriation: Redrawing the Maps

European colonisation works on the model of discovery and appropriation. Supposedly *new* territory is first discovered³ and then it is taken and appropriated in the name of Empire. Appropriation here is a synonym for taking. The colonial act of discovering a foreign land and taking it is quite brutal and is blind to the rights of native populations. Furthermore, European myths and perceptions are an important factor in the colonisation of space. For example, Christopher Columbus was at first certain that the *new* world was in fact China. Then he believed it to be some sort of earthly embodiment of Paradise. This is just one of the ways that European myths appropriated and colonised discursive space.

The decolonisation of space to some extent works along the same lines. Colonised space is re-discovered and re-appropriated, but contrary to the colonial acts of the same name, decolonisation is not final arrival but rather a working progress where meaning becomes a kind of a shifting ground. What I am saying is that in the post-colonial perspective that I want to defend here, a final and definite appropriation is not possible, and more importantly not wanted. Ambivalence is the key to counter previous patterns of power relations. Appropriation here is something like trying to fit a piece in a puzzle. Certain connections are made. This piece fits with this other, but where exactly they fit in the whole is another question entirely. As more and more pieces are put together, you are brought to question yourself on the relationship these pieces have to each other. This is what I mean by working progress or shifting ground. Meaning in a post-colonial perspective is unstable; it all depends on your viewpoint which is re-evaluated each time a new element is added. I have to admit that the post-colonialism that I am exposing here is quite deconstructionist in its mode of operation, but instead of simply deconstructing all truth-claims it tries to recuperate and install oppositional truth-

³ The term *discovery* is somewhat inappropriate because the land discovered is only new or virgin from a European perspective. Native populations already inhabited those regions.

claims in their stead.

Margaret Turner once wrote that “[i]n a very real sense, Canada itself doesn’t exist until it is written” (“Endings” 59). This is not only true of Canada but, from a European perspective, of all foreign lands. This is to say that before an explorer has written about his voyage, that voyage and the lands he has seen do not really exist in a broader consciousness. What was China to Europe before Marco Polo? Similarly, Canada was written from a European perspective and was mythologised and mapped by European thought. However this mapping did prove to be inadequate. The very language Europeans brought over did not fit the space of Canada. As Graham Huggan notes, there is a “discrepancy between an imported vocabulary and a land too large for that vocabulary” (xiii), which in turn creates a gap in perception between what you think the land should be and what it is. This is the beginning of the colonisation of space that has occurred in Canada. To discover exactly “where is here”, one has to look beyond the European myth of Canada and find meaning in the vastness of Canadian space.

This is what Dennis Lee discovered when he tried to write within the Canadian space. He discovered that the words he used “said Britain, and they said America, but they did not say home” (399). What this discovery entails is that the space he was writing in was colonised to the point where he could not write about it without speaking of someplace else: “the texture, weight and connotation of almost every word we use comes from abroad” (399). This is mainly because the vocabulary, the perception of space, is transplanted and transposed from Europe onto a land where such a vocabulary could not originate. This translation is one that the Canadian author has to work through in order to decolonise his own space: “The Canadian writer’s particular predicament is that he works with a language, within a literature, that appears to be authentically his own, and not a borrowing. But just as there was in the Latin word a concealed Greek experience, so there is in the Canadian word a concealed other experience, sometimes British,

sometimes American" (Kroetsch, *Treachery* 58).

The problem is not just trying to find a vocabulary that can fit within a Canadian context; it is much more complex. The problem is discovering that you are colonised, that the space you inhabit is somehow other. In *The Lovely Treachery of Words*, Robert Kroetsch talks about how he believed in his youth that Canadian space was a virgin territory without a history before the coming of Europeans: "Even at that young age I was secure in the illusion that the land my parents and grandparents homesteaded had had no prior occupants, animal or human. Ours was the ultimate *tabula rasa*. We were truly innocent" (1). He had never thought of the space he lived in as once belonging to someone else. His perceptions were European, and Canada was a new land without history. But his perceptions began to change and with them, his way of seeing and experiencing Canadian space: "I was that day on my way to embracing the model of archaeology, against that of history" (*Treachery* 2). For Kroetsch space is layered, the top being what European perceptions made of it. But if you dig deeper, you can discover a whole world there:

It is a kind of archaeology that makes *this place*, with all its implications, available to us for literary purposes. We have not yet grasped the whole story; we have hints and guesses that slowly persuade us towards the recognition of larger patterns. Archaeology allows the fragmentary nature of the story, against the coerced unity of traditional history. Archaeology allows for discontinuity. It allows for layering. It allows for imaginative speculation. (*Treachery* 7)

For Dennis Lee, colonisation begins with the words themselves: "To speak unreflectingly in a colony, then, is to use words that speak only alien space" (400). You can never truly speak Canadian space unless you think through the problem of Canadian

colonialism. For Lee, this meant falling silent. It also meant that he was trying to think through the layers of connotative meaning each word carries along with it. In the end, words began again to mean something for him. He called it cadence. It was a kind of rhythm, a kind of meaning the words always had but that was clouded. In the end, simple words such as *city* began not only to express London or New York, but also the “whole tangle of Sisyphean problematic of people’s existing here, from the time of the *courreur des bois*, to the present day, came struggling to be included” (401). *City* began to say also Montreal, Halifax, Toronto. It had a sound and a feeling that spoke to Lee. He had found a language that spoke of here. Kroetsch’s notion of archaeology or Dennis Lee’s notion of cadence are ways these authors have found to come to terms with writing Canadian space. It is their way of appropriating space. It is never a definite endeavour, but a constant process of listening to what the space has to tell you.

In the colonisation and decolonisation of space, an important element is the map. Both physical and psychological maps chart what space should be. Colonial mappings are resisted and subverted by post-colonial re-mappings. Graham Huggan writes: “The connection between spatial perception, graphic representation, and the social or cultural construction of gender, region, and ethnicity makes maps useful paradigms for the critical investigation of different forms of ideological foreclosure” (32). Once space is mapped, it takes on a certain meaning inherent to that map and to the ideas that are behind it.

Psychological mappings, the maps that you carry along in your head, are part truth, part myth, but they create reality. Robert Kroetsch writes that “[o]ur inherited literature, the literature of our European part and of eastern North America, is emphatically the literature of a people who have not lived on prairies. We had, and still have, difficulty finding names for the elements and characteristics of this landscape” (*Treachery* 5). Not everyone is aware that at the same time you “record and invent these new places called Alberta and Saskatchewan” (Kroetsch, *Treachery* 5). The process of writing these places down, either

discursively or through the aid of a map, inscribes them within a myth. Part of that myth is language-based, the other part is rooted in culture: a European culture which could not have evolved on the prairie, or in Canadian space for that matter, tries to impose itself on what one sees and experiences within that space. So Canadian space was written, not as it is, but rather how it was believed to be.

To briefly sum up what I have discussed up until now, there are three steps in the decolonisation of space: space is first colonised, then re-discovered, and lastly re-appropriated. This makes up the reading strategy that I want to apply to both Kristjana Gunnars's *The Prowler* and Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said*. In both novels, the specifics of these three steps are different but their manifestations go along the same lines. First when space is colonised, the colonisation itself works unconsciously: the characters view the colonial power and colonialism as something natural. Then at some point, they start to question their state of colony. This is discovery, or re-discovery. It is an in-between state where the colonised go looking for alternate truth-claims, where they take apart their value system in the hope of finding something that speaks to them. For Kroetsch, this operates through his archaeology, of going beyond the initial layers of *official* and oral history. For Gunnars, this translates into border crossing, which is intrinsically a transitional state. Next is re-appropriation which is a coming to terms with the elements that have been discovered. It is a rejection of the modes of colonialism for something that is much more unstable. This would be the end result of Kroetsch's archaeology, and in Gunnars it becomes prowling. Appropriation here is on very shaky ground. Archaeology is always *en attente* of more information to fill in its gaps, it is always willing to shift perspective when a new element comes in. Prowling is a kind of taking, but there is a twist: Gunnars's way of prowling rejects colonialism; it is a way of stealing through the elements of colonialism without buying into them. It is also an affirmation of the self over the Other, of asserting that a separate identity does exist, but such an

assertion is always mobile: it is constantly shifting through truth-values, asserting that there is no primacy within them, asserting that *this is me*, that there is no primacy in the stories that make up an identity.

CHAPTER 2

Post-Colonial Reading of *The Prowler*

2.1 Island of Periphery: The Magic is Elsewhere

Reading through Edward Said's *Orientalism*, one gets the extremely strong impression that colonialism has a lot more to it than just an appropriation of space. It has a lot to do with "Two great themes [...] : knowledge and power" (Said 32); that is the dissemination of knowledge and the disregarding use of power. The colonial centre comes into the 'foreign' country with the absolutist idea that it already knows and understands that country. From this understanding, that colonial centre goes about doing what is supposedly in the best interest of that 'foreign' country: "England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows; England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government; England confirms that by occupying Egypt; for the Egyptians, Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs; foreign occupation therefore becomes 'the very basis' of contemporary Egyptian civilisation; Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation" (34). What comes from this is a cause-effect sequence in which the British idea of Egypt in fact constructs what is modern Egypt.

Extrapolating from this, we get the notion that within a colony, the colonised 'subject' is constructed and constructs himself through the coloniser's perception of him. In the case of the Orient, Europe constructed it as magical, mystical, and as radically Other: "The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (Said 1). But

* I put the term subject in quotation marks because the subjectivity of the colonised is problematic within a coloniser/colonised binary, such as Hegel sets it up in his master/slave dialectic. The very subjectivity of the Other is negated by European imperialism.

what of those who actually live there? How do the colonised see themselves and their country? Do they actually believe that they cannot have self-government?

To answer these questions, I will begin with the premise that the colonised are at a point in their history where they have constructed their identity from the coloniser's point of view. In this case⁵, they are Other and thus inescapably marginalised. They are geographically, culturally, and intellectually outside of the centre; that centre is where everything happens including the decisions regarding their own government. Historically speaking, this accounts for the situation that was found in many pre-WWI colonies, in which the coloniser was perceived as almost a blessing in certain circles. This construction of the colonised subject as Other is one of the most difficult aspects of colonialism to overthrow. The colonial subject, constructing himself as Other, must reinscribe his identity within totally different parameters in order to get out of the coloniser/colonised binary.

But the decolonising of the colonised subject is not what I want to get at here. My aim is to look at the precise moment of colonisation where the colonised is somewhat content with the colonial situation. If we take for example the British Empire at the height of its imperial power, there was the sentiment of pride in belonging to a nation upon which the sun never set. Of course, this sentiment of pride is found mainly in white settler populations and also in natives who have been educated by the European system. I am not willing to state that the whole of the population within a colony held this 'national' pride. What I am willing to say is that an elitist portion of colonial society felt and maintained this pride. Just as the imperial centre constructs the colonial periphery as Other, the colonials themselves construct the centre as being the embodiment of knowledge and reason. In such a view, if something is ever going to happen, it will be in the centre. The periphery is but the raw material that feeds the refined centre.

⁵ The other case would be that the colonised have moved away from this mode of constructing their subjectivity, and that they have searched for other ways, other models, upon which to build their self-identities.

This brings me to Kristjana Gunnars and *The Prowler*, in which we do find a certain celebration of the colonial centre, although this celebration does come under serious attack and revision within the novel. But before addressing how *The Prowler* constructs and subverts colonialism, I would like to discuss briefly both the author and the novel. Kristjana Gunnars is a Canadian author of Icelandic descent who has written a number of collections of poetry and prose. *The Prowler*, her first novel, is an autobiographical metafictional novel that covers subjects ranging from the narrator's childhood in Iceland, Denmark, and America, to metafictional comments on writing, reading, and critical approaches to the text. Its unique mixture of autobiography, fiction, and literary criticism, has made many critics read *The Prowler* as a postmodern text.

But I want to do a completely different reading here. The Iceland that the protagonist describes is one that in turn has been colonised by the Norse Men, the Danes, the British, and the Americans. This is a facet of the novel that post-modernist criticism does not read in the same way as post-colonial criticism would: "Western post-modernist readings can so overvalue the anti-referential or destructive energetics of postcolonial texts that they efface the important recuperative work that is also going on in them" (Slemon, "Modernism's" 7). *The Prowler* does deconstruct, in a very Derridean fashion, notions of structuralism and textuality: "In a puzzle every piece is its own center, and when compiled the work is either made up entirely of centers or of no center at all" (Gunnars 110)⁶. But the whole of the novel does not stop there, it does not solely deconstruct itself; it also builds out from the subversion it proposes: "I imagine a story that has no direction. That is like a seed. Once planted, the seed goes nowhere. It stays in one place, yet it grows in itself. It blossoms from inside, imperceptibly. If it is a vegetable, it nourishes" (*Prowler* 24). Postmodernist criticism focuses on how a text takes apart conventions, how it subverts mainstream thought. Post-colonial criticism looks at what can be reinscribed and

⁶ Since the pages of *The Prowler* are not numbered, the parenthetical information refers not to page numbers but to sections. From now on, all parenthetical references to Kristjana Gunnars' novel, *The Prowler*, will be noted as *Prowler*, omitting the author's name for the sake of brevity.

recuperated in the empty, deconstructed space.

Turning back to the actual space that the novel inhabits, that is Iceland, we notice that first of all Icelanders are a white settler culture, the white Inuit (*Prowler* 7), who have become in a certain way colonised. Iceland was originally home to nomadic Celts and not populated by an indigenous people. It was only in the ninth century that Scandinavians journeyed to the Island to colonise it. Gunnars alludes to one of the first settlement voyages in *The Prowler*. “[...] the longship that journeyed from Norway in 874, full of small-time kings and chieftains looking for an island to settle on” (*Prowler* 166). The colonial situation in Iceland is pretty particular. From one point of view, the population of Iceland is entirely made up of colonisers. There was no population to colonise. But the economic reality of Iceland⁷ and the sheer military power of the Scandinavian nations forced the population of Iceland to become a colony of Denmark. The Icelanders needed lumber, they needed food, and Denmark needed to extend its empire.

But *The Prowler* is not an Icelandic post-colonial text. Kristjana Gunnars is a Canadian, writing out of a Canadian context. She uses Iceland as a starting point to open up a larger discussion. Parallels do exist between both countries, especially when observed from a Second World perspective. Canada, like Iceland, is a space that tries to get rid of colonialism. It is a white settler culture that has become itself colonised. If we turn our attention back to the question of the creation of subjectivity under colonialism that I discussed earlier, we see that the very dialectic upon which it is based becomes problematic. The Second World colonial subject is at the same time coloniser and colonised. This is why Stephen Slemon points out that conflict between these opposites has “been taken *inward* and *internalized*” (“Unsettling” 38). The process of decolonisation then becomes very individualised.

⁷ There was basically no wood or lumber on Iceland: “If there were trees once on those mountains, they had all been cut away” (Gunnars, *Prowler* 10). The settlers had to use the boats in which they arrived to build their houses. Icelandic history shows a people plagued by malnutrition and economic strife, until geothermal technology arrived and solved many of the country’s problems.

I would like now to begin the discussion on the specifics of colonialism within *The Prowler*, and along with it the first part of my reading strategy, by using an image that parallels the colonial process: magic. From the perspective of a child, everything has somewhat of a magical glow to it. Rabbits come out of hats, flowers out of canes, women get sawed in half, and magicians really disappear. As one grows older, the magic has the tendency to wear off. The rabbit was under the table, the flowers were just folded paper, and nobody really gets sawed in half. Magic has two sides to it: a child's innocence and an adult's cynicism. The same can be said about colonialism. I noted earlier that there is a certain pride in belonging to a nation, but at one point down the line, one begins to question the institution of colonialism. One begins to realise that the nation in question, the colonial centre, cannot ever represent the colonised self as belonging to it, that everything one was proud of will never be here/now/you. It will always be someplace else. The seat of colonial power, both economically and culturally, is located in the centre and never in the periphery. Nothing seems to happen in the periphery whereas the centre is imbued with the sense that everything happens there. This is the childish, magical view of colonialism.

Edward Said's comments on the Orient demonstrate how it was mythologised by Europe. Even today, when I think of the Orient I think exotic, I think magic, and I definitely think of not-here. One thing that colours most my vision of the Orient is my reading of romantic texts. The Orient was alive; it was magical. It never existed except in the minds of those who believed in it, that is, the colonial powers who invested the Orient with this magic. Even though technically speaking I know that there is not anything really romantic about the Orient, nor any other place for that matter, there is nonetheless a feeling that there is something magical, mysterious, about life elsewhere. This is what Kristjana Gunnars shows in *The Prowler*. "Materials for stories came from magical places so far away that people there had never heard of us. The Russian Steps and the Hungarian

plains and the Chinese mountains. But for us way up here in the North there never would be a story" (83). To the colonised subject, nothing seems to be happening in the 'here'. If there is something happening, if there is a story to be told, it is out 'there', "in some magical country rather far away" (*Prowler* 165).

Added to this feeling that nothing really worth mentioning happens 'here', is the impression that life 'here' is not enough. There has to be more. There has to be somewhere else that is worth it all: "Anything that came from far away was good. The further away it was, the more magical. I sometimes stood in front of the mirror in the hall, rehearsing pinched eyes and Japanese words. Life is not enough, I insinuated to the mirror. It has to be magic" (*Prowler* 21). Furthermore, the 'here' in question is literally insufficient. Iceland was an impoverished nation without the means to adequately feed its population: "This was the country where people died of starvation. For eleven hundred years sheep collapsed in the mountain passes, horses fell dead in the ash-covered pastures, fishermen were too tired to drag their nets out of the sea. Children faded away in sod huts from malnutrition. Old men ate their skin jackets" (*Prowler* 39). Fruit came from elsewhere. Lemons were like gold: "I was like a prospector eyeing gold. I was stuck to the lemon, thirstily devouring the juice, the meat, the rind, everything but the seed" (*Prowler* 9). The narrator comes to the conclusion that an undernourished nation can not have the upper hand, that they are politically predetermined: "human psychology is determined by politics. And politics is determined by diet. That is, those who eat best win" (*Prowler* 155).

Dennis Lee once wrote that "to speak unreflectingly in a colony, then, is to use words that speak only alien space" (400). He came to this conclusion when he realised that all the words he used possessed no immediate sense of 'here,' they all spoke of some other 'there.' The space that the words lived in was crammed with an experience, a whole culture, that didn't belong to the specific place of Lee's creative energy. He stopped

to reflect upon the words he used everyday. Looking at all of this, he did not recognise himself. He became stranded, without words, like when you walk out onto a sandbar at low tide and don't notice the tide coming back in. Gunnars describes a similar situation: "I walked out onto a sandspit. It was an overcast day. The sand was black, the sea was black, the sky was almost black. [...] I walked so far and so long that the tide rose behind me, closing access to the mainland. I was out on an island that was preparing to go under" (*Prowler* 32).

For *The Prowler's* protagonist, the place where stories come from is elsewhere: "The story is always somewhere else" (47). There are no words in the immediate 'here' that can possibly say anything: "Yet I thought there must be something I could say if I knew what it was. It was a matter of outlook. Some pattern into which a story could fall. Those magic words I did not have. If there are magic words they must be far away" (*Prowler* 92). Furthermore, the colonial space, the 'there,' is what counts. It is reality. The periphery does not count; it isn't necessary to existence: "My father's people have always known that potentially they don't exist" (*Prowler* 30).

The colonial center/there is magical whereas the peripheral 'here' is common drudgery. But as the bright lustre of magic has a tendency to wear off, so does that of colonialism. One begins to notice that the space one calls home is inhabited by strangers. One begins asking the question of who they really are. Questions bring on more questions. They also bring on a refusal of belonging to the colonial Other.

Iceland, up until WWII, was a Danish colony. Sometime during the war, there was a revolution. Independence was declared. This, however, was short lived: "It was during the German occupation of Denmark that Iceland declared its independence. It was known that the Danish army could not move in at such a time. However, the British army could, so it was a brief moment of independence" (*Prowler* 64); "One morning during the war, I read, people woke up to find they were occupied by the British. This was to preempt the

possible arrival of the Germans. [...] Then just as suddenly the British were gone, and people woke up to find they were occupied by the Americans" (*Prowler* 45).

The shine wears off pretty quickly, to the point where the narrator is unable to find something magical about America, calling their CARE packages "rubbish" (*Prowler* 22). She also cannot fall in love with Americans because they are unmagical: "But is this why, much later in life, I could not take an American lover? Because with a Korean or a Greek or a Hungarian, you can be with a dark and handsome man from a magical place" (*Prowler* 27). Once the magic has worn off, there is a dirty feeling that hovers over anything that has to do with the colonial power, and all one can do is try to wash it off without any real hope of success. The narrator is dirtied by her association with the Danes, and likewise with the Americans. She decides to drown her colonialism in a flood of Other, a sort of Babel revisited:

After some deliberation, there was a new nickname for me. [...] American Dane! [...] Now that the memory of Danish colonization was mellowing out, I was just getting by. But fate has to turn around and join me up with the new colonizers as well.

There was a sense of anger. I studied methods of escape with greater intensity. If familiarity with language determines a person's identity, I considered, I would learn Russian myself. I unearthed my father's Russian dictionary. I set myself study hours every day.

As time went by an even better idea presented itself. Supposing I were to learn to speak Russian, and then the Russian army would occupy us. It would be digging myself deeper into the hole. The solution was to study more languages. I would learn French and German, Faeroese and Inuit. I would confuse them all. (Gunnars 133)

This is the beginning of the narrator's resistance. It is from this point that she recognises

her situation, sees the rabbit under the table, and decides to do something about it. From this point on, the centrality of any imperial power is put into question. There is the desire to rework power relations within the colony, to go out and acquire knowledge without the intermediary of the colonial power, to try self-government and prove the colonial power wrong. Resistance to colonial power is the beginning of decolonisation and it surfaces as a stage of discovery.

2.2 Discovering Out There: Border Crossings

Once you step outside of colony, there is a certain amount of free fall, of wondering what or where is here. There is an in-between state that weaves back and forth from colony and decolonisation. This is the stage of discovery, of looking for physical limits. This discovery, be it spatial or other, is a major part of the creation of a distinct identity. The colonial subject tries to discover different ways in which he can attribute meaning to himself. He tries to construct an identity without being radically Other. This discovery entails a certain amount of crossing over into the realm of the Other, to discover meaning. In terms of *The Prowler*, this is expressed in the act of crossing borders. Borders between self and other; here and there; Iceland, Denmark and America.

Borders are interesting in themselves. In theory they are clean cut, defiantly saying where one thing ends and the other begins. They separate the 'here' from the 'there,' keeping everything neatly on the right side. But what is even more interesting is when all this neatness is messed up. Confusion in the tower. In the passage that I have quoted from extensively in the previous section, the protagonist decides to blur all the possible borders that one could impose on her. In her resistance to belonging to a specific category, she blends them all. She practically represents a case study for the Second World in which borders are quite problematic. Borders and categories are blurred because the limits between coloniser and colonised are unclear at best. A person from the Second World is unsure of his position. The Second World writer stands on the border itself and therefore cannot see it, cannot know when he or she has crossed it in either direction.

Crossing borders is a transitional action, from one place to another, from one state to another. The moment of crossing is one invested with discovery. It is in this in-between state that the differences between both spaces, the 'here' and the 'there,' are unveiled,

discovered. The crossing is also marked with ambivalence, a question mark over an unknown variable. The border line goes out of focus, widening out into an indeterminate blur. Most borders themselves are quite arbitrary: a pass in the mountains, the course of a river, a geographical line on a map. Often the moment that you actually cross them is uneventful. Only later do you realise the importance of what you have crossed. This is true for both psychological and physical borders. In theory the border is self-evident, cleanly marked, but in reality it is very hard to tell what it is. Walking over the Canadian prairie, one never really knows the difference between the provinces, or when one has crossed over into a different province. The prairie is arguably a continuous body stretching from lake Winnipeg to the Alberta badlands and the Rockies. Borders then become very arbitrary and hard to visualise.

But not all borders are as problematic as those within Canada. In *The Prowler*, Kristjana Gunnars writes that "The border between Iceland and Denmark is very visible. It is all water, and to cross over it becomes necessary to sail for ten days" (152). As far as borders go, it is hard to find a border that is better defined than the limit between earth and sea, although politically speaking this is not so clear. Territorial waters are arbitrary delimitations of part of an ocean. Nonetheless, the passage between Iceland and Denmark, the crossing of a border marked by water, is interesting because of the transitional effect it has on the protagonist. Neither belonging to one country or the other, the ocean is a place void of identity where one can easily adopt a new one, become a sea person: "I conceived of a desire to belong to the sea. To have been born on a ship. There were attempts at rewriting history. I began to understand the addiction of fishermen to the sea. It became my ambition to be a sea person" (*Prowler* 106).

The narrator is at home in the border crossings, in that intermediate/ambivalent space between here and there, because she herself is intrinsically ambivalent: "In my father's country I was known as the dog-day girl, a monarchist, a Dane. Other kids

shouted after me: King-rag! Bean! In my mother's country other kids circled me haughtily on their bicycles. They whispered among each other on the street corners that I was a white Inuit, a shark-eater. The Icelander" (*Prowler* 16). The narrator is half Icelandic, half Danish. Not being totally at home in either country, she associates herself with the no-man's land of the crossing. Her nature is one that is transitional. This is somewhat the normal state within the Second World, where identity is often a strategy of not belonging: "To make a long story disunited, let me assert here that I'm suggesting that Canadians cannot agree on what their meta-narrative is. I am also suggesting that, in some perverse way, this very falling-apart of our story is what holds our story together" (Kroetsch, *Treachery* 19). The very ambivalence that abounds within the Second World is what enables one to work through identity and belonging as a process of association and redefinition. Stability is not sought after nor obtained.

Graham Huggan writes that "territories/spaces can also be considered, however, as shifting grounds which are themselves subject to transformational patterns of de- and reterritorialization" (410). Space in *The Prowler* is constantly shifting in its connotative aspect: Icelandic, Danish, British, American, Russian, home, self, other. The border crossing is the place where all these connotations come into contact with each other, where they lose their clarity. On the passage from Iceland to Denmark, one has time to reflect on what is happening, to seize the moment for what it is: a transition between 'here' and 'there'. The border crossing is also the place where the "post-colonial response to and/or reaction against the ontology and epistemology of 'stability' promoted and safeguarded by colonial discourse" (Huggan 410) is first voiced in *The Prowler*. The boat itself, as a shifting ground going from 'here' to 'there', is an image of instability, rocking on an unstable sea.

The border crossings themselves are moments where stability is put aside, where one is not quite sure of the ground one is on. Besides the narrator travelling on the

Gulfoss, there is also a Hungarian boy who crosses borders during the Russian invasion of Budapest. The boy is shown the border by a peasant, but the moment when it is crossed is never certain: "The peasant who was to escort the boy to the Austrian border took him into a large field, pointed in one direction and said: the border is that way. Then he turned and left, and the boy walked on" (*Prowler* 60). The crossing itself seems uneventful. There does not seem to be a moment of epiphany, of realisation: he is saved. The crossing itself seems to lack meaning. One would hope for some kind of moment of clarity but it never comes. The transition takes more time to be realised, if it is ever realised at all: "Did he know when there was a border? Can borders be felt? Is there a change of air, a different climate, when you go from one country to another?" (*Prowler* 60). These questions permeate the moment of crossing, stretching that moment over time.

Moreover, one carries the border itself around as if it was part of the space one has just left: "It is about that Hungarian boy who walked through a border that could not be felt. It must be like walking through a cloud of nuclear dust. The dust cannot be seen, felt, heard or smelled, but it lodges in you and makes you susceptible to disease much later in life" (*Prowler* 72). The feeling of indeterminacy pervades the moment of crossing which is only realised much later. And this also is true for the trip back, that is there is no coming back full circle once the border is crossed. There is always something that is changed, even though one always hopes for a complete return, for a clear break when the border is crossed. But ambivalence hangs over borders like that cloud of nuclear dust.

The ten-day voyage by ship is a way of imagining how borders cling to someone, how they permeate what one thinks as normal: "We lived on the Gulfoss so often that I had perpetual sea legs, even when we had been on land for weeks. It was natural that the floor should tilt in different directions [...] Even on land I watched carefully to make sure that plates and cups would not slide from the table" (*Gunnars* 106). The unstable nature of a sea voyage prepares the protagonist to let go of her expectations and let the transition

between 'here' and 'there' take place. The Gulfoss is a shifter that lets the protagonist take off the masks of her Icelandic colonial self, to discover the nothingness of her existence on the border itself: "The Gulfoss was the only place where I loved loneliness. There was the loneliness of the heavy ocean in black billows as far as the eye could see, day after day. The loneliness of having nothing to do and being fascinated by that nothingness. Of being in a world without expectations, where the body was simply being carried forward in an environment where backward and forward did not exist" (*Prowler* 106).

Stability, that is, knowing the difference between 'here' and 'there', self and Other, does not rhyme with crossing. The Gulfoss is instability incarnate. First of all, it is a ship that goes from one place to the next, not standing still. Furthermore, it is subject to the weather and the ocean. It rolls and pitches to the whim of the sea.

There is an element of unpredictability in the crossing of borders. One never quite knows what is going to happen or what will befall. In *The Prowler*, Gunnars shows how important the moment of crossing is: "My grandmother, I was made to understand, was very beautiful. She became ill while still young, and the necessity of moving her to Copenhagen for medical care arose. But she did not make the crossing in time. Her illness made her blind, and after that she was not considered as beautiful" (*Prowler* 152). Crossing borders is not uneventful. The crossing itself, while not being a clear, definite moment, leaves marks that might not be readily seen. Furthermore, time is important as to the significance of border crossing. Going from Hungary to Austria can be very problematic or banal, all depending whether or not there is a Russian invasion at hand: "I was left with the general impression that in the business of crossing borders, timing is everything. If you do not cross at the right time, you run the risk of blindness. Sometimes you also run the risk of death" (*Prowler* 155).

I have emphasised here the fact that crossing borders is an unstable process.

Discovery works much along the same lines. Discovery is an abandonment. One lets go of his presuppositions to go in search of something different. This form of discovery differs somewhat from European exploration, which brought along with it a whole set of preconceived notions of what Europeans would find in their explorations. Discovery in a decolonising context looks for ways to subvert colonial truth-values and to find new paradigms by which an identity can be constructed. Stability is a quality of colonialism and to put it aside, to throw caution to the wind, is to begin decolonisation. Crossing over is in a sense a way of discovering difference, of also recognising your self: I am not Other. The pivotal moments of border crossing in *The Prowler* illustrate just how the transition from one place to another takes place.

Before going on to the next section, a different kind of border crossing needs to be addressed, one that is not physical but rather textual. The text itself crosses certain borders of textual convention, "incorporating that which does not belong to a story. Posing itself a question: It may not be a story. Perhaps it is an essay. Or a poem. The text is relieved that there are no borders in these matters" (*Prowler* 164). The text wants to blur the limits of textuality and just be itself. But despite its claim, there are definite borders in the matter of writing. When one reads a given text, a first impulse is to categorise it generically. Kristjana Gunnars in *The Prowler* crosses over textual borders set up as almost an academic colonisation. The idea is to discover what may lie beyond the borders. But the crossing of borders, the moment of discovery, is only a stage of decolonisation. What remains to figure out is what to do once new territory is discovered. This brings me to my third and final part of my reading strategy: appropriation.

2.3 Appropriating a Home: Love and Prowling in a Space of One's Own

Following the discovery of one's space, one appropriates it. From Other/there, one tries to become self/here. But this passage from Other to self is not this clearly cut. Appropriation in the Second World is a constant process of rethinking your notions of self and here. It is a time of free-fall, of spacelessness. Dennis Lee writes that "[t]he first mark of words, as you re-appropriate them in this space-less civil space, was a kind of blur of unachieved meaning" (400). This blur is part of the response process, part of the resistance to colonial power, to colonial discourse. One of the things that decolonisation must resist is the cultural and social hegemony of modernist/Enlightenment discourses. Appropriation must not be a repetition or a substitution of colonisation. It has to resist such repetition of colonial forms and put in its stead a negotiated, mediated, truth-claim that is not mimicry but rather a subversion. Appropriation is a process of subversion that works on an individual level instead of claiming universal hegemony.

In *The Prowler*, we find resistance in many forms. The narrator's comments on writing show a resistance to form, to convention, to writing, and even to the story although a story is being written: "It is a relief not to be writing a story. Not to be imprisoned by character and setting. By plot, development, nineteenth century mannerisms. A relief not to be writing a poem, scanning lines, insisting on imagery, handicapped by tone. A relief just to be writing" (*Prowler* 3). This contradiction, this ambivalent resistance, is part of a process of ridding space, be it written, physical, or interior space, of the colonial Other. In order to write as self, first the space must be emptied: "Words are suitcases crammed with culture. I imagine a story of emptied containers. Bottles drained of their contents. Travel bags overturned, old clothes, medicine bottles, walking shoes falling over the airport floor. To come to your destination with nothing in hand. To come to no destination at all" (Gunnars 52).

What this seemingly contradictory resistance does is subvert colonialist discourse and replace it with something that is at best ambiguous. Ambivalence leaves room for individual interpretation. It also leaves the door open to multiple sub-versions. This resistance is not only textual. Discursive or textual space is not the only type of space that is in the process of decolonisation. The body itself is colonised and the resistance to such a colonisation comes under the form of a “hunger strike against God” (*Prowler* 16). The protagonist’s sister resists the colonisation of her own body and tries to recuperate it: “Why do you not want to eat? I asked her. People who refuse to eat die. She answered me. I just don’t want to be who I am, she said” (*Prowler* 18). The protagonist’s sister here has begun, in her refusal to be herself as she is, to recuperate her own sense of identity.

In *The Prowler*, space is appropriated — and I use the term appropriation with caution and because of the lack of a better one — through the act of prowling. At its source, prowling is a form of truancy, of stealing for yourself whatever things that would not otherwise belong to you. But prowling is not exactly stealing either. It is not a direct taking of colonial space with all of its luxuries. Instead it is a mediated process in which meaning is reattributed in different ways than under colonialism. There is a resistance to buy directly into colonial discourse:

My great-aunt Sirri, in my father’s country, imitated those Danish ways. She was, or so it was rumored, upper crust, so she had househelp in the kitchen as well. But that was an elderly Icelandic woman with large breasts and a warm smile. I spent my time on a stool in the kitchen, listening to her talk, watching her wash dishes. She was laughing. I noticed my father’s people could not play the game they were supposed to play without laughing. They made fun of themselves. (*Prowler* 118)

The colonial discourse that is being resisted is the sectioning of social space, the division of social classes that exist in Denmark: “It was not considered well mannered for me to

go into the kitchen, for it was her area. I observed her from the distance of invisible social barriers" (*Prowler* 117).

As I have just mentioned, the protagonist's sister is, by the means of a hunger strike, in the process of reappropriating her self. But she is not the only person in the novel who has lost possession of her physical self. At one point in the novel, the narrator believes she is not even hers to own: "The man in the brown apron said: who owns you? My father, Gunnar Bødvarsson. I took these forms of expression literally. I was certain I was my father's property" (Gunnars 94). From this first state of not even owning her 'self', the narrator moves slowly towards the appropriation of her self. This is done carefully through a certain attachment to space. From being part of her father's space, her father's property, the narrator falls into a space-less dark area. An in-between place where you belong to everything and nothing at the same time:

I refused to go home when I came out of the fish plant. It was a silent house. There was no presence in the rooms. The kitchen counter was cleared and blank. The beds were empty. The living room door was closed, and there was no one on the other side of the door. It was a space, but an uninhabited space.

I went to other houses. Wherever there was a person at home. I realised in a slow dawning way that it was a country whose most notable product was love. I loved in a longing and sorry way the person who gave me a bowl of soup. Or a place to sleep. An alcove in the wall. The person who was at home when I walked in unannounced. (115)

This is the beginning of prowling, of stealing for one's self a space to call home, to call 'self.' Prowling is first done by a criminal on the beach in Rungsted. There is the idea that it is not a good thing to do, that somehow it is illegal and dangerous: "We understood that

a prowler was loose in the area. Do not wander too far along the beach. Do not find yourself alone in the park" (*Prowler* 56).

Furthermore, the act of prowling itself is filled with negative connotations: "Prowling was an act of truancy. The more you prowled, the more useless you became. It was possible to work your way to the bottom of public estimation simply by prowling" (*Prowler* 158). But despite this negativity, prowling becomes an act of liberation from colonial pressures. There is a feeling of empowerment that comes from being outside, from doing what is not right. While in Denmark, the narrator takes on the role of the prowler and pilfers through the estate in Rungsted:

In Rungsted I joined the prowler in imagined activities. I stole downstairs into the rooms on the main floor when I knew the old couple was not home. I fingered the gold door handles. I surveyed the crystal vases. The soft porcelain statuettes. The Persian rugs. The velvet upholstered chairs. I thought: it could be that Goldilocks is the bears. Certainly she is the youngest bear. The one who sleeps in her own bed. (*Gunnars* 59)

Here, her prowling is compared to Goldilocks but with a twist: Goldilocks is at home stealing from herself; she (re-) discovers her entourage and ends up appropriating what already belongs to her. This image is quite interesting: while under colonial power, the colonised is a stranger in his own home. He must re-discover his own space in an act of truancy before being at home.

From a Second World perspective this is really interesting, because the act of appropriation is in itself a repetition, but this time the appropriation is not blind to its own process. This is apparent when the narrator speaks of the double-sided nature of the text itself, and suggests that the text itself has become almost a character:

The text conspires in a form of truancy. There are derisive comments

between the lines. A sense in the air that there is not much potential in the claims it makes. The text answers back: there are no claims. There is nothing to be fulfilled. Therefore it has nothing to have potential for. There is the admission that duties have been shirked. That the text has been prowling in the reader's domain. (*Prowler* 164)

But even as the text tries to negate itself, to remove meaning from itself, there is nonetheless a text, a story, unfolding: “[a] relief just to be writing” (*Prowler* 3). The text, just like the other characters, is trying to discover its boundaries and define what it is. It appropriates what reason might dictate doesn't belong, but then reason is one of the colonising forces that is being resisted. Textual form, the space inhabited by the text itself, is problematic because of the repetitions it perpetuates. Robert Kroetsch asks a question that represents this textual colonisation: “I said to Jane, What is the subject of a love poem? She said, There can only be one subject of a love poem. What? I asked her” (*Treachery* 150). The text itself in *The Prowler* is trying to get rid of boundaries and to become itself.

There is one last instance of appropriation that I want to discuss here. First of all, I want to insist on the fact that appropriation is a process of redefining and reassigning meaning. Meaning is deconstructed and reinscribed in a post-colonial context. This process shows up in the passage that I have quoted from extensively above in which the protagonist becomes a prowler in Rungsted. I discussed the significance of the image of Goldilocks in a colonial environment, but there is still one more issue that needs to be addressed here. The section begins with a paraphrase from James Joyce: “It was James Joyce who said: *the reader wants to steal from the text*. The reader aspires to be a thief. For that reason the text must not be generous” (*Prowler* 59). Joyce is known as a high modernist writer. The narrator, after thinking about this statement, goes on to reject it: “It is a relief not to have such rules. To play such games. Hide and seek. Not to have

rules perhaps means you are free to steal from yourself. Finally” (*Prowler* 59).

This process of looking at modernist ideals and then rejecting them or recontextualising them, is precisely the process of appropriation that I am referring to. The protagonist then goes on to prowl among the colonial world in the Rungsted house. She ‘fingers’ and ‘surveys’ the objects of colonial wealth: gold door handles, rugs, vases, statues, and upholstered chairs. But the protagonist never acquires these things. She never takes them for her own, because in a way she knows better. Her father’s people always knew they could not play the game of coloniser with a straight face. There is the idea that to buy into such discourse would be laughable. Moreover, the protagonist does not only go through the objects of colonialism in a deconstructive mode where she discards centrist truth-claim. There is also a moment where she reinscribes an oppositional truth-claim:

As I sat in the heavy gold-rimmed lounging chair in the elegant living room of that estate, I came upon the greatest surprise. On the wall facing the street there was a stained glass window as large as a doorway. It was green and white, illuminated by the light of the afternoon. The picture it portrayed was a map of the North: Greenland, Iceland and the Polar Cap. (*Prowler* 59)

Sitting in that chair, surrounded by colonial wealth, she realises that the map has for centre her own home. Most maps place England as the centre, using the meridian of Greenwich as the dividing line between East and West. But all maps are quite arbitrary in the distinctions they make. Meaning is in a sense also very arbitrary. And so in this moment of prowling, colonialism is rejected (deconstructed) and the protagonist appropriates space by placing an oppositional truth-claim.

As mentioned earlier, appropriation is not quite the right term. Prowling is much closer to what is going on, to the ideal of decolonisation as an on-going process.

Prowling is not appropriation which would just be a repetition of the colonial act, but it is a working process where you go through the objects of colonialism asking yourself the question whether or not you should take them, whether or not you buy into that dialectic. Kristjana Gunnars's prowling is an ongoing process of redefinition where ambivalence is at the heart of it all.

CHAPTER 3*What the Crow Said*: Robert Kroetsch as Trickster in a Post-Colonial Canada

3.1 Reading Sub-Versions: Post-Colonial vs. Postmodern

What the Crow Said is Robert Kroetsch's sixth novel. It deals extensively with the deconstruction of myth, story, realism, patriarchal society, and received notions of the text. At first, the story seems to be about the courting of Tiddy Lang and her daughters, but soon into the book the stories around the courting take precedence. What one might take as the central story is quickly invaded by stories which seem at first marginal. The story takes place in the community of Big Indian where all sorts of bizarre characters evolve. The novel itself reads almost as a series of anecdotes and stories one would hear in a beer parlour, which accounts for the comic and exaggerated nature of some of the stories.

The novel itself is working from a number of different writing strategies: it uses Bakhtinian humour to tell the fall of traditional patriarchal society, it is written in a postmodern magic realist mode which plays with textual conventions, and it also rewrites and subverts classic mythology. Keeping track of the different strains of the narrative turns into a Herculean effort. The search for meaning in such a text is, as Kathleen Wall points out, "an act of hubris" (90). The sheer amount of overlapping intertextuality and parody makes one wonder where it all ends.

Kroetsch himself said that *What the Crow Said* was his "own personal struggle with the temptation of meaning" (Neuman 15). As one reads into the novel one is faced with the same struggle, the same temptations. The reader is tempted to make some sort of order within the apparent chaos of the novel. Associations need to be made. Mythic links need to be tagged on specific characters, meaning should flow from the text's symbolism.

But in a very important way, the novel resists the attribution of meaning. We, as a reader, are then forced to also resist the pitfalls of meaning in order to flow with the novel's narrative. We come to the conclusion that maybe what the crow has to say, is not as important as what we want it to say. In his *Crow Journals*, Kroetsch writes: "I am sick of the tyranny of narrative. And fascinated by the narrative that I'm creating. And that's the whole story" (67). Out of the primacy of the story, the idea that there is just one meaning to the text, Kroetsch leads us into a realm of "manymeaning" (Wall 103).

If the search for meaning in the text, in a classical almost Sherlock Holmes style of elucidation, is in a sense preempted by the multiplicity of meaning, there is nonetheless the hope that it is possible to recover the method in Kroetsch's madness through specific approaches to his text. One way of dealing with *What the Crow Said* is from a purely technical standpoint. Neil Randall, in his article "Carnival and Intertext: Humour in *What the Crow Said* and *The Studhorseman*", goes about reading Kroetsch along the lines of Bakhtinian theory. He analyses elements of the kind of gaudy bar room humour that Kroetsch posits as a central element in the creation and telling of his stories as partaking in the carnivalesque:

According to Bakhtin, carnival humour links degradation with affirmation. It does this by employing an oral humour, one that emphasises defecation, procreation, and the sequences of birth and death. *What the Crow Said* and *The Studhorseman* link us intertextually to Bakhtinian carnival, since Kroetsch's humour, in its degradatory use of anus and penis, hence defecation and procreation, is essentially carnivalesque. (98)

But Neil Randall does not come to the use of this approach from out of nowhere (which does shed quite some light on many instances in *What the Crow Said*, such as the schmier game that lasts 151 days and the self degradation that it incurs). Kroetsch

himself is quite interested in the moment of Bakhtinian humour and even wrote an essay called "Carnival and Violence: A Meditation," which appeared in *Open Letter*. The reason I chose here to discuss Neil Randall's article is that it demonstrates a common tendency in the criticism that surrounds Kroetsch's works. What is hard to do with Robert Kroetsch is to distinguish the author from the critic and scholar. Many critics have a tendency to read Kroetsch's works of fiction and poetry as an embodiment of his criticism. Although his own critical positions are very helpful in understanding Kroetsch, it may be somewhat of a misreading to associate directly Kroetsch's critical stance with his fiction. J. R. Snyder remarks on this problem:

M. E. Turner, among several others, has contended that the discussion of Robert Kroetsch's work is too often based upon the critical positions set out in Kroetsch's own theoretical work; Kroetsch's literary output has enjoyed a high level of acceptance because Kroetsch's criticism implicitly posits his own works as models for postmodern fiction and poetry. (1)

What I believe that needs to be done, is to look at both the author and critic separately. What this enables us to do is approach Kroetsch's texts from a different perspective. Since Kroetsch himself is a prominent figure in Canadian postmodernism, it seems only natural to study his works as being postmodern. But are his texts purely postmodern? Is there room to argue that what Kroetsch constructs as his version of postmodernism, is in reality a form of post-colonialism? It is my contention that in fact what Kroetsch ends up creating over the years as his 'postmodern view', is really a way of resisting the literary forms of colonialism.

In his essay, "Unhiding the Hidden," Kroetsch demonstrates that the English Canadian word is in fact a construct, carrying along with it American and British connotations (*Treachery* 58). This deconstructive moment, that arises from a reading of

Heidegger, is not nihilistic. It is not only an uncentering, an uprooting, of language. Kroetsch repositions the English Canadian language as being decentered, and then goes on to “rooting that borrowed word, that totally exact homonym, in authentic experience” (*Treachery* 59). What this does is posit an oppositional truth-claim after the original truth-claim is deconstructed. This is exactly what differentiates the post-colonial from the postmodern, as I have discussed here earlier.

However, it is important to note that Kroetsch’s work is inseparable from a postmodernist esthetic. Kroetsch’s form of expression is neither, strictly speaking, realist nor romantic. He writes at a time where literature is seen as having crossed a certain boundary. That boundary is between modernism and postmodernism. But what Kroetsch is doing in his writing is not purely postmodern. He does subvert central truth-claims and the idea of the primacy of the story, but he does this with oppositional truth-claims, with marginal stories. It is not a strictly deconstructive mode of subversion.

Furthermore, Kroetsch’s own ‘post-coloniality’, indeed, is something that he himself alludes to in his critical work. Most of the time it is not directly fleshed out, but in his essay “An Arkeology of (My) Canadian Postmodern,” Kroetsch parts somewhat from his earlier work and takes a direction that is more post-colonial than postmodern. In order to demonstrate this, I would like to turn to one of Kroetsch’s earlier essays, “Unity as Disunity: A Canadian strategy”, and compare how his view on postmodernism has evolved. In the earlier essay, Kroetsch begins with François Lyotard’s famous definition of postmodernism: “simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward meta-narratives” (qtd. in *Treachery* 22). He then goes on to say that by that definition, Canada is a postmodern country. Because almost everything in Canada is intrinsically a boundary, a margin, Canadian spaces becomes a place of contestation, of *incredulity toward meta-narratives*. Kroetsch’s language is very deconstructionist: “The centre does not hold. The margin, the periphery, the edge, now, is the exciting boundary where silence

and sound meet" (*Treachery* 23). Although Kroetsch often deconstructs the centre, he also celebrates the margins in a way that pure deconstructionists would disagree with. This is the core of Kroetsch's 'post-coloniality' which blooms in his latter essay which I will now discuss.

The first two sentences of "An Arkeology of (My) Postmodern", are very politicised: "Postmodern, for me, describes the Canadian political predicament. Further, it describes a poetics for a context that calls itself, sometimes reluctantly, Canada" (307). Such a definition strikes me as somewhat problematic. Kroetsch explains how he came into contact with the term postmodern while he was teaching in the United States, that he believed it would be "a neutral or descriptive name for what we intended to study" (307). He then looks at a collection of essays by Rudy Wiebe called *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic*, saying that Wiebe "locates the speaker/writer in a field so vast that dislocation and dispersal become necessary conditions of the book's narrative intention — and the narrative's intention is what we would now call postcolonial. Indeed, the postcolonial and postmodern work closely and ambiguously together in Canadian writing" (308).

This seemingly innocent remark on Wiebe leads me to believe that what Kroetsch has been doing in his writing since the very beginning, has always been post-colonial. He just did not have a name for it at the time. Furthermore, being in the United States, he was exposed to postmodernism and took what interested him and incorporated it within his own so-called 'postmodern' view. It turns out that what Kroetsch constructed as his postmodern is arguably post-colonial. His postmodern is "archeology become arkeology" (310). This image is quite interesting. Archaeology is the search for the layering of truths, of stories. It is the quest for a decentering of history. Arkeology is the rounding up of this archaeology. You incorporate in an Ark what is essential. The layering of marginal stories is recentred and placed as essential in a post-colonial Canada. Kroetsch's arkeology is a

reaffirmation of the margin, it is an oppositional truth-claim that comes out of the deconstruction of traditional *surface* history, it is profoundly post-colonial. It is for this reason that the post-colonial approach that I propose for *What the Crow Said*, is first of all possible and secondly might bring us closer to a better understanding the subtleties of Kroetsch's writing.

3.2 Colonisation of Space: Ice Monument to Human Folly

The story of *What the Crow Said* takes place in the community of Big Indian. The town itself is located ambiguously on the Saskatchewan-Alberta border. Ambiguous borders are a key issue in the novel and when they get transgressed, there are two different ways the characters react: acceptance or resistance. The overstepping of boundaries is in a sense a sort of embodiment of change, of bringing about a 'new world order.' The borders that get stepped on the most are social and gender related. Traditional gender roles are reversed. Patriarchal society is directly attacked from the beginning when Tiddy Lang is trying to cope with the stray bull: "For the bull had gone into the pasture north of the barn at a time when Martin Lang did not want his milk cow bred. Martin Lang, who was always in town when he was needed, always in the beer parlour in the Big Indian Hotel, doing anything but farming" (*What the Crow Said* 3⁶). Kroetsch's female characters are the strong archetypes. They are the ones who get things done while the men sit around playing cards and drinking beer. The Lang women are the ones changing, moving along in the social order.

The men on the other hand are the embodiment of tradition. They are in a very real way a demonstration of what happens when one hangs on to a stable and unmoving reality. They resist change to a ludicrous degree. It is this desire for an unchanging and controllable universe that I want to discuss here as belonging to the realm of the colonial, of the 'old world order.' There are three instances of resistance to change that I would like to highlight here: first, I want to look at an extreme case of spatial colonisation in the building of the ice tower; second, there is the sacred space of the beer parlour that must remain inviolable at all costs; and last, I want to discuss the social and physical implications of the schmier game.

It is true that colonialism is normally seen as a physical appropriation of space, of

⁶ From now on, I will refer to *What the Crow Said* in parenthetical notation as *WCS*.

claiming some foreign country for one's own. It is part of the growth of an imperial power. But there are other forms of colonialism. On the premise of a self/other order/disorder binary, colonisation can be seen as the colonial (imperial) self trying to make sense of a foreign other. Such a colonisation can take the form of the building of roads, of outposts, of cities, of governmental infrastructures. It is a replication of the familiarity and security of the imperial centre. Wilderness becomes familiar by being mapped and having roads built through it. Sense is made out of the apparent chaos. The key here to colonisation lies in the replication of similitude, in the spread of a hegemonous society. It is like chain stores and restaurants. All are the same and familiar.

This mapping out of physical space to something familiar is a common sight on the Canadian prairie. Roads are aligned to precise compass points. The presence of man as an intelligent organisational creature on the vastness of the Canadian landscape, becomes apparent when you look at a map of Saskatchewan. It looks like a modern urban city plan: straight lines of roads crisscrossing at right angles. There is a certain comfort in the precision of civil engineering, of straight lines and clean cut boundaries.

In *What the Crow Said*, the characters are faced with a winter that will not end. They are caught not really knowing what to do with it. John Skandl, the local ice cutter, at one point says: "Funny damned break up [...] I can't cut ice because it's almost summer, and I can't sell ice because it's almost winter" (WCS 11). Faced with a total loss of direction, of the sense of normality, the men decide to make something out of it, to make a sense of the chaos in nature. Skandl decides to build a tower: "I'm building a beacon [...] A kind of lighthouse looking thing" (WCS 32) out of blocks of ice.

Skandl's way of dealing with the endless winter, is to harvest the cold itself and turn the situation into a capitalistic venture: "Every snowflake is a penny in everybody's pockets. The country is paved with money. The ice is thickening fast. We must work day and night" (WCS 40). The chaos of unending winter turns into a commercial project where

the very idea of winter ending does not come into account. All that is important is that more ice be cut from the frozen river, that the tower be built higher. Nowhere is there mention of it one day melting. The project is continuously pushed further and further, beyond the limits of even reason, all to the greater glory of Skandl who has become the most important figure in town.

Leaving aside phallic imagery and Freudian analysis, the whole idea of the ice tower can be seen as an allegory of colonialism. The colonial arrives in a new situation, unable to get the idea that 'here' might be completely different from anything else he has experienced. That what was normal in the imperial centre might not have its place in the colonial periphery. Instead of coping with the different, the colonial has the tendency to adhere to his sense of normal, to the idea that you "dressed in June clothing because it was June" (WCS 10). And so the colonial goes on living as though everything was as it should be (and not as it is) and tries to profit from the situation. This is the heart of the colonial project as Frantz Fanon describes it in *The Wretched of the Earth*: "In the colonies, the foreigner coming from another country imposed his rule by means of guns and machines" (40). Colonisation is interested in the acquisition of capital. What it doesn't take into account is the shaky ground upon which such an acquisition is built.

Another aspect of colonialism is culture. Colonial, or white settler, populations bring with them a whole culture. It is not culture as a dynamic process as it exists in the centre --- that is, forever changing and mutable --- it is a static entity based on the immutability of tradition. This culture is plastered over the land that the colonials settle into without much regards as to whether or not it is appropriate. And from a colonial point of view, it is more important to safeguard and uphold tradition than to deal with its contradictions in a new environment. This is what happens in the Big Indian beer parlour. Let me first state that the beer parlour itself is a safe haven for men in the community. It is the place they go to be alone, to get away from life and drown their sorrows in beer. It is a

woman-free zone, off limits to the opposite sex. It is the incarnation of tradition that is grounded in nothing other than itself. At the beginning of the novel, Tiddy Lang oversteps the sacred boundary and enters the beer parlour. The men (John Skandl, Gus Liebhaber, and Martin Lang) do not really know what to do. Skandl even tentively offers a chair, but soon after doing it, he joins the other men in completely ignoring the situation: "Tiddy tried to say something. But now they were resisting, the three men; subtly they were not letting her exist in their secret place. They could not send her outside, into the storm. But they would not let her in either" (WCS 13).

The beer parlour is the last safe haven the men have. It is a closed environment in which they can ignore the outside world. When all else goes wrong in their lives, the men can always find comfort in a glass of beer in the smoke-filled parlour. It is a place where the men can share a sense of camaraderie and also share stories. But most importantly, the beer parlour is the place where Kroetsch finds a possibility of reinscription, or rewriting Canadian space within the centre: "The trick is just this: to *hear* a pub. To look at the interior of a prairie pub is merely a pleasure; to listen is to recover our story, is to dwell at the centre again [...] Our endless talk is the ultimate poem of the prairies. In a culture besieged by foreign television and paperbacks and movies, the oral tradition is the means of survival" (Kroetsch, *Treachery* 17).

The men in the beer parlour resist change, they resist the intrusion of something new in their lives, they resist the overthrowing of their traditional values. Resistance here is turned around on itself. Normally, the term is associated with decolonisation. Resistance helps undermine the institutions of colonialism. But in this case, the men resist instability. They try to uphold their colonial state of mind, and to do this they must actively resist outside change. They turn a blind eye to what is happening. The same can be said of the colonial situation, in which colonials ignore the problems that their colonisation of a country cause. They ignore the situation by telling themselves all is well,

all is normal. But the reality that is around them is quite different. Tradition cannot cope with the difference.

The last element that I want to discuss here is the game of schmier that lasts 151 days. What is interesting in a game of cards is that the rules are identifiable and its logic is clear. On the subject of card games, Kroetsch said:

I take a card game seriously. For me, a card game is a model of life [...] Card games are interesting because, on the one hand, there are absolute rules and, on the other, inside those rules there is absolute chance, or at least an indefinite mathematically large number of chances that even to deal yourself the same hand would be a grotesque unlikelihood. There are absolute rules and there is chance. (Neuman 65)

Nature, when compared to a game, has no rules. It is arbitrary and intrinsically frightening to those who hold onto the idea of a logical and purposeful universe. The schmier game is a ludicrous attempt to hold onto a sense that the world is rational. That there is a clear-cut winner. But the game goes on for what seems forever. The players are eventually thrown into a state of complete physical degradation. In their mad attempt to cling to the reality of the game, they lose sight of themselves and of the real world.

The self-contained universe of the card game in which there is supposedly a beginning and an end, a winner and a loser, becomes distorted. The game does have a beginning but it knows no end nor any winner. At one point in the game the goal shifts from winning or losing to warding off death itself. Jerry Lapanne was scheduled to be executed by the hangman Marvin Straw, but Marvin was caught up in the schmier game. The men united themselves in the goal of keeping Straw from his appointment and started losing on purpose.

In the end, the men are all losers, lying in their on filth and excrement. This has a lot to say about the men and their willingness to preserve their sense of order: "yet the

unappetizing conditions of the schmier game aptly illustrate the lengths to which Liebhaber and his crew will go in order to confine themselves to a microcosm that has definite rules" (Wall 96). The microcosm contained within the game is comforting, but it also is limiting. The assurance of fixed limits, definite rules, pushes the men to hang on to the illusion that the whole world could be such. The rationalisation of the sensible world into categories and laws, such as those found in a card game, reflects a modernist post-Enlightenment mode of thought. But the world is complex and defies the rational ideal of one single explanation. In contrast to this, the colonial order is simple and comforting. The colonial state of mind is grounded in the modernist ideal of global hegemony, of everybody working towards a single ideal of development. The men of *What the Crow Said* cling to this colonial ideal as a way of rationalising outside phenomenon, even though that definition of the world is crumbling away.

3.3 Going Beyond Big Indian: Transformation of the Self and the War Against the Sky

The stage that follows colonialism is one of discovery, of looking for different options. Fanon equates this with acts of physical violence, but here in a Canadian context, where the borders between coloniser and colonised are not defined and tend to overlap considerably, violence is not much of a viable option. As Stephen Slemon notes, the conflict between self and Other have been internalised in a Second World/white-settler colony situation, such as that of Canada. The colonised subject is also the coloniser. Discovery then must find a different way of being expressed.

We have seen, in the previous section, some of the forms under which a colonial state of mind transpires throughout the text. Without being directly alluded to, this state of mind is nonetheless apparent in the structuring of space. Frantz Fanon remarks the effects of colonialism on both the colonizer's and colonized's minds, saying that: "We cannot be held responsible that in this war psychiatric phenomena entailing disorders affecting behavior and thought have taken on importance where those who carry out the 'pacification' are concerned, or that these same disorders are notable among the 'pacified' population" (249). I do not want to get into the specifics of psychiatry or of Fanon's argument; I just want to underline that the process of colonisation is, in a sense, a mental disorder that affects both coloniser and colonised. The business of appropriation works on the perception one has of the world, and to get rid of that appropriation becomes a difficult process.

This brings us into the second stage of my reading strategy which tries to look at the text as discovering different possibilities. In this stage, the colonised self tries to reformulate itself from a different perspective. It tries to remap colonial space from a point of view that is free from the colonial state of mind. To do so, the colonised self must go beyond the borders of colonialism to be able to put colonised space into a new

perspective.

What Kroetsch does, in *What the Crow Said*, is give us the partial tales of two characters who physically go beyond the boundaries of Big Indian: John Skandl and Isador Heck. Both characters are interrelated: John Skandl leaves Big Indian in order to represent the community and press its rights in parliament⁹; and Isador Heck is sent by the card players to go find Skandl who is later seen as almost a messiah: "John Skandl is about to return to Big Indian. He is returning to the assistance of his beleaguered people. He will return by aeroplane" (WCS 102).

What is interesting in the first instance, is that John Skandl leaves in order to bring better things to the community. In a way, he wants to bring about change to the town of Big Indian, but the change seems to be colonialism all over again:

John Skandl, on the night of the chinook, sitting slumped and dishelved in his new blue suit and shirt and tie on the edge of Tiddy's bed in the Big Indian hospital, began to explain why he must immediately leave town: it was his duty to his constituents. He made no mention at all of his lighthouse, or of its vanishing. He must leave, he explained, because culverts would wash out. Grades would wash out. Bridges would be weakened. A program of road building and flood control was essential. He resolved to anchor himself to the earth. It was important, vital, that the provincial government construct a main highway into the heart of the municipality so that when calamity struck, assistance might easily reach his beleaguered people. (WCS 53)

The warm air of the chinook melts away Skandl's ice tower, and now he has nothing solid to hold onto. He wishes to "anchor himself to the earth." He needs solid ground. So he leaves Big Indian in search of the help of a provincial government. His attempt is bound to

⁹ It is important to note that the often over-esteemed self-proclaimed politician is in reality a lot less glamorous than Liebhaber and the card players make him out to be. He seems to be living (barely) in the 'city' where he is too ashamed to return to Big Indian with anything less than a victory parade. When he does come back, it is in an airplane but this is not to be taken as a symbol of his success: "Mother [Tiddy] sent him money to rent the plane. He phoned for money. He felt he should come back in style" (WCS 108).

fail just like any attempt to hold together colonialism after it has fallen apart, or melted away like his ice tower.

Even though Skandl doesn't succeed, the memory of his ideal sings strongly to hearts of the men¹⁰ of Big Indian. They believe and hold onto his dream. Just like colonialism itself is but a fading dream, a dream that one clings to even if its memory is bitter. But the men do question their faith in Skandl at one point. They believe that it is high time for him to come back among them. But who will go after him? They opt for a democratic way of deciding: "Mike O'Holleran hated arguments. He suggested they play cards to settle the issue" (WCS 106). And so Isador Heck wins the game and uses the money in the pot to find Skandl. Little does he know that he is already missing. His plane has disappeared at this point in the story.

And so Heck goes out into the World, looking for a man that is dead in a plane crash. What is interesting in Skandl's death is that he will never bring back news of what he found outside of the community. On the other hand, when Isador Heck returns, he does tell tales of what he saw but no one really takes him seriously, mainly because the only job he could find was as a human cannonball. Heck says that the world would "make a pig laugh" (WCS 126). People think he's gone insane with his stories of jet aeroplanes and concrete highways. They dismiss him as having been shot out of a circus canon one too many times.

The truths of these two moments of discovery are in a sense ignored by the rest of the community, by the men. They all go on stubbornly believing in the old world order, in tradition. But nonetheless, they have all begun a certain transformation. The status quo cannot last. They start to see that something else is out there, although what they do with that knowledge is not always appropriate or well-advised: "Liebhaber, looking at the man who had seen the world, listening to the laughter, was reminded that Heck had departed from the schmier game with every last cent of the other player's cash. It was obvious, the

¹⁰ In the term 'men' I include those who have been at one time or another involved in the schmier game.

lesson: money would buy happiness. Liebhaber, briefly, went into politics” (WCS 126).

This transformation, this change in perspective, is one that does not come about quickly. It takes some time. It begins arguably near the end of the schmier game, as I have discussed earlier, where the players unite in their first completely unselfish goal: “A man’s life was at stake. Liebhaber could hardly go on playing; he could only think of the morning three days hence when a man named Jerry Lapanne would hang by the neck until dead. Unless the hangman himself failed to keep the appointment” (WCS 93). The card players, who at that time had never thought of anything else but themselves, uniting in the idea of saving Jerry Lapanne began losing like crazy. This moment in the card game, in which the hangman is kept on a winning streak, culminates when the ghost of Martin Lang joins in for the last and decisive hand. The game explosively breaks up and the whole male population of Big Indian, sensing that something is awry, ends up in the beer parlour “hell-bent on getting blind drunk” (WCS 100), and trying to forget the whole affair.

Discovery, in *What the Crow Said*, works in a very odd fashion. We sense that there is a will to go beyond Big Indian, to go beyond the self, but we also sense that there is a profound resistance to that discovery. But the more that is discovered, the more information that seeps in from outside, the more the men in the village have to deal with the transformation that is going on. Discovery here is internalised. It is personal. And because of the fact that this discovery works on a very individual level, the community as a whole can ignore it. But the communal weight of this transformation builds to a point where it cannot be ignored: “And it was not he alone who had come to doubt; the whole community was showing symptoms of a faint but uneasy skepticism” (WCS 127). In this passage, the doubt and skepticism refer to Mike O’Holleran’s failed attempt to find oil, but both also refer to the community’s failure of predicting its economical future. The skepticism builds to a point where no one can quite ignore the fact that something is changing in Big Indian. Just what that change is, is however beyond the men’s ability to

predict.

The men of Big Indian take one last concerted effort to ward off the advance of change: they unite in the war against the sky. In its whole, the war against the sky is quite futile, but the men are determined to hold their ground. Symbolically speaking, the war can be seen as the men's attempt to control the uncontrollable, with the end result inevitably being failure. The wind and sky rage against the community of Big Indian, but unlike the winter which lasted almost a year, the men here react to it differently. They could have built wind mills and harvested the power of the sky. They could have tried to profit somehow from the situation. But the men have gone beyond that stage. They are angry and choose war over money. The situation will not allow them to anchor themselves to the earth. They are constantly blown around by the victorious wind.

What the novel's section on the war against the sky does, is confront the men with a reality they have to accept. Their self-contained universe is exploding from the pressures within. There is the suspicion that "anything that can be imagined exists" (WCS 162). They come to realise that they cannot win, that in fact they never had any possibility of winning. They only had the illusion of control, of power. That illusion is finally and irreversibly blown away when Liebhaber takes the war into his own hands. He wants to "fertilize the barren sky" (WCS 163), to bridge somehow the differences. What he does is use Isador Heck's circus canon to shoot Vera Lang's bees into the sky. This triggers the rain to come finally down, and with it hail stones and bees. It also starts the rain that will turn into a flood. Change has begun to set in, and like the flood, nothing can stop it.

The men here have begun to realise their potential. They have, in a sense, joined the women. The women, since the beginning of the book, have been challenging every aspect of 'traditional' life in Big Indian. Tiddy and her daughters are faced with a patriarchal society, but they will not be stopped by convention. Tiddy enters the beer parlour to get her husband back to work, she has a son by either Liebhaber or Skandl and

we never quite know exactly which, and her daughters have untraditional and passionate relationships with men. The women are at the heart of a true cultural revolution, what Fanon would call the “whole social structure being changed from the bottom up” (35). The men have resisted a change in their world but now they have begun to discover other possibilities. They cannot deny the fact that change is upon them and have to go with the flow or be swept away.

3.4 Back to 'Normal': Trickster and the Business of Appropriation

In his book, *The Lovely Treachery of Words*, Robert Kroetsch recalls the experience of discovering Blackfoot oral tales, and writing poems about the “Blackfoot trickster figure [who] was (and still is) called Old Man” (2). He felt that those “old stories are appropriate to the new Province of Alberta” (2). Searching the landscape of his youth, Kroetsch discovers archaeologically a history of place that is not the same as the history he learns while growing up. What he discovered was that Canada is a historically charged place --- contrary to the European notion of America being a ‘young’ or ‘new’ world. Native stories and figures have always fascinated Kroetsch, especially the trickster figure. On the subject of the Trickster, Thomas King writes that: “The trickster is an important figure for Native writers for it allows us to create a particular kind of world in which the Judeo-Christian concern with good and evil and order and disorder is replaced with the more Native concern for balance and harmony” (xiii).

Before discussing Kroetsch’s use of the trickster figure in *What the Crow Said*, I would like to briefly mention here the whole problematic of this appropriation of Native story and voice. I touched on this subject in the introduction and find it important to note again. Although Kroetsch does use and appropriate trickster figures in his stories and novels, he has never really been criticised by Native populations for doing so. This is not the case for many white settler Canadian authors who have used Native oral culture, and were severely criticised for it. I guess that the difference may lie in Kroetsch’s own very personal relationship to Native culture. While not saying that he belongs to a Native tradition, Kroetsch does say that Native culture was an important part of his more formative years. It shaped the way he sees Canada.

For Kroetsch, the use of trickster tales in his own fiction does not constitute appropriation of voice because that voice was always part of his life:

Beginnings: a Cree from the Hobemma reserve. A baseball pitcher. At a sports day, when the team that was on a winning streak ran out of pitchers, it was legal to send a car, driven wildly over the gravel roads, to the Hobemma reserve. He was too old, Rattlesnake, too big to be graceful. Sometimes he was too drunk. But he pitched ball like a man possessed. I was a kid, maybe fifteen, playing first-base because all the real players were off to war. Rattlesnake threw the first two pitches straight at my head: inside curves, coming high, breaking straight at my skull. After that I stood too far back from the plate. Only years later did I understand that I'd met The Trickster. (*Treachery* 10)

The Trickster is as much a part of Kroetsch's youth as farms and the prairie itself. For him, the precise boundaries between European and Native cultures are not clearly established. It all blends into a grey area that Kroetsch writes up as 'Canadian.' Maybe this is why the critics don't tear Kroetsch apart for using Native imagery. Maybe Kroetsch is doing a service to Canadian culture in general by writing the voices he hears, no matter where they come from.

Even though a more in-depth discussion on the politics of appropriation of voice in Kroetsch's novels, and in Canadian literature for that matter, would be interesting, it is not the topic I want to elaborate here. What I want to discuss is Kroetsch's use of the Trickster figure in the appropriation of space within the text. The Trickster in question is embodied in the character of Liebhaber, who is the *Big Indian Signals* editor and also the novel's main male protagonist. He is a key figure in all that happens in *Big Indian*, either good or bad. Things tend to go from one extreme to the other when Liebhaber is concerned, and this is one of the things that sets him out as being a Trickster. One other thing is his canny way of getting both himself and others in trouble, by his ideas and premonitions.

Liebhaber, and this also goes for Tricksters in general, is an ambivalent character.

We never know what we are supposed to make of him, and he doesn't seem to know either. At first, the reader gets an impression that he must be stark raving mad because he *remembers* the future: "And Liebhaber, then, remembered: Martin Lang was going to die during the night. He started to set the story, slightly in advance of the event" (WCS 9). His memory of the future comes at three key moments in the narrative: first, he remembers Martin Lang's death; second, he sees John Skandl returning in an airplane; and third, Liebhaber remembers the flood, saying to himself that "Fish would swim in the streets of Big Indian" (WCS 136). It is interesting to note that the narrator uses the same phrase, although conjugated in the past tense, on page 187.

On a temporal level, Liebhaber's remembrance of the future posits him somewhere in between 'now' and 'later'. He is always somewhat out of tune, a man lost on a border belonging to nothing in particular. Although Liebhaber is right in the middle of those who resist change (during the year-long winter, he says that he "found a soft cowpie. Somewhere the grass is green" [WCS 41]), he also is the one who finally is able to do something with himself. He is arguably the only male character who frees himself from his colonial self and reconstructs himself in a post-colonial environment. That environment is one that may have always been post-colonial, governed by change and women, but the men never let reality filter into their microcosms.

Liebhaber's colonial situation is not just on the level of tradition or space. It has another dimension that initially limits him more than other characters, but this other dimension is also what enables him to become free. Liebhaber is bound up by the fixity of the past, by the fact that history is a written 'fact'. He is colonised by the past itself, bound up in literal textual space: that is the space of printed words upon a page. As I have mentioned before, Liebhaber's official occupation is editor of the local news paper. What he does is arrange movable type to fill out the blank space of the page. He takes the stories that people in the community give him and makes them fit. He is constantly aware

of the space that a text occupies: "One sentence about the widow and the page would be complete" (WCS 10). Furthermore, words for him operate spatially. They are made up of movable type of different fonts and size. They take up room within the printing form. Furthermore, he can only think of the words in a spatial context: "He looked for words. He wanted to look with his fingers, not with his head" (WCS 11). He knows the words by their letters which he does not need to see, but feel with his fingers. Words are not mental abstractions but physical entities.

Where the past comes into effect is in the fixity of movable type. Something printed never changes. Colonial history is a canon of printed texts which are safeguarded as being the absolute truth. The past then is transfixed by the text, and by extension life becomes predetermined by the text: "[Liebhaber] spent the afternoon of Tiddy's wedding day in his flat above the newspaper office, studying his collection of type, puzzling with his ink-stained fingers the intricate knot of language that bound him to death" (WCS 46). The text is immobile. Following the logic of this, Human existence is determined by its past and is thus also caught up by textual immobility.

Liebhaber comes to believe, through his identification with the printing process, that the past itself is a singular entity, that somehow "Gutenberg did this" (WCS 101). In a moment of clarity, he sees that: "it was Gutenberg who'd made all memory of the past irrelevant. His fly open, the mountie pulling his shirt tight around his neck, he understood: only the future, and that just barely, was free of Gutenberg's vast design" (WCS 102). Liebhaber tries to break free from all of this. He sees that words are made out of individual type and tries to free himself from Gutenberg's design:

He tried, with a twist of the wrist, to turn a M into a W. Failing at that, he turned a T upside down; but he could read it as easily upside down as upright. [...] He set the word OUT, building from the T he had tried to mock out of meaning. He left the T on the table. He placed the U on the windowsill. He

carried the O into his living room. But he knew the word OUT was still OUT. It was the failure to reduce a mere three-letter word to nothing that made him attempt a sequence of illogical sentences; (WCS 47)

Liebhaber fails in this first attempt to deconstruct the text. But he does succeed later on in subverting not the text or language, but the alphabet: “He tried again, the simplest changing of the alphabet --- and heard himself making sounds for which he had no sign” (WCS 60). He sees that the alphabet is but an abstract and arbitrary convention that holds no real power. From this point he begins to free himself and rewrite his self in a different order of reality.

The reliability of the written text is one of the things that Kroetsch challenges through Liebhaber. He also challenges notions of stable history. The only thing that is reliable in the whole novel is Liebhaber’s memory of the future which never seems to fail. But even this memory of something still to come, only inscribes future events within the fixity of the past. To be free of the past and the future, Liebhaber must set himself free from the text. It is only when he has been through the different stages of the novel and is finally reunited and married with Tiddy (whom is now living only for the moment [WCS 191]), that he comes to the realisation that he is free:

He knows now. Gutenberg, too, was only a scribe. Liebhaber turned end for end in the old bed, his head to the foot, like printers of old, always, reading backwards, reading upside down. [...] Liebhaber hears the crow. The crow is outside the bedroom window. It is talking, not listening, croaking endlessly on. Liebhaber cannot quite understand what the crow is saying. [...] Liebhaber is happy. He cannot remember anything. [...] He tries to remember the future. Perhaps the crow is telling him that morning has come. He doesn’t call out, for fear of waking Tiddy. Liebhaber is happy. After all, he is only dying. (194)

Liebhaber at the end is finally free from Gutenberg. He is free from both the past and the future. He is free from determination. Through the many twists and turns of the novel, through the many desperate tries of making a sense of his existence, Liebhaber finally appropriates the text of his own life. He realises that he is *only dying*. We also feel at the end of the novel that the narrative voice, “the voice of the entire community over a period of twenty-five years” (Wilson xv), has also moved on. Its tone is no longer alarmed. It does not search for meaning in an endless list of statistics and numbers. It seems to have accepted existence. Time is moving on and the community no longer sees itself as being marginal, on the outside. They stop to search for meaning in what the crow said, and just hear it cawing (WCS 195). The community of Big Indian seems to have appropriated its space and no longer is subject to the determinate nature of history.

CHAPTER 4

Comparison of Strategies: A Discussion within the Second World

4.1 Strategies of Discovery

Frantz Fanon distinguishes three phases which characterise the evolution of writing in the process decolonisation. He writes:

In the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. His writings correspond point by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country [...] In the second phase we find the native is disturbed; he decides to remember what he is [...] Past happenings of bygone days of his childhood will be brought up from the depths of his memory; old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of a borrowed estheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under the skies [...] Finally in the third phase, which is called the fighting phase [...] Instead of according the people's lethargy an honoured place in his esteem, he turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature. (222)

Although Fanon does write from an African position, and more specifically Algerian, his distinctions do prove to be quite interesting for a more general discussion. Leaving aside here what he perceives as the third phase, which I see much as being propagandistic¹¹, the other two phases do have their corresponding elements within a postmodern and post-colonial Canadian context: the first phase being the colonial phase of the pre-1950-60's, and the second being the phase of colonial and post-colonial resistance that

¹¹ It can be argued that the militant search for a Canadian identity both in French and English Canada in the 1960's, somewhat constructed itself and its literature in much a propagandistic fashion. Many of the assumptions and definitions of Canadian literature have been rejected and exploded since.

emerged arguably around the 1960's and continues to this day. It is this second phase that I would like to discuss in more detail here. Fanon writes that this phase is sometimes "dominated by humour and allegory" (222). The mode of writing is subversive and looks for alternatives, within a 'native' history and culture, to the dominant modes of expression.

I believe that the writings of both Gunnars and Kroetsch can be inscribed within this second phase of decolonisation of writing. They are not, as would a writer in the third phase, trying to give the reader a direct message of what to do. The political agenda is always underground in such writing. It is not overt and does not aim to teach, but instead the second phase aims to subvert. Subversion and rewriting are a major part of post-colonialism as I have underlined it here throughout my thesis. There is a search for the minor story, for that perspective which has escaped attention but which brings knowledge under a new light. Both Kroetsch and Gunnars write from the margins, from that subaltern perspective which subverts the humanist ideal of unity, of great texts, of the canon itself.

Although both Gunnars and Kroetsch do arguably write within this second phase, their approaches are quite dissimilar. In terms of the post-colonial perspective that I formulated earlier in the Introduction, both authors differ in their resistance and subversion of colonial discourse, that is they do not use the same strategies of discovery and appropriation. For right now, I will only discuss the differences in discovery strategies and then, in the following section, I will discuss the differences in the strategies of appropriation of both authors.

Before starting the comparison *per se*, I will briefly sum up what I have discussed in the previous chapters on the diverse strategies of discovery either author uses. Beginning with Kristjana Gunnars's *The Prowler*, I have noted that the act of (re-)discovery is somewhat equated with the act of crossing borders. The crossing itself is seen as a transitional moment from 'here' to 'there'. This introspective moment of discovery is,

much like the metafictional text itself, “situated at the borderline that separates art from life, signifiers from signifieds, possible worlds from the actual world” (Gheorghe, “Intertextual” 46). The moment of discovery is an empowering moment where possibilities meet. The moment is situated somewhere in the problematic spaces of borders: geographical, political, textual, bodily. This act of discovery, of crossing borders, is a beginning. It enables other possibilities, other relationships between coloniser and colonised. From this (re-)discovery of space, the process of decolonisation can begin. In *The Prowler*, this process is personal, individual. Each character must go out and discover for himself the possibilities that exist.

Similar to this, in *What the Crow Said*, the moment of discovery is also associated with a kind of crossing of borders. In the previous chapter, I discussed two cases where the communal borders of Big Indian were crossed: John Skandl and Isador Heck. Both go outside of the community and discover other ways of seeing the world. But these two moments of discovery are ignored as much as possible by the community itself. Discovery is problematic and works on an individual basis. Whereas certain characters do make tentative advances and discoveries, the whole of the community stays blind to them. But as more and more individuals join in on the act of discovery, the communal weight of the discoveries themselves cannot be ignored by the whole and change begins to work itself into society.

If we now turn our attention to possible similarities in the strategies of discovery of both authors, the first one to come to mind is, as I have pointed out, that in both *What the Crow Said* and *The Prowler* there is the act of crossing borders involved in the moment of discovery. In *The Prowler*, the border is both definite and indeterminate: the border that the narrator crosses between Iceland and Denmark is as clear cut as the border between land and water; and there is also a less definite border that the young Hungarian boy crosses without really knowing the exact moment of transition. In *What the Crow Said*, the

border is roughly drawn around the 'here' of Big Indian, and the general 'there' of everything outside of the community. The community itself is located in an indeterminate space between Alberta and Saskatchewan. The border itself is not something that is easy to trace with any definite certainty. The location of the community is somewhat of an oddity, and is never clear: "One of the provincial governments, or possibly both of them, had decided to build a highway through the municipality of Bigknife. Because of the river valley, or perhaps because of a surveyor's error, it would pass two miles south of the town of Big Indian" (WCS 157).

In both books, the crossing of borders is problematic. Gunnars compares the border to a cloud of radioactive dust. It is something one carries around with one's self. The moment of transition, then, is more than just the crossing of an arbitrary physical border: it becomes a moment where past definitions meet with new ones and a certain shifting in perspectives occur. That moment is not instantaneous. It does take some time to be able to go psychologically from 'here' to 'there'. That is why the image of crossing over by boat, the ten day sea voyage, from Iceland to Denmark is so interesting. It creates a transitional space that prepares the moment of (re-)discovery. In *What the Crow Said*, border crossings are likewise put into question. The characters who actually do go outside the limits of Big Indian, either come back dead or are not taken seriously. In both cases, the stories they bring back are never inscribed within a communal knowledge. Their discoveries remain outside of accepted knowledge as long as the community can logically keep up its selective blindness.

One situation does contradict what I have discussed here about *What the Crow Said*: the case of Vera's son who was raised by wolves. He comes back into the community and becomes an authority in predicting weather. He also knows which crops will grow the best in a particular area. Vera's boy is a comic figure that defies and subverts traditional sources of authority.

Aside from the fact that both novels problematise the border, *The Prowler* and *What the Crow Said* differ in the way they come to terms with the border and the moment of discovery itself. For the most part, the border in *The Prowler* is almost palpable. It outlines a separation between 'here' and 'there', 'us' and 'them'. The crossing of such a border allows for a new perspective of the 'here', of 'us'. While it is not a moment of appropriation of identity, discovery in *The Prowler* has an element of choosing sides to it. There is a will for redefinition, even if such a definition might later be put into question. In terms of the novel, such an act of taking of sides is played out as being a cold war. Throughout *The Prowler*, we encounter various forms of cold wars: the American-Soviet cold war (Cuban missile crisis), the narrator's sister's own personal cold war (hunger strike against God), and the Icelandic children's resistance to Danish colonialism and Denmark. It is this last form of cold war that I would like to discuss here.

The moment of discovery here is impulsive. It takes sides without quite weighing all the possibilities. It is not clearly defined in itself, besides the will not to be Other. But exactly what the self here is is not quite clear, although a certain acknowledgement of solidarity among the Icelandic children does occur:

There was a conspiracy among the kids in my school to boycott the Danish lessons. The boycott was to consist of a refusal to do homework. We were all to appear at our desks at the set time, and when the teacher calls us up to recite our homework, no one is able to say the lesson.

I did not know whether the boycott took place because no one liked the Danish teacher or whether it was a political act. If we were no longer a colony of Denmark, it could be argued, then Danish should be removed from the curriculum. [...]

He walked up to my desk, knowing I would be able to say the lesson. After all, I already spoke Danish. I did not say a word, but stared him directly in the

face. He knew as well as I that it was no longer a language class. It was a kind of cold war. The object of a cold war must be, I thought as we stared each other down, to ascertain who your enemies are. (*Prowler* 82)

We see in this passage that the taking up of sides is a strategic manoeuvre that allows one to ascertain the Other's position. We also see that in the moment of discovery there is a realisation of differences that run along the divide between 'here' and 'there'. There is more involved in the moment of crossing borders than simply going from 'here' to 'there', as there was more than just language involved in the boycott of Danish. There is something very political in the act of crossing, of discovering.

Contrary to this, the clear-cut edges of a cold war are not present in *What the Crow Said*. The only war that goes on is with the sky itself, where the enemy is never clearly ascertainable. The difference in discovery strategies lies in how the moment of discovery itself functions in both novels. In *What the Crow Said*, the discovery itself is a trial and error process that does not have a clear beginning or end. It seems to take up the greater portion of the novel, where arguably every new encounter is a moment of discovery. From the coming of the bees, to the winter that would not end, and to the crow who could speak, the characters are constantly faced with moments of discovery of the incomprehensible. What allows me to categorise certain reactions as either colonialism, discovery, or appropriation, is the way the characters react to the situations. By their refusal to accept any change whatsoever, a major portion of the novel is locked in a colonial reaction to discovery and change.

This has a lot to do with the way knowledge circulates in a community. It is at the same time oral and traditional. Change is not something that enters easily in such a setting, and when it does the only way the men know how to react is by being "hell-bent on getting blind drunk" (*WCS* 100). It is an escape from reality, from the encroachment of change within a stable universe. In *What the Crow Said*, discovery works on two levels:

individual and communal. Whereas an individual can come to realise and discover certain things, the community on the other hand ignores these discoveries in favour of a stable traditional notion of reality. It is only when the community as a whole has accepted change and discovery that stability can be put into question. Until that moment, which only comes near the end of the novel, individuals are compelled to repeat continuously isolated moments of discovery which are never entirely accepted or admitted by the community.

In *The Prowler*, this notion of communal discovery is absent. What this absence allows is a greater freedom for personal discovery. It allows the individual to discover for their self, what their relationship with the 'there', the Other, is. This individual level of discovery is almost smothered by the communal level in *What the Crow Said*. Individual efforts are not rewarded in the same way that they are in *The Prowler*. *The Prowler's* narrator is also sometimes a character which then is mainly involved with what is going on with herself. In *What the Crow Said*, the narrator is arguably a communal voice, an accumulation of beer-parlour stories and old wives' tales, which does not function at all on the same level. As I have mentioned before, communal discoveries are not of the same order as individual ones, in the sense that acceptance works on a completely different level. *The Prowler* works with and against individualised borders, whereas *What the Crow Said* is overtly community oriented. Both novels diverge here on the level on which discovery operates. This divergence is representative of how radically different both novels are.

4.2 Strategies of Appropriation

In *A Likely Story*, Robert Kroetsch writes about Professor Zirker who “located a center and placed himself in a margin that was in some way to be preferred to the center” (90). What he describes is a very postmodernist perspective of deconstruction and subversion, that the marginal text is what might prove more interesting. Kroetsch also notes that “[t]o write in the margin of a text is to write by hand; we sign what we say” (91). This textual analogy of the relationship between center and margin is interesting. What is accepted is the printed text. The underground writing is found in the margin. It is personal. It is written by hand. It has traces of the self. The central text is hegemonic in its ambitions. The marginalia is unique and individual; it does not aspire to tell all.

What is really interesting when reading a book somebody else has already annotated is that the marginal discourse or notes is what first attracts attention. The marginal text, the personal voice, becomes somewhat preferred to the center. It is the underground discourse and not the overtly accepted one that becomes interesting in a postmodernist/deconstructionist view. The margin, then, subverts the primacy of the central text, melding the hierarchical relationship between margin and center. The center and margin play against one another and shift positions. “Where is the center? Where the margin?” (Kroetsch, *Likely Story* 102).

But as I have argued before, a postmodernist post-colonial perspective does not only show the constructedness of textuality and of centre-margin relationships, it also has the agenda of reinscribing an oppositional truth-claim. In other words, a post-colonial perspective consciously prefers the margin to the center. This celebration of the margins is what makes up the last part of my reading strategy. It is an appropriation which is in a constant process of redefinition. It is a decentered centre but nonetheless it is a centre (which was at one point considered a margin). What I want to discuss here is how both

Robert Kroetsch and Kristjana Gunnars appropriate space in their novels. I want to examine the similarities and differences in this respect in *What the Crow Said* and *The Prowler*.

First of all, appropriation in both novels functions in greatly different ways. In *The Prowler*, appropriation is associated with the act of prowling. It is a process of pilfering through the objects of colonial power, and reassessing one's position vis-a-vis those objects. The objects of colonial power here are both physical and imaginative. The physical objects of colonial power are present in the house in Rungsted, Denmark. The protagonist steals her way around the house much in the manner of a modern Goldilocks, but she takes nothing. She leaves behind all the lush carpets, the gold door handles, and the social structure associated with these objects.

Appropriation also works on the imaginative level. Gunnars writes that "words are suitcases crammed with culture" (*Prowler* 52). The problem is, as Dennis Lee and Robert Kroetsch point out, that the connotative culture that is associated with language in a colony, is generally the colonial centre and not the colonised periphery. And so, one of the prowlings that is going on in *The Prowler* is explicitly textual and language-based. It is a rejection of, and resistance to, textual forms and it is also implicitly a rejection of colonial connotations: "All stories are romances. Detective stories, spy thrillers, horror tales are all romances. They are not real. The romance of the threat. The male romance. I have heard speakers on the female romance. Sentimentality. Emotion. Feelings of love. Fears of rejection. I imagine a story that is not a romance" (*The Prowler* 53).

The narrator/protagonist, when trying to think through her relationship to reality, to colonialism, first begins by pilfering through objects. But she does not buy into the objects of colonial power. She tries other ways of redefining herself. The protagonist at one point tries to reinvent herself, to rewrite her story: "In another version of my childhood, I did not grow up in my parent's house at all. When I was not in school I lived with another

family" (*Prowler* 97). There is, however, the danger of replacing one story with another. This is where the aspect of prowling comes into play: it is a process of negotiation, in which absolutes are resisted.

In an interview with Christina Gheorghe, Gunnars says that *The Prowler* "was an attempt to abandon the militancy of meaning" (53). This shows up throughout the text, and I would like to discuss one particular occurrence here: "At times I think we have outgrown the story. We are no longer entertained by pretense [...] When we recognize that all our stories are pretense, we run out of enemies. When we run out of enemies, all we have left is love" (*Prowler* 55). Here meaning, in the form of stories, is resisted. No counter-story is posed to replace a so-called colonial story or discourse. It could be argued that this is a purely deconstructionist moment, but the moment does leave the reader with something: love. It is not entirely nihilistic, although the primacy of the story is rejected.

Once the story is deconstructed, the reader does have something that he or she can grasp. It is not a story, nor a discourse, but it is something that is appropriated for a self and opens up certain possibilities of (re-)negotiation: "It is because I am full of love that my words have no meaning" (*Prowler* 3); "It is a world that never was. Perhaps I only love the aspiration. The fantasy. Perhaps it is only the desire that I love" (*Prowler* 23); "Because I am full of love, I am full of sorrow" (*Prowler* 34); "Conflicting emotions are silencing" (*Prowler* 36); "If I were not full of love there would be no words on the page. There would be no text, no book" (*Prowler* 89). These are some of the instances where love appears in the text. It is an ambiguous element which inserts itself into the writing process and disrupts the traditional relationship between author and text. Love becomes an empowering feeling which allows for a way out of colonial power binaries because it is an ambivalent third party.

If we now turn our attention to *What the Crow Said*, appropriation works on a

completely different level. There is not a moment of prowling and pilfering through colonialism, and then rejecting the objects of colonialism. The men in *What the Crow Said* are desperately trying to hang on to the comforting colonial state of mind throughout the entire book. They suffer from a selective blindness to change, to disorder: “the innocence of a man who dressed in June clothing because it was June” (WCS 10). But even though any change to the colonial order of things is viscerally resisted, the process of decolonisation rolls along, unstoppable despite the men’s efforts. I discussed in the previous chapter that appropriation in *What the Crow Said* is associated with Liebhaber and the printing process. It is an appropriation of textual space, of words, and of history. Liebhaber, by freeing himself from the fixity of the past, is able to reassess his place in a post-colonial environment. By his playing around with typeface, by rearranging and exploding words themselves, Liebhaber tries to discover new relationships to language and tries to find a sense of ‘here’ in a language that has “a concealed other experience, sometimes British, sometimes American” (Kroetsch, *Treachery* 58). In the end he is free of ‘Gutenberg’s curse’ which makes the memory of the past obsolete. In other words, Liebhaber is free of the tyranny of the established, canonical text — which undermines oral culture in favour of a literary one.

In the end, oral stories — the marginal stories — take precedence over any ‘official’ ones. The novel itself, whose narrator is a communal voice, works along the same lines. It continuously reaffirms marginal narrative in the text. The stories themselves originate, arguably, in the beer parlour. The ambiance of the tall tale and limerick transpire through the narrative. In order to affirm its authority, the narrative voice seems obliged to justify itself through the use of precise statistics and facts. But at the end of the novel, as I have argued earlier, the communal text no longer clings to modes of authority to justify itself. It has found and (re-)appropriated its own space. But this appropriation does not come about in a moment of epiphany. It is a long process that begins in the early chapters of the

novel and continues throughout the book. This arguably begins with Liebhaber and the local press, which both work towards the reinscription of marginal narrative into the centre.

As I discussed at the beginning of this section, the preference for the margin over the centre is not purely postmodern but has a post-colonial agenda, in the sense that it valorises and reinscribes the margin as central. From this perspective, Robert Kroetsch is not purely postmodern, although his techniques are derived from postmodernism. He uses the oral voice, the oral narrative and story, in order to subvert and replace textual/official (hi)stories. In *What the Crow Said*, the communal voice, the voice of the beer parlour, becomes textualised and crosses over into the realm of so-called official (hi)story. Even though the beer parlour is one of the places where the men cling to their stable colonial state of mind, it is also the place where story is set loose. The strict social conventions of the beer parlour allow for stability, but the drunken events that go on inside, the stories that happen there, are intrinsically disruptive and instable.

I would now like to discuss a specific instance of this reinscription of oral culture. As noted earlier, Liebhaber is the local printer in charge of the *Big Indian Signal*. His job is to fill the blank spaces on the page with words and to "Make them fit" (WCS 12). His boss, the editor and publisher Mr. Wills, comes into town and leaves Liebhaber with a basket full of advertisements. The rest is pretty much up to Liebhaber to fill and to make it all fit. What is interesting here is the relationship between Liebhaber and Wills, and also between advertisements and the local stories. From Wills' perspective, advertisement is central. It is the money that keeps the industry afloat. Subscriptions and sales account for a small portion of the income of a newspaper, hence the centrality of advertising from an economic perspective. The community stories are then relegated to a secondary order of importance. They are marginalised by economic/capitalistic colonialism.

On the other hand, if you look at the way these 'marginal' stories are treated within the novel, they are shown not to be trivial nor marginal, but rather central. Furthermore,

what Liebhaber does is print the “district news that Vera sent in each week, that a dozen women sent in each week from a dozen corners of the municipality” (WCS 11). This district news is doubly marginalised: economically and patriarchally. In a patriarchal society, like *Big Indian*, the women are arguably ‘second-class’ citizens and marginal. What they have to say is not essential. But throughout *What the Crow Said* the traditional role of women is put into question and subverted. We see women bringing in the harvest, taking care of the farm, making all the important decisions. The men are seen wasting away their time playing cards and drinking beer. Instead of being marginal, the women are the backbone of the community. Their stories are not marginal, but central. The traditional modes of life are subverted and turned around. Through this subversion, Kroetsch offers an alternative to traditional gender-related roles, and opens the possibility of redefining the self outside stable tradition.

What happens in the *Big Indian Signal* is that the marginal story is being written into the body of the text. It is no longer on the outside but reaffirmed in the centre, within the printing form itself. Gus Liebhaber does not only fill the blank spaces around advertisements, he physically places side by side the central text (the ad) and the doubly marginal story. Moreover, these two opposed texts are not shown as being equal, as a simple deconstruction of the centre-margin relationship, but rather the margin becomes central. There is never mention of the ads themselves, of their content. The central text is effaced and marginalised.

To now sum up my comparison of appropriation strategies in *The Prowler* and *What the Crow Said*, I would like to start by saying that both are rooted in language and textuality. Both subvert the primacy of the story by allowing the marginal story to come into existence. Space is appropriated after a deconstructive moment where the centre is questioned and rejected. However, the major difference lies in the level on which appropriation operates in either novel. The appropriation that takes place in *The Prowler* is extremely personal

and individual. It concerns one person's relationship to colonial discourse and her process of decolonisation. *What the Crow Said* works on the level of the community. Although individual efforts do contribute to the whole, decolonisation and the subsequent preference of the margin is only fully realised as a communal project. This is seen mainly through the narrative voice's tone, how it shifts in the last chapter towards a liberated tone. We catch glimpses of some of the characters in their daily lives. We see them happy to be just who they are. It is only at the end, when the whole assumes its place, are individuals free to reassociate their new relationship to the post-colonial space. That space is one that is constructed through oral story, and only when the marginal story is accepted as central can that space be considered as decolonised.

The differences in strategies here, as in the previous section, have a lot to do with the choice of respective narrators. The individual account versus the communal narrative: in *The Prowler*, the narrator is a single person; in *What the Crow Said*, the identity of the narrator is never clear, but the narrator is arguably the community of Big Indian itself. The individual interests of both authors transpire through these differences. Robert Kroetsch in *The Crow Journals* poses the problem of his own writing: "How I must always shape this whole labyrinth of the world. A novel into language. Trying to begin again, I invent my theory of the uninvention of the world, then plot anew [...] How to circumference the moving point..." (12). What Kroetsch does is rewrite metanarratives and reconstruct foundational paradigms, positing the oral culture in the stead of received/official (hi)story. Gunnars on the other hand is concerned with more finite matters. She is interested in what happens on an individual level, the level between the author and the text, the reader and the text. If she warrants change on any level, it is not foundational as it is with Kroetsch but immediate and individual. *The Prowler* plays on the level of the self: "What attracted me was the conscious, unapologetic use of the subjective --- complete infiltration of the subjective --- on the world. I found in what Barthes was doing a joy in the opportunity to

validate the self" (Gheorghe, "Interview" 51).

The self versus the community is what sums up the differences in Gunnars' and Kroetsch's approaches to the use of space in their novels. It reflects the difference in the authors' individual interests. Gunnars writes from the position of a singular subaltern voice. Her narrator is a girl who has been denied, to some extent, her own voice. She physically 'belongs' to her father, but she is constantly defined as not quite belonging to any fixed place. Her identity and origins are unclear. But it is through the narrator's singular experience that we, as readers, witness a way out of colonial binaries. We also witness a similar event in *What the Crow Said*, but it does not function in the same way. Individual attempts at redefinition do not work out the same way as they do in *The Prowler*. What we witness is the failure of individuality to bring about any significant change, even though change does happen. The addition of individual experience, and not the singular individual, forms the community. It is through the community that change can be brought about. A community is central whereas the individual can always be seen as marginal. This is why individual change can be dismissed and communal change cannot.

What we see in both novels is that there is no singular mode of decolonisation. There is, on the contrary, a multiplicity of modes. Stable, hegemonic modes of cultural authority must be resisted through multiple and often contradictory view points. It is through the resistance of the singular that a way out of colonial power binaries is possible. Kroetsch and Gunnars offer empowering modes of resistance and appropriate colonised space, which then pushes the reader to redefine his or her own relationship to the colonial centre.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Robert Majzels, in an interview with Lianne Moyes, talks about his latest novel *City of Forgetting*. It is set in a mythic, 'post-everything', 1990's Montreal, and portrays characters which have nothing to do with the time of narration: Clytaemnestra, Lady Macbeth, Karl Marx, Che Guevera, Le Corbusier, de Maisonneuve, and Rudolph Valentino. All these characters surface through the layers of the city into a same present time and are portrayed as hoboes roaming the streets. What I find interesting in his book is the way history comes back to haunt the present and how forgetting, in one way, acts as an agent of reinscription of a dislocated self. On this point, Majzels says:

History for us is a sequence of moments. We're at this moment now and the moment before is gone. But in fact it's not gone. It is in the future. It is always ahead of us in some way. So forgetting for me is that mistake we make. But it's also a defence. Look at Suzy Creemcheez: she forgets herself and forgetting herself is a way of getting away from the identity imposed on her, from the roles she's intended to play. So forgetting is an ambiguous thing for me; it's a form of resistance but it's also a form of oppression. On the one hand, Never forget; on the other, for change to occur we must forget ourselves. (Moyes 17)

Robert Majzels explores identity politics in his novel: how they function and how they can be resisted. He looks for ways to deal with the layering of history that exists in every person. In the end, that history is not conserved but rather recontextualised and reiterated

in a mode of appropriation.

I chose here to discuss briefly the case of Robert Majzels in order to point to the fact that history is an ongoing process and that it is not static. It lives within a double social context: the moment of origin and the moment of reproduction. The process of history works much like texts. The text is first produced by a writer, but then it is constantly reproduced by the reader. In his article, "Constitutive Graphonomy", Bill Ashcroft writes: "The written text is a social situation. That is to say, it has its existence in something more than the marks on the page, namely in the participation of social beings whom we call writers and readers" (298). The social environment determines in many ways how an individual text is read and received. If we take for example a canonical text such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, one can read it in very opposed ways: as a beautifully sculpted work of art, or as a problematic colonial text which dichotomises settler/native relationships within a power binary. It all depends on the way it is read: either in a humanist symbolic perspective, or in a politicised anti-colonial one.

Throughout my thesis, I have cast aside the humanist ideal of high art for a more political analysis of both Kristjana Gunnars's *The Prowler* and Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said*. I have argued that the discursive space within which both texts were produced is a post-colonial space, and therefore a post-colonial reading would be one that does not overlook the underlying political situation and discussion present in the texts. Furthermore, I discussed the ambivalent position of Canada within post-colonial resistance. From a Third-World position, white settler Canada does not have much to do with post-colonialism. The kind of white settler culture that can be found in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, is perversely ambiguous in the sense that it is both coloniser and colonised. These cultures are situated somewhere in between First-World colonisers and Third-World colonised in a space that is arguably Second-World.

I have also discussed, as Stephen Slemon argues, that both the term 'Second-

World' and 'post-colonialism', are enclosed within reading and writing strategies. Post-colonialism, as I have described it here, is not the same as Fanon's activist position of violent resistance. Post-colonial resistance within the Second-World is a process marked by ambivalence and reevaluation. The Second-World writer negotiates his or her position within a discursive space which has no clear us-them boundaries. The (re-)appropriation of colonial space within a Second-World post-colonial perspective, then, becomes on-going process of reinscription which also resists the creation of binaries. What is interesting to note here is that on the one hand, some Third-World post-colonial critics, such as Bhabha, argue against the possibility of the Second-World as a post-colonial space; and on the other hand, they argue for the necessity of ambivalence in the reconstruction of identity and for the resistance to recreating the power binaries of colonialism. The paradox here lies in the fact that the Second-World writer has internalised this ambivalence. It is part of his or her second nature. The location of conflict has been displaced in a supplementary movement out of the coloniser-colonised binary, into a space which cannot reconstruct those binaries in quite the same fashion because it incorporates both sides of the binary. This is precisely Homi Bhabha's argument, although he never mentions the Second-World:

This emphasis on the disjunctive present of utterance enables the historian to get away from defining subaltern consciousness as binary, as having positive or negative dimensions. It allows the articulation of subaltern agency to emerge as relocation and reinscription. In the seizure of the sign, as I've argued, there is neither dialectical sublation nor the empty signifier: there is a contestation of given symbols of authority that shift the terrains of antagonism. The synchronicity in the social ordering of symbols is challenged within its own terms, but the grounds of engagement have been displaced in a supplementary movement that exceeds those terms. This is

the historical movement of hybridity as camouflage, as a contesting, antagonistic agency functioning in the time lag of sign/symbol, which is a space in between the rules of engagement. ("Postcolonial" 459)

What Bhabha argues for is a third term to be introduced within binary oppositions. That third term, of relocation and reinscription, is arguably internalised within the Second-World subject. Although not originally expressed in quite the same context, Charles Taylor writes similarly to this: "There must be something midway between the inauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards, on the other" (72). The Second-World, then, becomes in my view an interesting point of contact and subversion between opposed forces of the coloniser-colonised binary. The in-between borderland position of the Second-World allows for a dialogic, negotiated, relationship which is a way out of the repetition of binary subject-object positions.

But as I have already mentioned, the Second-World is a reading/writing strategy. It was precisely this aspect of Second-World post-colonialism that I wanted to investigate. And so I have used a hypothetical reading strategy to discuss two very dissimilar novels, in the hope that a single strategy might prove a useful starting point to understand and compare them. The reading strategy itself is split into three parts: colonial, discovery, and appropriation. These parts correspond to the theory of decolonisation which I have described here, and can also be seen as a sort of literary structural model: initial situation, conflict, resolution; but here the resolution is an absolute which is never realised. It is always caught up in the process of becoming.

Reading *The Prowler* and *What the Crow Said* within this strategy has proved interesting for the way the differences in both the authors' writing appear. I believe that a strictly postmodern or even symbolic reading of the texts would not have underlined, in the same way, the central difference that I noted in the previous chapter. That difference lies in

an individual manifestation of decolonisation versus a communal one. These facets of Gunnars' and Kroetsch's writing shows up not only in the two books that I have discussed here, but also in their other works. Robert Kroetsch is an author who searches for voice on the prairie, in beer parlours, in drunken folk tales. His writing springs from the need to tell a communal story, to have one's story told and heard. Kristjana Gunnars on the other hand, is concerned with a different type of voice. She listens for the voice of the alienated, of the isolated, of the voiceless individual. Her perspective on writing is much more concentrated on individual experience, on how the singularity of existence is precarious within the greater alienation of society.

If we now look at how the reading strategy itself was applied to both novels, there are readily observable differences. First of all, *The Prowler* fit more easily into three-part mould that I defined as my reading strategy. Reading sections of the novel in terms of magic, border crossings, and prowling, allowed me to separate each part quite distinctly. Colonialism, discovery, and appropriation, then have clear symbolic divisions and associations with the text which then facilitates my reading. The only real difficulty of reading *The Prowler* along these lines lies in the book's construction: its non-linear and fragmented form disrupts a straight-forward incremental reading and forces the reader to reconstruct the text as pieces of a puzzle. Once the pieces are sorted out, an evolution can be observed.

Secondly, in *What the Crow Said* the reading strategy does not have the same textual equivalences as in *The Prowler*. There are no direct symbolic associations for colonialism, discovery, and appropriation. The novel is arguably a constant stage of pre-discovery, where on the one side colonialism no longer holds any true value, and on the other, the men cling to an out-dated colonial state of mind to try to bring order to their lives. It is not a stage of discovery *per se*, because discovery itself is resisted in favour of the status quo. But it is not a full fledged colonialism either. Change creeps into the lives of

the men, whether they like it or not. Furthermore, the magic-realist penchant of the text allows for a constantly shifting universe where new elements are brought in to shake up the characters' sense of reality. The stages of colonialism and appropriation are present in the novel, but as backdrops. The men cling to an unmovable past, and at the same time the male characters are constantly forced to reaffirm their selves, (re-)appropriate their sense of identity, which must remain in a constant flux because of the ever changing outside reality.

Finally, as a loose framework the reading strategy here does work, but not in the same way it did with *The Prowler*. I believe that other Canadian texts could be read within this reading strategy, but only as a larger reading 'envelope' which would have to allow for flexibility. Certain texts could be read as exposing only one or two of the stages in the strategy, whereas others might expose all three. The question of whether or not such a reading strategy would actually prove useful to Canadian literature, or to Second-World literature, is quite open. It has proven interesting with respect to the books by Kristjana Gunnars and Robert Kroetsch that I have analysed here. Maybe further readings and applications of the strategy would show that it would have to be greatly distorted in order to function over a wider range of authors and texts. But all theories must be shaped to fit the exact object of study. The elasticity of a theory is in part its beauty and is what makes it interesting to pursue. It would prove worthy of study to see just how far the theory I have developed here can go, to find its limitations. Maybe in the gaps and blind areas we will find new ways of coming to terms with an on-going decolonisation.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Texts:

- Gunnars, Kristjana. *The Prowler. A Novel.* Red Deer: Red Deer College Press, 1989.
- Kroetsch, Robert. *What The Crow Said.* 1978. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1998.

Secondary Texts:

- Adam, Ian. "Illywhacker and *The Prowler*. Settler Society Response to Ideas of History." *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada* 12 (1994): 1-10.
- Arnason, David. "Icelandic Canadian Literature." *Identifications: Ethnicity and the Writer in Canada.* Ed. Jars Balan. Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1982. 53-66.
- Ashcroft, Bill. "Constitutive Graphonomy." *The Post-colonial Studies Reader.* Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 298-302.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures.* London and New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Barbour, Douglas. Introduction. *The Crow Journals.* By Robert Kroetsch. Edmonton: NeWest, 1980. 5-10
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1957.
- Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays.* Trans. Jonathan Mayne. London: Phaidon, 1964.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Postcolonial Criticism." *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies.* Ed. Stephen Greenblatt

and Giles Gunn. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1992. 437-465.

—. "Signs Taken for Wonders." *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 29-35.

—. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Brown, Russell M. "Robert Kroetsch." *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*. Ed. William Toye. Toronto: Oxford, 1983. 418-9.

—. "Robert Kroetsch." *Profiles in Canadian Literature II*. Ed. Jeffrey M. Heath. Toronto and Charlottetown: Dundurn, 1980. 97-108.

Brydon, Diana. "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy." *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Ed. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990. 191-203.

Columbus, Christopher. "from *Journal of the First Voyage to America, 1492-1493*." *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Paul Lauter et al. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Lexington : Heath, 1994. 117-124.

Clifford, James and George E. Marcus, ed. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography: A School of American Research Advanced Seminar*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.

Daurio, Beverly. "A Review of *The Prowler*." *Cross-Canada Writer's Quarterly* 12.1 (1990): 27.

Davidson, Arnold D. *Coyote Country: Fictions of the Canadian West*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.

Edwards, Brian. "Landscape and Tricksterism: Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said*." Brian Edwards, Bruce Healey, and Hazel Rowley. *Beyond Realism*. Geelong, Australia: Deakin U. P., 1987. 27-36.

---. "Novelist as Trickster: The Magical Presence of Gabriel Garcia Marquez in Robert

Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said.* *Essays on Canadian Writing* 34 (1987): 92-110.

Einarsson, Magnùs. *Icelandic-Canadian Oral Narratives*. Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies. Mercury Series Paper No. 63. Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1991.

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press Inc., 1963.

Fee, Margery. "Who Can Write as Other?" *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 242-245.

Frye, Northrop. "'Conclusion' to a *Literary History of Canada* (1965)." *The Bush Garden: Essays on Canadian Culture*. Toronto: Anansi, 1971. 213-251.

Gheorghe, Cristina. "Intertextual Notes in a Metafictional Autobiography: *The Prowler* by Kristjana Gunnars." *Scandivian Canadian Studies/Études Scandinaves au Canada* 4 (1991): 43-49.

—. "Interview with Kristjana Gunnars About *The Prowler*." *Scandivian Canadian Studies/Études Scandinaves au Canada* 4 (1991): 51-59.

Griffiths, Gareth. "The Myth of Authenticity." *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 237-241.

Gunnars, Kristjana. Introduction. *Unexpected Fictions: New Icelandic Canadian Writing*. Ed. Kristjana Gunnars. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1989. xiii-xx.

---. "Laura Goodman Salverson's Confessions of a Divided Self." *A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing*. Eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli. Edmonton: Longspoon Press, 1986. 148-153.

---. "Sherpherding the Self: Love in the Autobiography of Gudny Jonsdottir." *Canadian Women Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 9.2 (1988): 50-53.

---. "The Hypothetical Text: Stephan G. Stephansson's Autobiography." *Canada and the Nordic Countries. Proceedings from the Second International Conference of the*

Nordic Association for Canadian Studies, University of Lund, 1987. Eds. Jorn Carlsen and Bengt Streiffert. *Lund Studies in English* 78. Lund: Lund University Press, 1987. 109-121.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Modernity: An Incomplete Project." *Postmodern Culture*. Ed. Hal Foster. Trans. S. Ben-Habib. London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1985. 3-15.

Harrison, Dick. *Unnamed Country: The Struggle for a Canadian Prairie Fiction*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1977.

Hegel, GWF. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Hoepfner, Kenneth. "Reconstructing the Deconstructed Text: A Reading of Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said*." *Future Indicative: Literary Theory and Canadian Literature*. Ed. Moss, John. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1987.

Huggan, Graham. *Territorial Disputes: Maps and Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994.

Hutcheon, Linda. "Circling the Downspout of Empire." *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Ed. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990. 167-189.

JanMohamed, Abdul R. "The Economy of Manichean Allegory." *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 18-23.

Jackman, Christine. "What the Crow Said: A Topos of Excess." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 16.2 (1991/92): 79-92.

Jones, Gwyn. Introduction. *Eric the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas*. Trans. Gwyn Jones. London: Oxford University Press, 1961. vii-xvi.

Kenyon, Linda. "A Conversation with Robert Kroetsch." *The New Quarterly* 5.1 (1985): 9-19.

Kenyon, Micheal. "A Review of *The Prowler*." *The Malahat Review* 91 (1990): 100.

- King, Thomas. Introduction. *All My Relations*. Ed. Thomas King. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, inc., 1993. ix-xvi.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Kristjanson, W. *The Icelandic People in Manitoba. A Manitoba Saga*. Winnipeg: Wallingford Press, 1965.
- Kroetsch, Robert. *A Likely Story: The Writing Life*. Red Deer: Red Deer College Press, 1995.
- . "An Arkeology of (My) Canadian Postmodern." *International Postmodernism: Theory and literary Practice*. Ed. Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Company, 1997. 307-311.
- . "Carnival and Intertext: A Meditation." *Open Letter 5* (1893): 111-112.
- . *The Crow Journals*. Edmonton, NeWest Press, 1980.
- . *The Lovely Treachery of Words: Essays Selected and New*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Kulick Keefer, Janice. "The Prowler." *Brick: A Literary Journal* 51 (1995): 52-57.
- Lamming, George. "The Occasion for Speaking." *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 12-17.
- Lecker, Robert. *Robert Kroetsch*. Twayne's World Author Series 768. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986.
- Lee, Dennis. "Writing in Colonial Space." *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 397-401.
- Lent, John. "Staring Into Snow: Subjectivity and Design in Kristjana Gunnars' *The Prowler*." *Recherches Anglaises et Nord Américaines (RANNAM)* 24 (1991): 103-115.

- Lindal, Walter Jacobson. *The Saskatchewan Icelanders. A Strand of the Canadian Fabric*. Winnipeg: The Columbia Press Limited, 1955.
- New, W. H. *Articulating West: Essays on Purpose in Modern Canadian Literature*. Toronto: New Press, 1972.
- Moss, John. "Postmodern Prowl." *Canadian Forum* LXIX. 792 (1990): 30-31.
- Moyes, Lianne. "Robert Majzels in Conversation with Lianne Moyes." *Matrix* 52 (1998): 16-25.
- Neuman, Shirley, and Robert Wilson. *Labyrinths of Voice: Conversations with Robert Kroetsch*. Edmonton, NeWest Press, 1982.
- Owens, Judith. "Drawing/In: Wholeness and Dislocation in the Work of Kristjana Gunnars." *Contemporary Manitoban Writers: New Critical Studies*. Ed. Kenneth James Hughes. Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1990. 64-77.
- Randall, Neil. "Carnival and Intertext: Humour in *What the Crow Said* and *The Studhorseman*." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 14.1 (1989): 85-98.
- Ricou, Laurence. *Vertical Man/Horizontal World. Man and Landscape in Canadian Prairie Fiction*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1973.
- Riegel, Christian, and Herb Wylie (eds). *A Sense of Place: Re-Evaluating Regionalism in Canadian and American Writing*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1998.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books-Random House, 1979.
- Slemon, Stephen. "Modernism's Last Post." *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Ed. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990. 1-11.
- . "The Scramble for Post-Colonialism." *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 45-52.
- . "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World." *World Literature Written in English* 30.2 (1990): 30-41.

- Snyder, J. R. "A Map of Misreading: Gender, Identity, and Freedom in Robert Kroetsch's *Gone Indian*." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 18.1 (1993): 1-17.
- Taylor, Charles. "The Politics of Recognition." *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*. Ed. Amy Gutmann. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Thacker, Robert. *The Great Prairie Fact and Literary Imagination*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989.
- Thomas, Peter. "Robert Kroetsch and Silence." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 18-19 (1980): 33-53.
- Tiffin, Helen. "Introduction." *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*. Eds. Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1990. vii-xvi.
- . "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter Discourse." *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. London: Routledge, 1995. 95-98.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *La conquête de l'Amérique: la question de l'autre*. Paris: Les Éditions du Seuil, 1982.
- Turner, Margeret E. "Endings Be Damned: Robert Kroetsch's *Gone Indian*." *Canadian Literature* 119 (1988): 57-71.
- . *Imagining Culture: New World Narrative and the Writing of Canada*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995.
- Van Herk, Aritha. "CrowB(e)ars and Kangaroos of the Future: the Post-Colonial Ga(s)p." *World Literature Written in English* 30.2 (1990): 42-54.
- Wall, Kathleen. "What Kroetsch Said: The Problem of Meaning and Language in *What the Crow Said*." *Canadian Literature* 128 (1991): 90-105.
- Wilson, Robert R. Introduction. *What the Crow Said*. By Robert Kroetsch. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1998.