

REGIONALISM IN THE FICTION OF ALISTAIR MacLEOD,  
ALDEN NOWLAN, AND DAVID ADAMS RICHARDS

by

Audrey M. Cormier  
BA, UNB, 1994

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements of the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the Graduate Academic Unit of the Department of English

Supervisor: Ross Leckie, PhD, Department of English

Examining Board: John C. Bail, PhD, Department of English, Chair  
David Creelman, PhD, Department of Humanities and  
Languages  
Miriam Jones, PhD, Department of Humanities and  
Languages  
Greg Marquis, PhD, Department of History and Politics

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

May, 2000

© Audrey M. Cormier, 2000



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.

0-612-65482-6

**Canada**

*Abstract*

Alistair MacLeod, Alden Nowlan, and David Adams Richards share the belief that a regional sense of place is a significant foundation for their fiction, a belief which moves them to explore the underlying cultural realities of Maritime life. In Nowlan's fiction, the character Kevin O'Brien struggles to reconcile his traditional, rural upbringing with his modern, urban present. MacLeod's short stories address similar themes of exile and return, and the dichotomy between traditional rural folk culture and modern cultural pressures. In Richards's fiction, the tension between traditional and modern mores is frequently expressed as a clash between liberal relativism and social conservatism. These authors recognize that cultural transformation is inevitable as mainstream influences reach the Maritimes, yet they identify what they perceive to be enduring values that can survive the vagaries of a fluid cultural milieu. Their fiction displays an awareness of regionalism more profound than superficialities of local colour.

*Contents*

Abstract	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Representing Regional Identity	21
Chapter 2: The Sentimentalist: Alden Nowlan's Maritimes	44
Chapter 3: Alistair MacLeod: Demonizing the Outsider	63
Chapter 4: Region, Myth, and David Adams Richards' River Community	88
Conclusion	108
Notes	113
Bibliography	116

### *Introduction*

The Maritime provinces are often defined by the qualities that they are perceived as lacking: the spirit of Newfoundland, the political and economic leverage of Quebec, the affluence of Ontario, the growth and optimism of the Western provinces. The Maritime provinces are a place where many people still live in scattered rural enclaves which maintain the same ethnic settlement patterns of a century or more ago, and where at least a small part of the population still works in the same primary industries as previous generations have done. Although real change has come to the region, it has come slowly and unevenly. The region has moved from prosperity to chronic economic decline and dependency by the late twentieth century. The result is an enduring mythos of a pre-Confederation Golden Age, as well as a popular regional grievance against the powerful interests of Central Canada blamed for the region's marginalization in national affairs. Maritimers' loyalty to their region also grows from a conservative impulse to celebrate established traditions that make the area distinctive. Alden Nowlan, Alistair MacLeod and David Adams Richards share an awareness of the solid foundation a strong sense of place produces in their work. Their literary regionalism allows them to explore the social conditions that characterize the Maritimes, articulate the concerns of the area's people, and explore the boundaries of regional identity.

The regional history of the Maritime provinces reveals much about the defensive character of Canadian regionalism in general. Circumstances shared by New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island during the post-Confederation era have given them a regional legacy of grievance against the Federal Government and the dominant metropolises of Central Canada. Until the late nineteenth century, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island had the advantages of economic prosperity and relative political autonomy. The presence of trading centres in the coastal Maritimes meant the establishment of many financial institutions, ranging from banks to insurance firms. Robust trade centres supported a shipbuilding industry, and the ships carried the products of the region's flourishing primary industries: lumber, coal, fishing and agriculture. Strong secondary industries such as iron, textiles and glass existed as well. The rich economic fabric of the Maritimes began unravelling shortly after Confederation, however, was irreparably transformed within two generations and brought the Great Depression to the Maritimes a decade early ("The Long and Winding Road to Prosperity" 1-2), and thus fulfilled the prediction of regional disparity made by Joseph Howe and others as Confederation itself was still being negotiated. By the end of the 1920s a pattern of economic dependency, chronic high unemployment, and population loss through emigration was established (Forbes and Muise 234-6, 271).

Although a significant number of Maritimers in all three provinces were opposed to Confederation, it had proceeded, and the regional protest movement began shortly thereafter. Repeal movements and discussions about Maritime Union lasted throughout the late nineteenth century (Francis et al. 68).

For Maritimers, widespread popular consciousness of regional identity intensified around the turn of the century, when politicians and editorial writers seeking to define the economic problems facing their voting and reading public framed the debate within the context of regional entitlement. Politicians and editorial writers incorporated regional issues into their rhetorics hoping to gain local support, and in so doing changed Maritimers' perceptions of regional sovereignty for generations to come (Forbes, *Maritime Rights* 40-2, 50-3). The interpretation of events commonly held by Maritimers, and summarized by historian T.W. Acheson, is that the Maritime provinces have declined from pre-Confederation prosperity to the *de facto* status of "client states of the federal government" (qtd. in McCann 167). Historians still vigorously debate whether or not the post-Confederation economic decline of the Maritimes was inevitable. In any case, many Maritimers currently believe that their resentment towards the more prosperous Central Canada is justified by the facts of history, which has created a grievance that has entered into the region's popular mythology

and become a defining characteristic of Maritimers' sense of regional identity.

Maritimers' legacy from the nineteenth century is, therefore, a regional political approach tightly bound to the past, to the perceived lost Golden Age and the humiliation and economic ruin ostensibly brought about by Confederation. But Maritime identity goes beyond political posturing, especially as the concept has become more engrained in Maritimers' perceptions during this century. A vast range of criteria is available for identifying regional boundaries. Regions do not always consist of rigid, or even permanent, delineations; indeed, the Maritimes are sometimes combined with Newfoundland as the Atlantic Provinces, most often as a political or economic entity rather than as a representation of true cultural congruity. As much as New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island may have in common with Newfoundland, however, the three provinces share more with one another as the Maritimes, and for this reason the Maritimes will be treated as a distinct region for the purposes of this thesis. In attempting to identify Canada's regional boundaries, one encounters the diverse approaches taken by geographers, ethnographers, historians, and economic analysts. In a 1983 article, William C. Wonders points out that "there is still no single regionalization of Canada recognized by all geographers" (33). Wonders provides "an arbitrary selection of



representative systems” which have produced regional maps of Canada, including climatic, linguistic, and economic-administrative approaches. Clearly, there is a wide range of criteria that can be used to locate and circumscribe regions within Canada. It must be recognized, however, that geographers frequently attempt to delineate “formal regions” that leave no room for inconsistencies and overlapping influences (Westfall 4).<sup>1</sup> L.D. McCann’s *A Geography of Canada: Heartland and Hinterland* (1982) attempts to take into account the myriad influences that can come into play when trying to recognize distinct regions within Canada. McCann explains in his “Foreword” that regionalism is “shaped and given expression by the interplay of land, economy, and society; by the emergence of a group consciousness that voices regional grievances and demands; and by the behaviour of society as expressed most commonly through political actions” (vii).

Maritime regionalism attained its political expression shortly after Confederation. However, Maritime regional identity is shaped by factors beyond the post-Confederation political and economic imbalance with central Canada. The Maritime provinces share similar demographic, ethnic, and cultural characteristics which make the region distinctive within Canada. The demographic development of the region, contingent upon economic circumstances, reflects a state of retrenchment rather than of the growth that

the rest of the country generally experiences. The Maritimes' weak, poorly diversified industrial development has taken away much of the incentive for urbanization. Relative to other regions in Canada, the degree of urbanization has stagnated in the Maritimes during this century. The percentage of Maritimers living in urban centres has remained at little more than 50% since the 1950s, whereas by 1995 the level of urbanization had risen to approximately 80% for Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia, and 75% for Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Urban centres beyond the Maritimes have in most cases seen their populations steadily increase, and often at tremendous rates, as in the cases of major metropolises such as Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa, Calgary, and Vancouver. The urban centres of the Maritimes, in contrast, have seen either small increases or erosion.<sup>2</sup> Few Maritimers now work at the primary industries conventionally associated with the region's rural economy, such as fishing, mining, farming and forestry. Nonetheless, Maritimers experience a familiarity with the rural landscape of their region, unlike Canadians in general. Moreover, immigrants are drawn to the more prosperous regions of Canada and their multicultural urban centres, and this has brought a gradual shift in the country's regional demographics. As a result, the Maritimes has thus gained a national reputation – to an extent justified – as a custodian of traditional social patterns. Ethnic and religious settlement patterns established by the

early twentieth century have endured with only slight change (Forbes and Muise 189; 1991 Census, Statistics Canada). Other areas of Canada have been repeatedly transformed by successive waves of immigration, giving them greater diversity, as well as different cultural, linguistic, and minority concerns.

The images associated with Maritime identity are routinely shown in the media, and these images frequently portray the rural, working-class, traditional aspects of life in the region. Regional programming by national broadcasters and regional marketing campaigns designed by national business firms frequently reflect these images. Regional programming has long been a successful formula for CBC television and radio, a formula also adopted by other national television networks such as CTV and Global. With few exceptions, Maritime-based programmes that have been given national exposure have tended to reflect the region's traditional rural culture: CBC Television has chosen to broadcast, for example, the folk music often featured on *Don Messer's Jubilee*, the period settings of *Road to Aronlea* and *Emily of New Moon*, and the fishing village setting of *Black Harbour*. Such programming has a significant impact on how the Maritimes is viewed beyond, as well as within, the region. The connection between a sense of tradition and Maritime identity has also influenced the way many products are sold in the region. For decades one such product, Alpine beer, has used

the traditional consumption of its product in the region as a central theme in television commercials. At the local level, programming broadcast within the region reflects the pragmatic reality of regional self-interest. "Rule Number One for advertisers is to associate the product with people's most deeply-held values. In the Maritimes, these have more to do with home, heritage and community than with the executive or macho images so common in North American advertising as a whole" (Burrill 312). Marketers understand the realities of regional identity, and in the Maritimes these realities arise from a sense of tradition.

The region's reputation for maintaining a traditional heritage has augmented and supported one of the few economic mainstays of the region, the tourism industry, or as Ian McKay refers to it, the "tourism state" (*The Quest* 281). McKay argues convincingly that since the First World War the tourism industry has encouraged the commoditization of an imaginary "Folk" lifestyle which is marketed to naïve tourists, a process which perpetuates the view of Maritimers as a culturally backward people. As economic and demographic forces transform much of North America, the Maritimes remains a region on the periphery, absorbing change unevenly and over a longer period of time. The resultant image of an unprogressive area appeals to nostalgic tourists attracted to a way of life, and a people, perceived as simple and even anachronistic. The tourism industry, one important to

the region's economy, promotes the dominant image of the Maritimes as rich in rustic sites and quaint people. Not surprisingly, economic need has encouraged Maritimers to become complicit in their own exploitation.

During the nineteenth century, ideas about folk and the possible organic connections between communities and their environments inspired discussion in the United States about the merits of literary regionalism.

American ideas about literary regionalism have influenced Canadian ideas about literary regionalism, as well as presenting some noteworthy contrasts.

American proponents of the regionalist approach write of it in terms of its compatibility with American nationalism. For these critics, conscientious regionalism is a fresh approach, worthy of literary experimentation.

Benjamin Drake, an apologist for Mid-Western regional literature, declared in its favour, "the union will be secure, for its center will be sound" (Spencer 223). Some authors, notably Whittier and Hawthorne, resisted the

categorization of their works as regional, and emphasized the abstract, universal focus of their writing ("the clouds over head" rather than "the

actual soil," according to Hawthorne) (Spencer 223-4). Yet by mid-century,

a *New York Literary World* editorial stated that regionalism "is undoubtedly a merit. For in our extended country, it would be next to impossible for a

writer to identify himself with the individualities of the individual quarters"

(224). American regionalism survived beyond the Civil War, notably in the

form of “local realism,” a concept embraced by writers such as Howells and Twain (Spencer 230). Howells “exhorted authors to turn to their immediate environments for material for their fiction”:

According to Howells’ realist poetics, regionalism, and even the nationalism he so ardently championed, was the means to a greater end. The local details that he exhorted authors to capture would lead to a distinctive American literature, and this literature in turn would contribute to the ultimate goal of all art: the discovery of a universal truth that transcends differences between individuals. (Jordan 43)

American regionalism once again found new life in the early twentieth century, when William Carlos Williams wrote: “From the shapes of men’s lives imparted by the places where they have experienced, good writing comes . . . One has to learn what the local is, for universal purposes. The local is the only thing that is universal” (244).

Much Maritime literature following the development of American literary regionalism features both regional themes and local colour as indispensable characteristics and builds upon the legacy of the American regionalists. The cultural antimodernism described by McKay is evident beyond the tourism industry. The romanticized view of Maritimers as a simple, innocent, isolated rural folk is also to be found reverberating in the

works of the region's writers. Thomas H. Raddall perhaps comes closest to a parallel of McKay's concept of the Maritime folk in *The Nymph and the Lamp* (1950). Isabel, the novel's female protagonist, rejects the modernity of post-World War I mainland life to be reunited with her husband, Carney, the stoic telegraph operator who lives on the "small sea-desert" island of Marina, located in the wild "graveyard of the Atlantic" (27, 116). Carney is the prototypical grizzled seafarer, "noble and fearless like one of those old sea-kings." Moreover, he is himself steeped in the mythology of Romanticism, a seafarer who quotes Byron and absorbs volumes about Norse mythology (371). The other inhabitants of the island are portrayed much like Carney, a folk "for whom the war had been a disturbance in another world – whose minds, like their clothes, remained molded in the fashion" of earlier times (110). The Romantic tradition of the Folk is reborn in the romanticized community of Marina, in its isolation, innocence of modernity, and subsequent ennoblement by Raddall as a remnant of social virtue preserved against the corruptions of the mainland.

The Romanticism of *The Nymph and the Lamp* is prefigured in Charles G.D. Roberts' *The Heart That Knows* (1906), in this case set along a different coastline, near the Tantramar marshes. The hamlet of Westcock is described again and again with lush pastoral imagery:

Outspread behind the watcher on the dyke lay a mile-breadth of the same light green marshes, traversed by a meandering creek . . . It pierced the massive barrier of an *aboi d'eaux* (or "Bito," as the country-folk called it) and formed a tiny port for the boats of the shad-fishers . . . dotted here and there with dark fir-groves, lay the southerly portion of Westcock village, the rest of it hidden from sight by a shoulder of dark fir-groves. (1-2)

In the course of twenty years, the only significant change to the landscape is the introduction of the local railway line, which reinforces the image of a place largely untouched by modernity (*The Heart That Knows* 159). The village is not without its darker side, however: the scandal associated with being an unwed mother suggests the menace that can lurk within such a seemingly idyllic setting. Geographic isolation is repeatedly emphasized; the villagers have more of an affinity to the other ports of the Atlantic than with inland centres, a reality for turn of the century Maritimers with limited transportation and communications. The villagers' attachment to their coastal way of life assumes an essentialist twist when Seth rejects the opportunity to attend university and enter "one of the learned professions," in large part because of "the lure that was in his blood by inheritance," an instinctive urge to roam the seas (128).



Alden Nowlan, and Alistair MacLeod and David Adams Richards, three of the region's most accomplished writers of the last thirty years, have each contended with the matter of literary regionalism and its relevance (or irrelevance) to their work, and each has described the significance of embracing a sense of place. In an interview with John Metcalf, Alden Nowlan acknowledges that William Carlos Williams is an important influence upon his own writing ("Alden Nowlan" 9-10), and Williams' influence likely extended into Nowlan's conviction that his literary grounding was provided by his own sense of place. In his essay "Something to Write About," he relates a pivotal moment of his creative development that occurred when he returned to his native village at the age of twenty-four:

... for the first time I saw the people and the landscape of my native place as entities separate from myself. ... Now I looked around me and tried to write what I sensed, intuited and thought about it. ... the best poems I wrote that fall are the oldest that I still take seriously. (7)

Nowlan's detached consciousness of his childhood environment later expanded into an appreciation of the particularities of Maritime life. His sense of place had a strong influence on his writing as he came to view the Maritimes as a distinctive, rich source of social observation. He believed his

experiences within the region gave him the advantage of a firmer grasp of “human relationships”:

The best thing about living and writing in the Maritimes, as far as I'm concerned, is that there's no place on the continent where so broad a range of social and human relationships is so readily accessible. When I meet writers in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver, writers I admire, I'm continually reminded of the narrowness of their experience. Most of them have lived all their lives in one subcaste of the bourgeoisie . . .

(“Something to Write About” 7)

Nowlan emphasized his deliberate choice of subject matter in his writing, maintaining that he wrote about the rural poor of the Maritimes: “partly because [my] early life was spent among poor rural people . . . and partly because almost everyone else writes about the urban, middle classes”

(“Something to Write About” 12). American regionalism has enjoyed the indulgence, albeit occasionally grudging, of a national culture confident of its own overall unity and strength. Canada's profoundly different situation—the combination of a persistent national identity crisis and the ever-present threat of disintegration into regional entities—has fed resistance towards regionalism's artistic possibilities. This resistance was diminished during the 1970s by a burst of creative activity in the Atlantic and Western provinces

following the growth in federal arts funding to these areas (Atherton 127-29). The denigration of literature through the perjorative use of the label “regionalist” is still evident, however. Donna Pennee has condemned the “soon-to-be-mythic proportions of [Richards’s] local reputation” in the Maritimes, which she blames on “the sort of mythos that regionalism in Canadian letters continues to be capable of fostering” (Pennee 41). On the other side of the debate, Don Precosky comes to the defense of regional literature in a polemical essay that in part argues against the “myth” that “Regionalism is a bad thing” (Precosky 89).

Defensiveness arises in interviews with Richards, who responds to what he perceives as the out-of-hand dismissal of his writing by reviewers who attempt to pigeonhole his writing with the label “Maritime regionalist.” Richards believes that such reviewers fall back on the term simply because the characters in his novels do not reflect “the sort of standard progressive social milieu that we’re all in”; whereas, Richards believes his fiction to be about “humanity itself” (Scherf 160). In a recent interview with *The New Brunswick Reader*, he states,

Toronto is . . . a very southward-looking city. It doesn’t have its finger on the pulse of Canada; it looks longingly across the Great Lakes for approval. You can understand why Toronto critics have a very hobbled view of what the country is about,

because so little of it enters their consciousness on a day-to-day basis.

When asked what makes Maritime writing “distinct,” Richards points to the connection between environment and artistic expression:

Mainly that they have something to say. Writers from other parts of Canada, no matter how well they can say it, don’t have much to say. Anytime you have a sense of place, you’re going to be better in the long term than those who don’t. . . . As Mlstairs MacLeod has said, you can get to know the different layers and dimensions of society probably better than those who come from a more homogenized place. (17)

On that final point, Nowlan and MacLeod concur with Richards. MacLeod explains the sense of place as a necessity for writers: “I think landscape just has an awful lot to do with all literature. I think *Wuthering Heights* couldn’t have been written coming from any other landscape . . .” (MacLeod, “Mlstairs MacLeod” 151).

The fictions of MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards express Maritimers’ traditional concerns and rearticulate them for contemporary readers. Regional grievance and celebration are themes pervading Maritimers’ consciousness. Late-twentieth-century conditions have exacerbated Maritimers’ long-standing sense of regional marginalization as changing

national demographics continue to erode the region's political leverage, and decades- and even centuries-old economic structures have collapsed. The position of the Maritime provinces continues to be one of chronic decline and relative powerlessness. The pride of Maritimers in their regional identity should not be underestimated, however. MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards wrestle with the implications of these cultural undercurrents for the people of the Maritimes. In their fiction, social conservatism mingles with the cultural mythology created out of antimodernism in this century. The protagonists of Richards's *Nights* trilogy, for example, find redemption in remaining steadfast to traditional, explicitly Christian values, while simultaneously finding themselves unwilling or unable to adapt to modern society's moral relativism. Such protagonists as Joe Walsh, Ivan Bastarache and Jerry Bines also belong to the rural proletariat of the Maritimes, the class so often identified with Maritime folk and Maritime identity. The conflict between traditional values and the encroaching commercialism of the urban entertainment culture is constantly present. Despite their distrust of the outside pressures upon Maritimers to conform to the cultural mainstream, these authors also maintain a sharp awareness of the projected image, the folk concept of Maritimers, and respond to it with irony. Artistic nuance enables MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards to re-envision the realities of

regional difference as they perceive them, and to dismantle the assumptions that may overshadow them.

This thesis argues that the thematic concerns of MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards developed in tandem with late-twentieth-century regional conditions, giving their fiction an important regional aspect worthy of close examination. Form is influenced by regional context as well. Janice Kulyk Keefer has pointed out Maritime writers' tendency towards using "critically outmoded" forms such as the realist novel (Keefer 6). MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards share a moderately conservative approach to the technical aspects of their writing. Their fictions are fundamentally realist, whether in the form of novels or short stories. However, each author has experimented with his own variations: Richards and Nowlan through non-linear narrative, Nowlan through the self-reflexivity of *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien*, and MacLeod through the incorporation of mythological elements. They also have in common their use of irony in destroying the bucolic image of rustic Maritime innocence. Chapter One, "Representing Regional Identity," discusses the multiple colonizing influences upon Maritime regionalism as the fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards depict them. The shared humanist outlook of these authors underscores similarities within their thematic concerns and narrative approaches. A closer analysis of the individual approaches of each author is provided in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two, "The Sentimentalist: Alden Nowlan's Maritimes," explores the influence of the nineteenth-century tradition of literary sentimentality in Nowlan's fiction. Nowlan invokes history and memory while employing sentimentality, initially in a conventional manner, then in increasingly sophisticated forms that undermine the reader's expectations in his later fiction. History and memory are also important thematic concerns for Alistair MacLeod, whose short stories are examined in Chapter Three, "Alistair MacLeod: Demonizing the Outsider." The past and its traditions represent a desired, and elusive, order for many of MacLeod's characters, who find themselves in conflict with the values associated with urban, non-Maritime culture. Chapter Four, "Region, Myth, and David Adams Richards's River Community," explores Richards's *Nights* trilogy and the role played by myth in his depiction of a Maritime community. Maritime identity has traditionally been rooted in local geography, an aspect of regional identity reinforced in Richards's trilogy. Traditional ties to the landscape are increasingly threatened by economic and technological forces, so that the values associated with rural life have come to exist ever more through myth and nostalgia as a characteristic of regional identity.

MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards value a sense of place as a crucial aspect of their literary work and their approach to fiction proceeds out of this belief. They each focus their writing far beyond the Maritimes towards a

wide readership, but they have consciously rooted their efforts within a sense of place. Their fiction explores regional identity as an entrenched and likely permanent fact of Canadian life. Their fiction displays an awareness of regionalism more profound than superficialities of local colour.



*Chapter One: Representing Regional Identity*

MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards respond to a regional legacy of historical and critical marginalization as they explore the complex circumstances that create Maritime identity in their fiction. Their representation of regional identity is achieved by infusing their exploration of humanist principles and realist techniques with regional concerns and the specificities of place. This chapter investigates the thematic concerns and formal techniques that these authors share, as well as establishing the extent to which their regional contexts shape their work. Each author's work reflects Maritime cynicism and angst about the ostensible progress being brought to the region by mainstream culture. By comparing the approaches they have taken to portraying different aspects of Maritime experience, the unique vision of each author is brought to light.

Although some critics persist in defining the literary output of the Maritimes as merely 'regionalist,' the regionalism found in the fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards is complex and fluid. The danger in using the term 'regionalist' is in dismissing the multiplicity of influences upon Maritime writers and their own awareness of their regional context. The aims of Maritime writers, when they extend beyond regional issues, are often in danger of being overlooked. A corollary to this is that their regional concerns are often exaggerated. There has never been any recognizable

Maritime literary school or, with the exception of the Maritime Rights movement of the 1920s, any coherent regionalist movement in the Maritimes beyond the periodic, short-lived political efforts that developed in the aftermath of Confederation. Maritime regional identity may have a relatively long history in Canada, but it is obviously an identity that is not rigidly dogmatic. In "Something to Write About," Nowlan observes the need for certain critics to organize literature, like hockey, "geographically (or otherwise) into leagues and teams" (10). Such criticism portrays Maritime writers as fundamentally strategists in the battle of late twentieth-century identity politics. Nowlan ponders the possibility of organizing a Maritime literary movement and concludes, "I've no doubt that the work of Maritime writers would receive wider publicity and inspire greater respect if we organized a political-literary party. Since there are actually hardly two of us who work in the same way toward the same objectives, this would involve an enormous amount of flimflam and gobbledygook" ("Something to Write About" 11). Moreover, Maritime writers are resistant to being viewed as mouthpieces for the collective interests of their home region. MacLeod has spoken against this notion, stating ". . . I think my own thoughts and I'm not a spokesman or spokesperson—or I certainly don't intend to be—for any particular way of life" (MacLeod, "Letters to the World" 52). Richards

cautions his readers against interpreting his fiction as an exact reflection of a physical place, explaining:

*DAR* . . . in a sense all my work is outside the Miramichi.

*KS* In that it's universal?

*DAR* Not only that, but also it's my own rivers, my own places, and in so many instances it doesn't have that much to do with the real Miramichi. (Richards, "David Adams Richards" 159)

Richards thus claims that his vision imaginatively incorporates physical place, rather than seeking to give the Miramichi an undeviating, concrete representation.

In the interests of establishing a regionalist criticism, critics sometimes unduly simplify their arguments. Keefer's broad study of Maritime literature, *Under Eastern Eyes*, falls back on the position that contemporary Maritime writing is fundamentally a response to the hegemony of the centre: "In the writing of Nowlan, Richards and MacLeod this kind of political awareness has permeated the imaginative shaping of local reality. . . . If nationalist literature mounts the case for Canada . . . then much regionalist literature may articulate one kind of case against Canada. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Maritimes" (24). Keefer bypasses the opportunity to cite support for her claim, and her chapter entitled

“Politics and Fictions” examines political themes in the Maritime canon by presenting a close reading of fiction by three other Maritime writers: James DeMille, Hugh MacLennan, and Silver Donald Cameron. Given the aversion MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards have expressed toward viewing their own work as a manifestation of regional politics, the scrupulous reader should find more than an anti-Confederation argument at the foundation of their fiction. Regional identity is revealed as a crucial aspect of their fiction, but it serves as one of several supports to their respective creative visions, not as the linchpin. Keefer identifies some important themes shared by an eclectic assortment of texts—including the deconstruction of the rural idyll in the fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards—but no formula that would indicate a consensus with regard to regional literary goals or methods.

As regional identity is explored and further delineated within Maritime writing, it becomes clearer that this regional identity has more than one geographical, and cultural, basis. The fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards responds, in fact, to a multiplicity of neo-colonial influences. MacLeod explores the influence of the Celtic diaspora upon the region. Ethnic and cultural connections with the United States are evident in *The Lost Salt Gilt of Blood*, where MacLeod links the mining communities of Cape Breton with those of the rest of the continent: “Springhill, Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Yellowknife, Britannia Beach, Butte, Virginia City, Escanaba, Sudbury,

Whitehorse, Drumheller, Harlan, Ky., Elkins, W. Va., Fernie, B.C., Trinidad, Colo.—coal and gold, copper and lead, gold and iron, nickel and gold and coal” (“The Vastness of the Dark” 38). These communities become palpably linked in the transient lives of the miners who must relocate in search of employment. MacLeod explores this mining subculture in his portrayal of the emotional struggle of a young man who tries to reconcile the values of his Appalachian parents with the more mainstream values of the Mid-Western community in which they now live. “The Golden Gift of Grey” is remarkable not for departing from the usual Cape Breton setting of MacLeod’s fiction, but for rendering so vividly an experience with obvious parallels to those of the Cape Breton exiles in the other stories of the collection. The dominance of economic forces, and the impact of industry on regional culture, is clearly a phenomenon that goes beyond national boundaries. As Richards puts it, “Maritimers in Toronto can relate to the song about being stuck in Detroit City while dreaming about rural life” (“Just Singing Along” 29).

The evidence suggests that the United States has been a more dominant cultural influence on the Maritimes than the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal axis. National context is seldom directly relevant in Richards’s fiction (Bogaards 68), although American consumer culture is omnipresent. Elvis memorabilia, a familiar symbol of cheap American kitsch, becomes the

scheming Antony's stock-in-trade in *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace*. Ivan Basterache, in a moment of self-awareness, realizes he has been blinded by his loyalty to his father, and has betrayed his own principles for the sake of supporting Antony's entrepreneurial avarice. He looks at Antony, "with his welder's cap, his ELVIS LIVES button, and [realizes] that all his ideals had come down to stealing two kegs of swish" (170). The artifice of "pop culture" even influences the way Gloria talks about her daughter:

"But I'm still sorry I wasn't with Margaret when she was growing up—there's so much a woman could tell her."

And there was something about the phrase that was again false and meaningless, that came off television sets and nights in bars or cottages, and had nothing to do with the magnificence of her daughter. Nor did she care that her voice was false. (63-4).

American popular culture's influence in the Maritimes stretches back even farther than many Canadians realize, particularly if they have "bought into" the tourist image of a past where Maritime folkways were untainted by mass media and consumerism. That degree of insulation, if it ever existed at all, disappeared by the 1930s. By then, Nowlan's Kevin O'Brien was spending his rural adolescence listening to the *Little Orphan Annie* radio serial (*Various Persons* 11), reading Jack London or *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, and

smoking Sportsman cigarettes. Kevin explains that he smoked his particular brand "because no one else in the village did," suggesting the seduction behind the spread of American consumerism in the Maritimes (39-40). In its relation to American cultural imperialism, Toronto is a fellow colony to the Maritimes, one more hinterland outpost; another segment of one long marginalized region sitting on the northern USA border. Toronto's national dominance may give it significant control over the Maritimes, but the fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards addresses broader cultural concerns as well.

Clearly, MacLeod's, Nowlan's and Richards's approach to fiction is not absolutely determined by the conflict between the Maritimes and the national centre of power. At one extreme end of the spectrum, it is sometimes the goal of Maritime writers to construct fictive locations that fit completely into the pattern of American cultural homogeneity, in the hope of either becoming more marketable or more palatable to Toronto critics.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the literature of the Maritimes generally expresses an awareness of regional distinctiveness. MacLeod, paraphrasing Flannery O'Connor, emphasizes the importance of literature that comes from "some place" rather than not coming from "any place" (Nicholson, "Alistair MacLeod" 196).

MacLeod's, Nowlan's and Richards's sense of place displays a mutual concern with the impact of antimodernism on contemporary Maritime culture. Antimodernism is stereotypically associated with the rural outlook versus the cosmopolitan, but with a particular connotation of determinism for the Maritimes. A fatalistic acceptance of regional complacency is often attributed to Maritimers, in particular to the rural poor associated with the region's folk culture. In "The Vastness of the Dark" (*The Last Salt Gift of Blood*), MacLeod's youthful narrator is confronted by "the awfulness of oversimplification" in an Ontario salesman's dismissal of the people of Springhill. The salesman does not acknowledge the complex family relationships and community history compelling the locals to remain in Springhill despite the decline of mining:

"They should get out and work like the rest of us. The Government tries to resettle them but they won't stay in a place like Toronto. They always come back to their graveyards like dogs around a bitch in heat. They have no guts." (48)

Maritime backwardness is the crucial factor sometimes cited by outsiders when the source of the region's economic underdevelopment is being addressed. The perception can be blamed in part on the growth of Maritime identity out of an awareness of loss, a factor perhaps not as relevant in other regions. Things that are lost hold great value once they are given a new life



as memories, and the Maritime legacy of the pre-Confederation Golden Age is no exception. The Maritime inclination to look back to the past is encouraged by the continuity of significant social patterns over generations, giving the region a different ethnic and cultural composition than the rest of Canada. As the "Introduction" to this thesis notes, the sense of social continuity encompasses stable patterns in work, religious practice, and geographic settlement; all provide the framework for shared values and history.

Traditional Christian mores are a profound problem for many characters in the fiction of Nowlan and Richards, illustrating the spiritual dimension of the tension between regional culture and modern values. Kevin O'Brien is beset with memories of the fundamentalism taught to him by his Baptist grandmother during his childhood. Kevin's grandmother, superstitious to the point that "she might as easily have been an old peasant woman in Galicia or Moldavia" (*Various Persons* 79), is ultimately understood by Kevin to be a sympathetic figure. Religious faith, which his grandmother confuses with folklore as often as not, is her weapon in her struggle against the poverty that would otherwise crush her spirit: "Blessed are they who survive, saith the Lord" (59). Kevin reconciles his past with his present beliefs, embracing religion "in the subconscious and mystical rather than the liturgical and public sense," so that he sees his happiest childhood memory

crystalized as “the iconotrophic instant, the sacred picture” (83, 79). In this way, some element of his past is salvaged and given new meaning.

Richards and MacLeod use similar methods to express the connection between traditional worlds and modern. For Richards’s characters, traditional Christian ideals are apparent in the actions of individuals struggling with modern dilemmas. Christian symbolism is sometimes used overtly as a foil to secular progressivism. Purpose found through self-sacrifice is a prominent theme in Richards’s *Nights* trilogy, particularly in *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*. Nevin, the former campus radical and rural “back-to-the-lander,” encounters his “Golgotha, his Calvary” (61) when his estranged wife Vera falsely accuses him of molesting his daughter. It is in “simplicity” and “action” that Nevin finds his redemption, abandoning his worldly ambition to join a “born-again” congregation and literally raising his cross (216-8). Ralphie, a progress-oriented intellectual, gropes towards his eventual understanding of the events unfolding around him: “That this was the parable of Christ made no serious imprint on Ralphie, who disliked religion” (84). In MacLeod’s fiction, Christian symbolism is omitted in favour of exploring the same Old World folklore transmitted by Kevin O’Brien’s superstitious grandmother. Several of the short stories in MacLeod’s second collection, *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun*, employ folklore extensively. Gaelic folklore becomes the instrument for

exploring the fluid relationship between characters' emotional and metaphysical comprehension of modern situations. The narrator of "Vision" attaches mystical significance to the accidental blinding of his friend, a tragic event which directly led to the end of a feud between their families. The injury seems to fulfill a family legend about a prophecy made by an ancestor with *Du Shealladh*, ("two sights or second sight") (154). The narrator discovers a deeper meaning in the myth beyond its literal implications, reflecting that it is "forever difficult to see and understand the tangled twisted strands of love" (189). This blending of traditional religion and mythology with current metaphysical dilemmas has been effective in the fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards. It is also distinctive as a part of Maritime culture, and is likely to persist in this form in the region as demographic changes bring a different dynamic to cultural life elsewhere in the country.

The tension between traditional and modern points of view expressed in MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards fiction has parallels with the experience of post-colonial cultures around the world. Antimodernism is the trait of Maritime identity that endures from decade to decade, a trait that is by turns voiced by the people of the region and projected onto Maritimers by outsiders. Many of the themes found in post-colonial literature are evident in broad cultural terms as regional issues in the Maritimes. Wolfgang

Hochbruck argues that “post-colonial regionalism” is the most significant trend in recent Maritime fiction. He defines it as a

... quality that is both regional in its connectedness to the space, and postcolonial in its move away from the apologetic/defiant modes of past literary periods and towards a form of cultural activity that is pragmatic in outlook and diverse and multicultural in form. Because of its fixed locale and the notion of identity it derives from it, it is not dependent on—or necessarily even concerned with—questions of national identity. (Hochbruck 17)

Thus, the fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards is to a certain extent a local response to some significant global trends. Literature reflects the ambivalence in regions paradoxically assimilated into and further marginalized by the cultural mainstream. Neo-colonial influences upon the Maritimes originate from both Central Canada and the United States. The Maritime region, which had once been an equal negotiating partner upon entering Confederation, is now in the position of having been re-colonized, so that it has entered a condition of growing dependency. Its prosperity and sense of self-determination having been diminished; the Maritimes has become irrelevant to much of the rest of North America, except as a tourist state. Every post-colonial culture, each in its own way, shares an awareness

of a lost way of life. Literary innovation is a way to reconcile the loss with the confusing, and often conflicting, values imposed by modern life.

MacLeod's Cape Breton exiles share the pain and culture shock experienced by characters in many other post-colonial cultures. The audience's inadequate comprehension of Archibald's beloved Gaelic songs in "The Tuning of Perfection" echoes the frustration of the narrator of "The Closing Down of Summer." In "The Tuning of Perfection," the narrator remembers his own experience in a miners' chorus, where he felt they were "parodies of ourselves," giving a performance "as lonely and irrelevant as it was meaningless." Another post-colonial performance is provided for comparison. The narrator has seen Zulus dancing and has scrutinized their performance "in the hope that I might understand the meaning of their art." But he concludes that in the end, the performers must perform for themselves: "Their dancing speaks a language whose true meaning will elude me forever." MacLeod's narrator acknowledges that he believes that he has glimpsed "their joy, despair or disdain" (*As Birds* 24-5). His glimpse of the common humanity he shares with the Zulu performers emphasizes the exoticism of the art, and the failure of two alien cultures to fully understand one another.

Kevin O'Brien's Lockhartville community provides a humorous example of another prominent theme in post-colonial art, alienation from

the state. The citizens of Lockhartville have a thorough distrust of the provincial police:

Like most of the inhabitants of Lockhartville [Kevin] looked upon the police much as the people of a country that was conquered and annexed in their grandfathers' time might be expected to look upon an occupying army. In Lockhartville when mention was made of the state it was always in the third person. So the police were the agents of an alien power. As such they were regarded with something very much like awe. To threaten an enemy with the police was to curse him, in both the divine and profane sense of the word. It was a threat that was often made but was almost never carried out.

*(Various Persons 125)*

A similar sentiment is aroused by the drafting of Kevin's brother Patrick into the army during the Second World War. Kevin's grandfather manages to take the side of the Irish:

"Well, at least we can be thankful to God the boy's alive yet," Granddad said. "What with the bloody Huns on one side of him and the bloody Limeys on the other, it's God's grace he hasn't got a bullet in his craw before this, and God forgive me if he doesn't deserve it going off to fight for the bloody

bastards that shot Jim Connolly and him tied to a chair, by  
 Jesus, tied to a chair.” (16)

In contrast, Richards’s *Nights* trilogy has a fine rendering of the internalized colonizing impulse in the character of Vera. Vera is a highly-driven, liberal social reformer, but remains oddly close-minded, and personifies true missionary zeal in her approach to her community. She is introduced as a young woman, arriving back in town after completing a graduate degree at Oxford. She spent her adolescence reading Jane Austen, learning to play Mozart on the piano, and creating school projects about the UN (*Nights* 92-5). Together with Neville she becomes a “back-to-the-lander,” hoping that the alternative lifestyle will make them independent of modern influences. By the end of the trilogy, she has written a sociological study of Jerry Bines which constructs a radical feminist explanation of his criminal behaviour that misinterprets, or ignores, his true motives. She is last seen departing for Halifax, saying, “there was so much work to be done” (225). Vera, who ostensibly seeks to rid society of its oppressive institutions, eventually becomes a part of the dominant establishment and acts in a selective fashion to further her career. She perpetuates the authority of powerful institutions that have a history of marginalizing communities such as hers. As she misrepresents her community, her impact on it is ultimately destructive.

Regional identity's multiplicity allows MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards to consider myriad cultural influences in their fiction, and by manipulating narrative form and technique they are able to respond to these various influences. The different marginal positions simultaneously occupied by the Maritimes give an intriguing context to the region's relationship with the Canadian cultural centre. By looking at the approaches taken by these three authors as a group, their common use of a fluid narrative style becomes obvious. Narrative point of view shifts within Richards's *Nights* trilogy and Nowlan's *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien*. Their fiction often presents the reader with ambiguous outcomes and more questions than answers. This experimentation with a fragmented narrative style is appropriate to the rendering of an environment such as the Maritimes, where the conflicting cultural demands of the late twentieth century are acutely felt.

Nonetheless, the demands of the realist mode chosen by the authors ensure that their fiction remains consistent with certain fixed ideological assumptions. Their choices of subject material—the ordinary characters, the typical Maritime settings, and the plot catalysts drawn from mundane situations—are a reflection of the realist imperative to avoid idealization (Becker 52-3). Their choices also reflect their concern with the experiences of the rural proletariat of the region, and the social changes that are pervasive in the contemporary Maritimes. Moreover, MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards



employ realist techniques. The effort to achieve narrative “objectivity” stands at the center of nineteenth-century realist technical innovation. Flaubert described his technical goal as narrative “impersonality” (Becker 56). There is an affinity between the convictions of the realist mode and folk culture in both their assumptions that truth can be articulated through art. Folklore, as a source of collective history and identity, asserts itself as a representation of literal truth. The folklorist W. Roy Mackenzie noted that Nova Scotia balladeers reacted with genuine emotion to the folk songs they performed (McKay, *The Quest* 53). The regional diction of MacLeod’s and Richards’s omniscient narrators even suggests the intonations of a bardic storyteller voicing the experiences of his or her people.

MacLeod’s, Nowlan’s, and Richards’s fiction articulates human experience that at once incorporates and transmits beyond a regional context. Their self-defined role is to mediate between regional concerns and what they perceive to be enduring, universal values, to evaluate local experience and gauge it against a broader humanistic outlook. The realist mode adopted by these authors to realize this vision is an unfashionable choice for contemporary writers (despite canonical exceptions such as Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence). The predominance of realist narratives in Maritime writing has led to its critical dismissal in many instances (Keefer *Under Eastern Eyes* 7), probably because of a perception of realism as a

reflection of a regressive mentality. Richards has rejected the categorization of his work as "social realist," although he acknowledges his fiction style is "rather traditional" (Richards, "David Adams Richards" 159). MacLeod explains his approach to writing as a rejection of trend-following: "I think of it now as writing for the record. It will be there. Post-modernism will come and post-modernism will go. But I will be there" (Anderson 52). Realist narratives are an appropriate way of communicating the mentality of a region aware of the burden and value of its nineteenth-century origins as it confronts an uncertain future.

Although their fiction lacks the self-reflexive play of post-modernist writing, it demonstrates an awareness of the social concerns and narrative experiments of this century. Our understanding of Richards's characters is obscured by the contradictions of competing authorities, all equally dubious; Jerry Bines's motives are revealed to the reader gradually, through the biased filter of several characters' perceptions of his motives. Adele tries to influence Vera and Ralphie's attitude towards Bines based upon her anger over what she sees as Bines's betrayal of Joe. The reader discovers more through Bines's responses to Vera's sociological line of questioning about his family background. Police statements given by Lucy and Loretta provide information about Bines's actions and indirectly suggest his motives. Two men who relate the local Bines lore to the boy Andrew reveal more about

Bines. It is through one of the latter narrative personas that we learn of Bines's individualistic conception of "truth": "Jerry had never known truth, but he had conceived it himself like some great men conceive of truth and chisel it into the world. And it was his and no one else's." This passage is immediately followed by the disturbing story of how Rils attacked Bines's helpless father when Bines, then a small boy, was with him. To Bines, this pivotal event reveals "truth": "You don't know it before then. (This is what he could not tell Vera, of course.) You don't know it before then" (*For Those* 78-81). Shifting perspectives prevent the reader from jumping to the conclusion that this horrendous event excuses Bines's murderous actions as an adult. After reading a newspaper article that glosses over his past and describes him as "more sinned against than sinning," he self-righteously nods "with conviction and satisfaction . . . the same way he had when he was acquitted at his trial" (132). As an omniscient voice narrates, Bines "was not a good man, make no mistake" (196). This perplexing combination of perspectives reflects the competing discourses trying to "steal" Bines's "story" (181), discourses arising from family, community, the police, a local academic, and the fourth estate. The real Jerry Bines, and the true explanation for his final battle with Rils, are left to the reader to discern from the many fragments composing the novel.

These conflicting claims for the true version of Bines's story are evidently unreliable and must be viewed in relation to one another for the reader to reach any conclusions about Bines's actions. Nonetheless, the novel indicates where truth may be found. Richards packs his novel with Christian allusions, suggesting that Bines's predicament is a metaphor for the forgiveness and spontaneous self-sacrifice that could give Bines's life purpose, instead of the expression of "fundamental nonlife" (165) that he assumes when he is overcome by rage and thoughts of revenge. The use of Christian metaphors in Richards novels, the Christian iconography of Nowlan's fiction, and the Gaelic mysticism of MacLeod's stories indicate the authors' interest in pre-Modern social values and spirituality, which they see surviving in various forms in the Maritimes. Despite manifestations of uncertainty and skepticism, the search for meaning is portrayed as fundamentally worthwhile. At the same time, several themes contained in the fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards question modern mainstream notions about social progress, consumer culture, and even the ability of people to locate truth through reason alone.

The search for meaning and purpose endured by so many of MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards's protagonists illustrates the authors' aims to touch on the commonality of human experience. Richards describes his fiction as "dealing with human beings at the moments of emotional and

physical crisis. That has most interested me in the human dilemma.” Richards hopes to provoke “sympathy rather than reaction” by the reader towards the characters (Richards, “David Adams Richards” 164, 169).

MacLeod also emphasizes the significance of reader sympathy towards Richards’s fictional characters: “If a writer has no sympathy for his characters or the human condition he will have difficulty arousing an emotional response in the reader. . . . I realize that ‘strong feeling’ is not art. However I believe that it often leads to the best art” (“At the Moment” 17).

Nowlan describes the essence of the poet’s role as lying in the ability “to express what humans feel” (Nowlan, “Alden Nowlan” 15), a point of view which undoubtedly extends into his approach towards his other writing.

“The best thing about living and writing in the Maritimes,” Nowlan explains, “. . . is that there’s no place on the continent where so broad a range of social and human relationships is so readily accessible” (“Something to Write About” 11). The possibilities and limitations in communicating emotional, subjective experience are themes frequently shared by MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards. As the narrator of “The Closing Down of Summer” struggled to understand the “joy, despair or disdain” of the Zulu dancers (*As Birds* 25), in “The Road to Rankin’s Point” Calum struggles with the “artificiality” of family photographs that obscure “the desperate hopes and fears,” “the darkest truth” behind frozen smiles and poses (*The Last Salt Gift of Blood* 148).

Kevin O'Brien's earliest contact with "another and larger world" beyond Lockhartville came out of the radio broadcasts of the 1930s. He perceived the radio programs, however, as inscrutable, imperfect reflections of that world, "like the images seen by the inhabitants of Plato's cave" (*Various Persons* 39). In Richards's *Nights* trilogy, the chasm between the alienated individual and the rest of humanity is bridged, or created, at moments of crisis. When Adele's carefully hidden pregnancy culminates in the delivery of a daughter in a public lavatory, Adele suddenly abandons her normally hostile, sullen disposition to proclaim, "Everyone's mad at me now . . . but I love you all" (*Nights* 208).<sup>4</sup> It is these words—"I love you all I love you all"—which echo at the moment Bines becomes aware of his father's total powerlessness against Gary Percy Rils (*For Those* 81). The disconnection of this line from the rest of the passage's narrative structure suggests, in an ironic context, the instant of Bines's separation of his own interests from those of the rest of humanity.

MacLeod, Nowlan and Richards's choices of structure, style and theme all serve to convey a humanistic response to the circumstances of Maritime life. Subjective, emotional experience is the means by which these authors provoke a sympathetic understanding of the particularities of local context. The clash between tradition and anti-modernism is reflected in the

dilemmas faced by characters who feel compelled to reconcile such contradictory influences in their search for identity and purpose.

*Chapter Two: The Sentimentalist: Alden Nowlan's Maritimes*

Known primarily as a poet, Alden Nowlan wrote prolifically in several genres, including fiction, drama, essays, magazine and newspaper editorials, and even speechwriting. Nowlan spent his childhood and youth in the villages and small towns of the Maritimes, which provided him with the settings of his novels and most of his short stories. Vital Maritime issues such as endemic rural poverty, the Puritanical repression of sexuality, and rigid gender and class roles emerge as prominent themes in his fiction. Nowlan's early efforts to sympathetically portray the experiences of the rural poor rely heavily on sentimentality, and his early sentimentalism emphasizes heightened emotion at the expense of a critical understanding of the situations pushing people to the edges of Maritime society. His early use of sentimentality was eventually transformed by the use of irony as a counterpoint to pathos. The character Kevin O'Brien, created to serve as Nowlan's fictional alter ego, dominates Nowlan's fiction. Kevin's memories of growing up provoke both emotional and intellectual reactions within him, a mixture of nostalgia and detached analysis. Through Kevin O'Brien and other characters, Nowlan's fiction reveals the emotional trials of people who struggle against bleak circumstances and their own sense of powerlessness.

An understanding of the significance of sentimentality in Nowlan's fiction is crucial to appreciating his distinctive expression of regional identity



in his fiction. Nowlan portrays his own vision of regional identity in his novels and short stories by deliberately risking sentimentality. This is an extension of a technique he uses in his poetry. In an interview with John Metcalf, Nowlan acknowledges what he believes to be the significance of sentimentality for writers:

... I sometimes deliberately run the risk of sounding sentimental. I think you have to risk sentimentality if you're going to write anything that matters because after all sentimentality is very close to the things that *genuinely* move people—it's not a falsity but simply an exaggeration. (14-5)

Metcalf comments that Nowlan's "Ypres 1915" is a poem playing "on the edge of sentimentality the whole time," a perception Nowlan affirms.

Nowlan's sentimentalism reveals his desire to remain faithful to his emotional experiences:

... That poem is essentially a dialogue between the brain and the guts, the cerebral and the visceral. The tension between the sentimental or the near-sentimental and the cynical or near-cynical is deliberate. . . . Any poet who deals with the emotions that move some people to tears is going to be accused by some people of being sentimental because sentimentality is by definition an excessive emotion and what

to one person may seem excessive to another person may seem perfectly normal. . . . I happen to be a very passionate person who is readily moved to both tears and laughter and if I denied this I would be false to myself. (15)

Nowlan's early efforts to depict emotional experience are influenced by the legacy of the nineteenth-century literary sentimentalists. For the contemporary reader, sentimentalism is sometimes equated with a clumsy manipulation of the emotions. At its worst, this is what sentimentality in literature represents at any time. However, sentimentality in literature has served a utilitarian purpose for many writers, particularly during the nineteenth century. The Victorian sentimentalists, Dickens and Thackeray predominant among them, were part of a movement with its roots in the tradition of eighteenth-century Enlightenment optimism and the concept of sensibility popularized by the Romantic movement. "Sentimentality" denoted sensitivity to "innate moral feelings." The goal of art was to heighten the emotional experience for the audience, thereby encouraging a response based on moral feeling. Sentimentalists believed that human benevolence could be tapped into by literature that evoked feelings of tenderness, pity or sorrow from the audience (Abrams 129). By the late nineteenth century, changing audience tastes led to a growing rejection of sentimentalism, which had come to be viewed negatively as a tendency

towards indulging in excessive or insincere displays of emotion, in opposition to reason (Kaplan 16-7).

Though popular culture . . . kept its heart beating with the blood of sentimentality, intellectual modernism and modern high art stigmatized sentimentality as the refuge of philistinism and small minds. . . . The notion of unearned and undisciplined feeling, and the fear of a dangerous misperception of the role of feeling in general, reached back to infect with distasteful overtones and to distort ahistorically the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century definitions of sentiment and sentimentality. (18)

Sentimentality gained its notorious association with Dickens through his coupling of the appeal to moral feelings with social reformism. One of the strongest undercurrents in the sentimental movement was a faith in the correcting effect of sentimentality. A central notion was the conviction that while one may fail to attain a moral ideal, there still existed the potential for reform. Indeed, as Fred Kaplan notes and as any reader of Dickens can attest, every Dickens novel includes at least one character “whose innate goodness cannot be perverted or destroyed by hostile forces” (70). Such virtuous characters were intended to serve as models of human potential. They were also associated with the belief that innocence has its own virtue,

and therefore characters embodying ideal innocence served an instructive purpose.

Nowlan, unlike his more optimistic nineteenth-century counterparts, did not overestimate the individual's capacity for overcoming environment and circumstance. Yet remnants of the sentimentalist tradition persisted into the twentieth century, and are revealed in his early work, mainly through his tendency to exaggerate the innocence of victimized characters. The short story "A Friend for Margaret" (1959) provides a particularly maudlin example of this sentimentality in the betrayal of an eccentric, destitute old woman, Margaret, by her only friend, Anne. Margaret, the "old lady that everyone laughs at," is an "apologetic" woman who visits Anne and her husband Dave regularly, often giving Anne "a loud sponge of a kiss like a child's" and smiling "vacuously" at her hosts, apparently without realizing that Dave resents her presence. Dave is angered by the realization that other people in their small town are "laughing" at them for befriending Margaret (1, 4). Surrendering to Dave's wishes, Anne decides that she can no longer allow Margaret into their home, and Anne, feeling "helpless and ashamed," projects blame onto Margaret. Anne feels hatred for Margaret, "for having driven her to this: having forced her to be cruel." Margaret desperately pleads with Anne, revealing that she is painfully aware how socially isolated she is: "Do you know that no one ever gave me a birthday present before?"

Not ever, Anne. But you did" (4). When Margaret is sent away weeping, "It sounded less like a woman's grief than the grief of a whipt pup" (5). The brutality of rural social conformity in the Maritimes is a theme that appears repeatedly in Nowlan's fiction. In this instance, however, Margaret is objectified by sentimental detail to an extent that the reader's sympathy is tested.

Nowlan's desire to communicate the experiences of "the Margarets in the world" (4) demonstrates his awareness that rural Maritime society was more complex than the "organic" unity often projected onto rural "Folk" by outsiders (McKay 52). Nowlan thus avoids the sentimental primitivism displayed in many inferior novels belonging to the "local colour" form of realism (Becker 105-6). However, in his earlier works, Nowlan's earnest attempts to show the harsher realities of rural life in the Maritimes are often weakened by overwrought pathetic detail. Nowlan's first novel, *The Wanton Troopers*,<sup>5</sup> contains several examples. The characterization of Mary is particularly sentimental, continually emphasizing her innocent nature despite her adultery. While other people in Lockhartville condemn Mary as a "whore" (99), Kevin views her quite differently. The difference between Mary and the other Lockhartville women is stark:

Where she skipped like a little girl, they trudged like spavined mares. The things that made her open her mouth in laughter,

made them close theirs in pale-lipped anger. Where she was pliant, they were unyielding. When she became soft and warm, they turned hard and cold. She was a solitary white birch sapling, surrounded on all sides by towering black spruces. (35)

Mary, who became a mother at sixteen, is portrayed as a victim of the sexual Puritanism of the town, but she feels trapped in Lockhartville by her duty to Kevin (111). When Judd confronts Mary about her adultery, it is with “something evil in his eyes, and he emits “a terrible, unreal snicker” when Mary confronts him about his attempt to turn Kevin against her (78-9). She is later shown rejecting the advances of a drunken, belligerent Judd (137). Mary’s helplessness, as well as Kevin’s, is expressed through a violent climax when Judd reacts with rage to what he perceives as mockery from Mary and Kevin. A lighthearted family outing to pick berries comes to an abrupt end with Judd beheading Mary’s pet cat. It becomes clear that for Judd, the animal that he calls a “cheat” becomes a convenient proxy for Mary and a target for his anger. Mary had “coddled” the cat “as though it were an ailing baby,” and it is given other human-like qualities by the narrator. As the cat eats a sausage and is caught by Judd, it reacts “in almost human surprise,” and as it is beheaded it makes a sound that shocks Kevin: “It bore no resemblance to the yelp of a cat in pain! This scream was almost a strangled

laugh.” When Kevin runs back to the house, Mary is waiting to comfort him, “her arms outstretched. . . .” (87-8, ellipsis Nowlan’s). The narrator’s use of ellipsis to introduce and to end the passage (84, 88) indicates a recurring device in the novel, directing the reader’s imagination to continue a sentimental passage beyond where the narrator has ended it. *The Wanton Troopers* depicts Mary as a martyr, despite the fact that she eventually abandons her son in Lockhartville. The repeated use of extreme emotional shifts, sensational detail and the exaggerated characterization of Mary indicate Nowlan’s reliance on sentimental appeal in its broadest sense of overindulging in emotion.

Much of the sentimentality of *The Wanton Troopers* may originate in Nowlan’s desire to explore the emotional extremes of a child who is too young to assess his experiences with an adult’s detachment. Nowlan’s approach to Kevin’s childhood experiences change markedly between *The Wanton Troopers* and *Various Persons Named Kevin O’Brien* (1973). In *The Wanton Troopers*, Kevin’s school days are often a gauntlet of violence, a cycle perpetuated by a sadistic teacher. When Miss Roache becomes the victim of a prank played by the older students, Kevin fails to act on his impulse to comfort her, knowing that a display of tenderness would be incongruous in that environment and may have negative repercussions for him. Instead, Kevin is a helpless witness the next day when Miss Roache exacts revenge by

beating “little Normie Fenton, the smallest and shyest boy in the school, until his hands were red with blood. . . .” (17, ellipsis Nowlan’s). The image of a child without allies, suffering through a painful ordeal over which he or she has no control, is a powerful one that few readers can resist responding to with strong emotion.

A pleading or praying protagonist, always a young boy, is a recurring device in Nowlan’s fiction used to exploit sentimentality. It is used to conclude the short stories “Hurt,” “At the Edge of the Woods” (*Miracle at Indian River* 12-7, 25-8), and “Nightmare” (*Will Ye Let the Mummies In?* 8-12), and it appears again in *Various Persons*. A brief scene from *The Wanton Troopers* is effectively elaborated upon in *Various Persons*. In both versions, Kevin’s schoolteacher takes a sadistic pleasure in describing to her pupils the punishments most suitable for Hitler should he be captured alive at the end of the war. In *The Wanton Troopers*, Kevin responds to her horrifying descriptions with boredom: “Having heard Miss Roache deliver such monologues every morning for more than a year, Kevin had long ago decided that he sympathized with Hitler . . . ‘If they ever bring him to Lockhartville, I’ll help him get away from them,’ Kevin vowed silently” (18). Kevin’s reaction is much more visceral in *Various Persons*, where he silently pleads for her to stop: “Thirty-five children exhaled. Make her stop there, Kevin said silently and to no one in particular. I want it to end there. This is



important: Make her stop" (9). The emotional impact of this passage stops short of sentimental excess. Moreover, it is put into a deeper context by the succeeding passage, where Kevin willingly participates in the sadistic "hazing" of a young recruit to his gang of friends, the "Junior Commandos." The violent incident leaves Kevin vomiting behind the clubhouse, an ironic conclusion to a chapter that featured Kevin fantasizing about the romance of war (22).

As Nowlan's skill as a writer grew, the sophistication with which he depicted rural Maritimers became apparent in his use of irony. In *Various Persons* this irony arises from Kevin's intellectual assessment of his memories of his childhood and youth. As he explores his memories, he questions his own nostalgic assumptions about his past. Kevin tries to "find the meaning of various incidents in his life and to give form to them," although he realizes that "the protagonist changes" as he matures and incidents take on a different significance (23). Nonetheless, nostalgia's connection to emotional awareness sometimes defies rational comprehension, as Kevin realizes when he revisits his childhood home. Although he cannot remember when his last visit took place, he decides that he prefers to leave such details "vague," since "this is one of those instances when vagueness is more truthful than accuracy." For Kevin, Lockhartville is "not a real place, but a verbal convenience . . . denoting a certain set of experiences that possess a unity

more easily sensed than defined" (4). The very name of the village "Lockhartville" suggests the repressed emotional past Kevin left behind and is now in the process of reclaiming. Nowlan explores the emotional connotations that a sense of place can have, particularly through a nostalgic yearning for the past.

In certain passages, Nowlan uses unabashed sentimentality to depict the ability of characters to restore a higher moral order within their experiences by showing their ability to emotionally transcend the constrictive circumstances of their environment. Rituals that Nowlan describes metaphorically as sacramental observances demonstrate this approach as well. Kevin remarks in *Various Persons*, "About the only good thing about involuntary poverty is that, sometimes, it turns lead into gold" (80). The O'Briens celebrate Christmas by feasting upon foods "sacramental to the season," including such rare luxuries as fruit and nuts. To the O'Briens, this ritual was "a religious rite...although we didn't need to call it religious" (81). Kevin concludes,

... it was all very religious. Religious in the subconscious and mystical rather than in the liturgical and public sense. It was the human spirit finding joy in an almost intolerable environment. Even the gods must sometimes envy man's gift of laughter. (83)

Nowlan prefaces this episode with Kevin's comment, "my memories of that poverty sometimes seem to me to be less private recollections than dark glimpses of the collective unconscious . . ." (79). The appeal to an awareness of a larger universal truth, a sympathy for the wider human condition arrived at through an exploration of emotional experience, is a hallmark of the nineteenth-century sentimentalists that persists in Nowlan's fiction. Nowlan's sensitivity to regional traditions, perceived as ritual observances, harmoniously unites these thematic layers in his fiction.

The Kevin who narrates *Various Persons* is circumspect in his exploration of his own nostalgia, so that moments of sentimentality are generally balanced by a sense of irony. His portrayal of the unjust and oppressive circumstances of poor Maritimers is relatively hollow in his earlier works, where he relies too heavily upon superficial emotional provocation at the expense of developing character. Martha, the grandmother of Kevin O'Brien in *The Wanton Troopers*, first appears as a flat rendition of a crone, one with a bitter view of the family's prospects for contentment. She suffers from a painful form of cancer throughout the novel, but palliates her suffering by nourishing her soul "on the flesh offered in sacrifice to the God of Abraham," as well as, apparently, on the misery of the O'Brien family. Martha assumes the role of pious castigator in the household. She relishes opportunities to rebuke "what she called the false pride of Kevin and his

mother.” She responds to their aspirations for an easier life with a fatalistic lesson: “People like us should be willin’ tuh take what’s handed out tuh us. We’re poor as dirt and allus will be. . . . The O’Brien’s has allus been poor, boy. But they allus knew their place” (20). Martha mainly serves as a recurring reminder of the seeming inevitability of the drudgery the family endures. In his first novel, Nowlan thus creates a character in Martha who is ultimately unyielding and it is impossible for the reader to have sympathy for her. Nowlan provokes a visceral negative reaction against Martha’s extreme pessimism.

The character reappears in a different form, however, in Nowlan’s later novel, *Various Persons*. As the older Kevin remembers her, she gains fresh aspects that make her more sympathetic, even admirable. The Granner of *The Wanton Troopers* torments her family by singing hymns as a veiled criticism of their activities. In contrast, the grandmother of *Various Persons* is a mystical “old peasant woman” who spends the last night of her life singing both hymns and bawdy folk songs, “to entertain herself and Death” (64). But rather than viewing his grandmother as an ignorant and superstitious eccentric, Kevin remembers her as a woman with the power to “interpret dreams and pronounce curses” (56). She was a woman for whom money was “immeasurably valuable,” and who could convince her grandson that “threads of gold” were woven into the paper of dollar bills: “When he was

much younger she had shown him the threads, holding up a dollar bill to the light. And he had seen them" (57-8). Kevin's grandmother would occasionally buy him a treat that he now views as a "sacramental interchange," "the offering and acceptance of a tumbler half-full of soft drink, a small slice of pastry spread with jellied strawberries." A simple meal becomes transformed into an emblematic gift of grace: "Kevin quailed at the memory of it like one who is suddenly aware that he has been paid an honour he neither earned nor desired" (61). The behaviour of Kevin's grandmother becomes more sympathetic as the reader shares a vicarious emotional pleasure in her satisfaction at outwitting her miserable circumstances. The pervasive chronic rural poverty of the Maritimes assumes the power of economic determinism as it destroys the O'Brien family in *The Wanton Troopers*, but in Nowlan's last novel, it becomes an obstacle that can be transcended. Through Kevin's hindsight, a celebration of his grandmother's will to survive is reclaimed out of the sad realities of her impoverished existence.

In his later writing, Nowlan became more sophisticated in exposing the harsher facts of life in the rural Maritimes. Fred Cogswell has argued that Maritime regionalism is expressed in two dominant themes in Nowlan's writing: Nowlan's basically unchanging attitudes towards women, and towards outsiders (Cogswell, "Alden Nowlan" 219). Cogswell's reductionist,

and therefore limited, vision of Maritime regionalism nonetheless indicates an important theme in Nowlan's work, Maritime attitudes towards women, and towards gender roles generally. This theme gave Nowlan a great deal of emotional territory to explore in his writing. Rigid, uncompromising gender and class roles have painful consequences for both men and women in Nowlan's fiction. Kevin's awareness of this regional culture undercuts any nostalgia he may have for his childhood. The consequence of breaching the unspoken, yet understood, code of conduct in the community was the implication of immorality and perversion on the part of the transgressor. The mother of Kevin O'Brien in *Various Persons*, for example, who deserted the family years earlier, is reviled by Kevin's Aunt Lorna as "that stinking bitch, that cow." Lorna states in veiled terms her belief that Kevin is actually illegitimate, and repeatedly reminds Kevin's father of a joke suggesting Kevin's mother prostituted herself to the soldiers from a nearby military base during the Second World War (32). The suggestion that a woman was sexually promiscuous carried a strong stigma in the rural Nova Scotia of Nowlan's childhood and of his fiction. When Av calls Kevin's mother a "whore," he uses the gravest insult of the boys' stock vocabulary of obscene threats and epithets: "There was a moment of silence. Even Av seemed a little shocked by what he had said" (*The Wanton Troopers* 99).<sup>6</sup> And it is the

one accusation that Kevin's mother will not forgive his father for making against her (136-37).

Difference is interpreted as weakness in the Maritimes of Nowlan's fiction, particularly when this difference is manifested as the transgression of gender roles. Kevin believes his father would possibly walk away from a physical confrontation, "not so much from fear as from a kind of wild shyness, for there's nothing he dreads more than being conspicuous" (*Various Persons* 49-50). Judd is self-conscious to the extent that he burns the drawings he makes for his son before anyone else has the opportunity to see the evidence of his act of tenderness (*The Wanton Troopers* 58). The cultural impetus to enforce conformity is so powerful in Nowlan's Maritimes that the landscape he describes seems to breed it. The road to Lockhartville is lined with "tall, skeletal trees growing so close together that their roots suck the life out of one another, and each one is prevented by its neighbours from gaining access to the sun" (*Various Persons* 4). This image recalls a similar passage in *The Wanton Troopers*. Mary is "a solitary white birch sapling, surrounded in all sides by towering black spruces" (35), a light-hearted young woman who cannot conform to the rigid standards of her Puritanical community. Sexual identity consists of roles assigned by the community, and where the community judges it appropriate, gender roles are enforced.

The gender role for men is enforced through the identification of emotionally sensitive behaviour as effeminate, the implication being that the individual is being marked as a homosexual, typically thought of as a moral degenerate in the rural Maritimes. The suggestion of moral taint that is associated with promiscuity on the part of women, and homosexuality on the part of men, produces a profound emotional sense of shame, which is the compelling psychological force reinforcing gender roles. A strong sense of shame haunts Kevin into adulthood. In *Various Persons*, he recalls once trying on his sister's clothes as a curious young teenager. With some irony, the adult Kevin takes the reader into his confidence before confessing the incident: "Listen, I will tell you something that I have never told anyone else. I would kill myself if anyone else knew." Kevin leads the reader through the intimate memory, then finally he rationalizes the episode:

Since then I have wished often that I were a girl, and beautiful.  
Because then, perhaps, I would not be expected to *do* anything.  
I could simply relax and let things happen to me. And that  
would be so much easier. (112)

Kevin's fascination with the clothing and role of the opposite sex is therefore part of his desire to escape the rigid expectations imposed upon him by the community. Kevin's community demands that, as a male, he be aggressive, authoritative, and possess great emotional self-control. As a sensitive,



awkward, and somewhat stubborn teenager, Kevin finds these demands painfully difficult to meet, and he therefore fantasizes as a way of embracing the “feminine” aspects of his nature. Women’s roles required them to be passive participants in the life of the community and in the events of their own lives. Kevin romanticizes a role that real women themselves often find stifling and burdensome, however much relative liberty they may seem to have in certain respects. Nowlan’s fiction acknowledges the defeated attempts by women to defy the oppressiveness of this environment: for example, in the characters of Mary in *The Wanton Troopers* and Ethel in “Skipper” (*Will Ye Let the Mummies In?* 17-22). But by directly soliciting the reader’s confidence through Kevin, Nowlan employs an effective device to exploit reader empathy. The adult Kevin is able to intellectually assimilate an emotionally painful episode from his childhood by recognizing the influence that his shame-based Puritanical culture had upon him. The reader is therefore able to understand the emotional repression that motivates Kevin’s episode of escapism and his enduring shame because of it.

In *Various Persons Named Kevin O’Brien*, Kevin O’Brien remarks, “All fictions are ghost stories, and some fictions are exorcisms” (41). Nowlan’s desire to explore the emotional terrain of his Maritime childhood and youth resulted in many episodes of pathos within his fiction. To remain faithful to the expression of genuine emotional experience, he willingly chose to “risk

sentimentality.” His use of sentimentality evolved, however, from emphasizing “the virtue of the sympathetic tear” (Holman 435), in the tradition of the earlier sentimentalists, to an emphasis on the importance of interpreting emotional experience through critical detachment. The experiences of the outcast and marginalized rural poor are placed in a more sympathetic context once Nowlan abandons their objectification through sentimental excess. Nowlan’s acknowledgement in his later work of the ironies within Maritime life gives his audience a deeper understanding of the complexities of the region.

*Chapter Three: Alistair MacLeod: Demonizing the Outsider*

Alistair MacLeod does not write using the sentimentalist techniques favoured by Alden Nowlan, but powerful sentiment is nonetheless present in the atmosphere of “Celtic melancholy” that permeates his fiction (Sutherland 35). MacLeod insists that he is a “realistic writer” rather than one “steeped in pessimism” (Fortier 39). The reality that he portrays encompasses the dying regional culture of Cape Breton as well as its foil, the alien mainstream culture of Canada’s modern cities. As in Nowlan’s fiction, central themes include exile and return, the complex relationships between generations, and the influence of the past. Also prominent is the polarization that delineates regional difference. The dichotomies between urban and rural, mainstream and fringe, traditional and modern are as certain as the Strait of Canso in marking the physical and psychological boundary between Cape Breton and the outside world. MacLeod’s work memorializes a historical watershed in the regional experience, when many characteristics of Cape Breton culture are being swept away by modern conformity (Nicholson, “Alistair MacLeod” 197). An inescapable element in MacLeod’s fiction is the resulting loss of identity for Cape Breton’s people.

MacLeod’s Cape Bretoners are detached from the mainland of Canada in part by geography, but more significantly by a proud cultural identity attached to their history as Scots immigrants. Their actual isolation

has gradually eroded so that the distinctive characteristics of Cape Breton life, such as the prevalence of the Gaelic language, have today nearly disappeared. The relative autonomy of Cape Breton has made it a fringe area within the Maritimes, itself a marginalized region. Consequently, many of the regional concerns of Maritimers in general are felt more sharply by Cape Bretoners. The dispossession experienced by the Scots who have migrated to, and from, Cape Breton is a central theme of MacLeod's fiction.

MacLeod's recent novel, *No Great Mischief* (1999), suggests that the cycle of dispossession is perhaps unending. In it, the MacDonalds are over the centuries repeatedly robbed of their individual and collective dignity as they become fodder for the engines of modern economic and territorial conquest. Some of the conflicts explored in *No Great Mischief* are similar to those which haunt the characters in the detailed portraits and dense prose of MacLeod's short stories. His desire to communicate the experience of Cape Breton's people is expressed in his affinity for the techniques of realism, particularly for present tense, first-person narrative, which he uses to achieve direct and "intense" narration (Nicholson 190). MacLeod's subtlety lies in his use of lyrical, "incantatory" language (Ditsky 8). He avoids contractions, and employs sentence fragments, compound sentences and the occasional Gaelic phrases, in order to reflect oral language and Gaelic-influenced speech patterns.<sup>7</sup> Such nuances are effective in revealing the tenacious, intimate

connection so many of his characters have with Cape Breton's traditional culture.

Traditional music is another means by which MacLeod's Cape Bretoners experience a connection to the culture of a Celtic diaspora which extends across much of North America. In Cape Breton, cultural identity is strongly bound up with ethnicity and the characteristics, traditions, and sense of collective history associated with the inhabitants' Scottish heritage, and, indeed, an awareness of Cape Breton's Celtic folk identity has become naturalized into Canadian national consciousness.<sup>8</sup> MacLeod connects the Scots fishermen, coal miners, and subsistence farmers of Cape Breton to a larger Celtic immigrant folk identity with its own history, traditions and culture, and MacLeod's Cape Bretoners are part of an extended family with a collective history, shared kinship and customs. The branches of this family tree extend along the Atlantic coast of North America and look back to the Old World for their origins, to Scotland and Ireland and pre-modern Celtic culture. The permutations of Celtic heritage are evident within these branches, and they are collectively a testament to the endurance of the traditions of clan culture, such as folk music. The narrator of "The Boat" (1968) listens while his father sings "East Coast sea songs which celebrated the long liners of the Grand Banks, and of Anticosti, Sable Island, Grand Manan, Boston Harbor, Nantucket and Block Island. Gradually he shifted

to the seemingly unending Gaelic drinking songs . . .” (*Lost Salt Gift* 115). Yet another detail linking these groups culturally are the radio programmes from West Virginia, which appear in both “The Golden Gift of Grey” (1971) and “The Boat” in *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood*. Alden Nowlan also fondly recalls listening to these same programmes as a boy, broadcast directly “from WWVA, Wheeling, West Virginia.” They served as a cultural link to pre-modern days:

Soul music. Rooted in Scottish, Irish and English folk music, in approximately that order, reaching back to the first Elizabeth, and beyond to the Crusades, and earlier. (*Double Exposure* 9-10).

This musical, cultural connection is echoed again in the title story of MacLeod’s first collection, “The Lost Salt Gift of Blood” (1974). The narrator was one of the “bright young graduate students” seeking “fame” by collecting folklore from the continent’s peripheral areas a decade ago:

. . . the near-Elizabethan songs and ballads that had sailed from County Kerry and from Devon and Cornwall. All about the wild, wide sea and the flashing silver dagger and the lost and faithless lover. Echoes to and from the lovely, lonely hills and glens of West Virginia and the standing stones of Tennessee. (68)

The narrator is visiting the illegitimate son he left behind in Newfoundland during his days as a student researcher, which undoubtedly gives a poignant connotation to the folk lyric that he may have found romantic or quaint in his youth about “the lost and faithless lover.”

MacLeod presents further evidence of the cultural ties between these distant areas and the Cape Bretoners of his stories. The Scots kinship ties of the mining towns of Appalachia are central to “The Golden Gift of Grey,” as are Caudell’s oral cadence and expression, as in his use of such a familiar Highlands phrase as “Aye lad” (*Lost Salt Gift* 104). In “The Vastness of the Dark” (1971), James is shown to be familiar with the mining culture that has drawn friends and family throughout North America (*Lost Salt Gift* 38), and the narrator of “The Closing Down of Summer” (1976) has worked alongside fellow Nova Scotians in mines as far away as Newfoundland, the Yukon, and Africa (*As Birds* 18, 22). In MacLeod’s fiction, history and culture bind Cape Breton to a global Celtic diaspora.

Northrop Frye, whose analysis of the pastoral myth relates its significance to the modern “Canadian spirit,” illuminates MacLeod’s approach to regional identity. Frye builds upon Marshall McLuhan’s metaphor of an imminent global village created by modern technology:

... new conditions give the old ones a new importance, as what vanishes in one form reappears in another. The moment

that the peaceable kingdom has been completely obliterated by its rival is the moment when it comes into the foreground again, as the eternal frontier, the first thing that the writer's imagination must deal with. (Frye *Divisions on a Ground* 848)

MacLeod's exploration of Celtic cultural pre-modernism marks the emergence of "the eternal frontier," a force in his fiction similar to the archetype represented by the pastoral myth. The eternal frontier marks the desire to renew social and cultural harmony. Just as modern values and manners displaced the once tangible traditions of Cape Breton, the eternal frontier appears as the pastoral myth, an important representation of traditional culture and mores. Tradition that has vanished in one form can ultimately reappear in another form, evolving and enduring so that it seems to become timeless. For MacLeod's characters, the Celtic diaspora results in the renewed importance of the ancient folk heritage. Celtic heritage brings a legacy of cultural continuity to characters experiencing modern dislocation, thus bridging the gap between the traditions of the past and the uncertainties of the future.

The use of binary oppositions must be taken into account when examining the cultural phenomenon of regionalism as it is represented in MacLeod's fiction. MacLeod's characters often find themselves caught between diverging ways of life, the traditional versus the modern. Cape



Breton's relative geographic isolation allowed manifestations of Celtic culture brought from Scotland to persist and flourish for a period in the New World. Clan loyalty, Celtic music and folklore, and the Gaelic language, as well as customary occupations such as mining and fishing, are all elements of traditional Cape Breton life undermined by the area's gradual adoption of modern cultural patterns. Cape Bretoners have increasingly entered a mainstream way of life by becoming linguistically assimilated, entering modern professional occupations, consuming the products of popular culture, and even going into geographical exile, absorbed by the major metropolises of Canada. Such characters as the narrator and his sisters in "The Boat," or the narrator and his father in "The Return" (1971, *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood*) find themselves trying to reconcile these opposing pressures in their lives. Other characters, such as the narrator's mother in "The Boat," or Angus's mother in "The Return," choose to demonize the different. Some sociologists use the terms *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* to describe the construction of certain relevant social divisions. Ferdinand Tonnies, in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), used these terms to refer to the division between pre-modern and modern cultures:

[Tonnies] argued that the problems of modern society have arisen because of a split with the traditional, community-based organization of the Middle Ages. He argued that such an

organic, community form of social solidarity, which he called *Gemeinschaft*, was based on the fact that individuals shared a common history and common traditions. (Scollon and Wong Scollon 135)

The concept of *Gesellschaft*, on the other hand, describes modern relationships which “are more contractual, rational, or instrumental...one might say [a] corporate society—which developed as part of the industrialization of Europe” (136-7). These terms, which have been used for decades by many cultural theorists across several disciplines, prove useful for analysing regional identity as it is presented in MacLeod’s short stories. Regional differences are often depicted as conflicts between modern and pre-modern cultures, as the former displaces the latter.

An important distinction between the traditional culture of *Gemeinschaft* and the impersonal, rational culture of *Gesellschaft* lies in how each system achieves the enculturation of the individual. Pre-modern structures such as kinship, folklore and ritual give indications of what the individual’s acceptable role is within a traditional *Gemeinschaft* culture. In contrast, *Gesellschaft* culture more often socializes the individual through formal, impersonal kinds of instruction (136-7). The narrator and his sisters in “The Boat,” as well as Angus in “The Return,” demonstrate that modern enculturation forces the loss of the community ties so crucial to traditional

*Gemeinschaft* cultures. MacLeod's fiction examines the tension his characters feel between the alternate identities represented by *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. Traditional *Gemeinschaft* becomes equated with a powerful sense of regional identity. The modern *Gesellschaft* is depicted as a form of cultural degradation which threatens to suffocate *Gemeinschaft* culture. Each becomes part of MacLeod's Celtic mythos, their conflict playing out the cultural destruction that will potentially transform the Maritimes once modern *Gesellschaft* values assimilate, and overwhelm, the regional way of life.

MacLeod depicts modern changes in circumstances and in values as stresses upon traditional Maritime culture. As regional traditions are subsumed, his characters experience a wrenching sense of cultural displacement: "One generation succeeds another, which is both the displacement and the replacement of that which came before" (Davidson 42). The generational rift in "The Return" illustrates this modern development. The story is narrated by ten-year-old Alex, who is in Cape Breton meeting his paternal grandparents for the first time. His father, Angus, tries to come to terms with his situation as a prodigal son, the native who is viewed by his mother as having become an outsider. Angus, a lawyer now living in Montreal, "bitterly" ponders the "exploited" situation of his five less-educated brothers, who work for low wages under dangerous mining conditions, just as many previous generations of their family had

done. Angus's mother, on the contrary, considers her college-educated, professional sons such as Angus, a lawyer, to be the ones truly "lost" to her (*Last Salt Gift* 78). She views it as a particular affront that another alcoholic son "was turned out" of Angus's home in Montreal (79).

Angus's response is to point out the social pressures, rather than the personal or familial ones, which lead him to force his brother to move back to Cape Breton. Angus recognizes that the "clan" culture is irrelevant to the modern world:

. . . I couldn't do anything with him, Ma, and it's different there. You just can't be that way. . . . Well somehow we just can't live in a clan system anymore. We have to see beyond ourselves and our own families. We have to live in the twentieth century.

His mother retorts simply, "What is the twentieth century to me if I cannot have my own?" (79). The question is left unanswered by Angus, but the story concludes with compelling illustrations of the destruction of once-powerful *Gemeinschaft* clan bonds. Alex's grandmother tells him that "you are the only grandchild I will never know" (86). Alex's grandfather declares with equal sombreness, after shaking hands "very formally this time": ". . . it was ten years before you saw me. In another ten I will not be here to see" (87). The reader last sees Angus and Alex as they are physically journeying by

train from Cape Breton to Montreal. Alex remarks, "We have come from a long distance and have a long way now to go" (87). The implication is that modernity itself is carrying them over an immeasurably vast psychological distance, away from ancient traditions. Angus nonetheless tries to maintain the family bonds between himself, his father and his own son through the return to Cape Breton. During his visit, the narrator is taken to the mine by his father and grandfather and undergoes a rite of passage experienced by generations of men in his family, a symbolic baptism in the coal dust of the mine, which is then washed away in the mine's shower room (84-5). The narrator can thus share his father's awareness of how the past shapes his present and future identity.

This sense of cultural displacement is not absolute for every character, however. Sometimes, the cultural traditions that have vanished in one form may unexpectedly evolve and reappear in another. The transition from a traditional culture to a modern one is recognized by the narrator of "The Closing Down of Summer" (*As Birds Bring Forth the Sun*). He reflects upon his wife's journeying "deeply" into a world of contained consumer domesticity, "a world of avocado appliances and household cleanliness and the vicarious experiences provided by the interminable soap operas. . . ." (23). The narrator has become similarly isolated through the separations forced upon him by his mining work, leaving the man and his wife "lost and

separated and unavailable for communication” (23). But rather than being “surprised or critical of each other,” their marriage settles into a pattern familiar to both of them, since “she too is from a mining family and grew up largely on funds sent home by an absentee father.” The narrator, noting the irony, wonders if he and his wife “are but becoming our previous generation” (23). For the narrator and his wife, their marriage continues to copy a pattern that has become a long-standing custom within their families and among other mining families of the area. Nonetheless, the narrator indicates that the cultural traditions associated with his work have disappeared in the generation following his:

... it is unlikely we will be replaced in the shaft’s bottom by members of our own flesh and bone. For such replacement, like our Gaelic, seems to be of the past and now largely over.

Our sons will go to the universities to study dentistry or law and to become fatly affluent before they are thirty. (27)

MacLeod’s “The Boat” depicts mainstream popular culture’s influence on the most remote Maritime communities, even a fishing village beyond the reach of drive-in cinema. Popular culture materializes in the magazine subscriptions and “Book-of-the-Month wonders,” the “weird and varied” reading material that arrives by mail to the narrator’s home. These popular publications arrive first for his father, “but in later years they came

more and more often from [the narrator's] sisters who had moved to the cities" (*Lost Salt Gift* 110). Their mother is unyielding in her hostility to the world beyond her village, and she unsuccessfully tries to destroy the influence of the books she derides as "useless" and "trash." When she catches her daughters with the books, her reaction would be "abrupt, bordering on the angry," and when the youngest daughter in her turn is caught with the books, their mother slaps her (112). The narrator's mother fails to see "how books help anyone to live a life," although for her daughters, the books are valuable evidence of a life that can be lived beyond their mother's routine of "darning socks and baking bread" (112). Each daughter in her turn leaves the household to work in a restaurant serving tourists. Much to the dismay of their mother, neither the books nor working in a restaurant represents any of the "right things" she believes her daughters ought to be interested in (113).

The narrator's mother is deeply suspicious, both of the books and of tourists. The narrator's father, in contrast, does nothing to prevent his daughters from either reading his books or taking jobs at the restaurant. He also discourages his daughters from spending time near the wharves, despite the fact that his wife sees nothing wrong with it. The narrator's father undoubtedly realizes that his daughters are "clever in school" (111) and intellectually gifted like himself and the narrator. The narrator acknowledges

that his father was not suited to making his living as a fisherman, either physically or mentally, and that he regrets having never gone to university (121). His father therefore gives his children tacit encouragement to seek a life beyond the confines of their isolated village, in opposition to the wishes of his wife. A pattern emerges whereby each of the narrator's sisters discovers the books, begins working at the restaurant, and eventually marries a tourist and moves to a distant city. Once married, their mother rejects them for what she perceives as their betrayal of her, and she has thus "lost" them, "finally forever" (117). She sees only difference in the "outsiders" who invade her village and rob her of her daughters (113). When the death—or more likely the suicide—of the narrator's father frees him to attend university and leave the village as his sisters have done, the narrator reflects upon the "bitterness" his mother now feels towards him for being "untrue" to village tradition. Indeed, the boundaries by which a sense of regional identity is delineated and reinforced remain contingent upon identifying cultural differences. Once distinguished as originating from beyond the regional cultural sphere, outside cultural forces are then viewed through the perspective of reaction. The reaction of the narrator's mother against such outside influences is guided by her aversion to what she perceives as the innate corruption of mainstream culture.



The conflict between Maritime culture and non-Maritime culture, as it is represented in "The Boat," has its roots in the physical differences between life in the village and life outside the region. As the narrator's father takes out the enthusiastic tourists for "circles in the harbour," the native at ease in his surroundings is contrasted against his foreign guests. The tourists board the fishing boat "awkwardly," and once they have boarded they behave in the only shipboard manner familiar to them:

They tried to look both prim and wind-blown like the girls in the Pepsi-Cola ads and did the best they could, sitting on the thwarts where the newspapers were spread to cover the splattered blood and entrails, crowding to one side so that they were in danger of capsizing the boat, taking the inevitable pictures or merely trailing their fingers through the water of their dreams. (*Lost Salt Gilt* 114)

The naïve tourists who spend part of their vacation languidly "trailing their fingers" through the harbour have little understanding of the harsh reality of the work of the fishermen, or of the cruel indifference of the ocean. The superficial tranquility enjoyed by the tourists belies the destructive power of the ocean which will eventually drown their host, hurling and slamming him against a rocky cliff bottom and leaving his own hands torn apart like "shredded ribbons" (125).

The tourists receive a far less gracious welcome from the narrator's mother, who turns them away at the door (116). Her reverence for the harsh physical demands of her environment reveals itself in the bitter contempt that she has for the differences she perceives in outsiders, including the young men who marry her daughters. The narrator recalls, "My mother never accepted any of the young men, for in her eyes they always seemed a combination of the lazy, the effeminate, the dishonest, and the unknown" (117). His mother is hostile towards the lack of "physical work" done by the young men, and she cannot comprehend "their luxurious vacations," for such behaviour directly contrasts with the demanding physical labour required for living in her village, labour in which even she must participate:

She fed and clothed a family of seven children, making all of the meals and most of the clothes. She grew miraculous gardens and magnificent flowers and raised broods of hens and ducks. She would walk miles on berry-picking expeditions and hoist her skirts to dig for clams when the tide was low. . . . My mother was of the sea as were all of her people, and her horizons were the very literal ones she scanned with her dark and fearless eyes. (109)

It is both her strength and her weakness that she has become so closely attuned to the values of her native village, for she is compelled to reject

anyone who seems incompatible with the life she knows. She remarks that, “though they go about with their cameras for a hundred years,” outsiders remain ignorant of “the way it is here” (113). She dismisses her sons-in-law with finality: “. . . she did not know whence they came nor who they were. And in the end she did not really care, for they were not of her people, and they were not of her sea” (117-8). In this formidable woman, MacLeod has created a character for whom outside cultural influences are demonized as harbingers of immorality, disruption, and chaos.

Maritime literature frequently reveals the perception that the region’s authentic culture is based upon tradition, the culture of *Gemeinschaft*. To allow it to become corrupt or, still worse, to become completely displaced by outside cultural forces would be to encourage a tragic loss. Many of MacLeod’s early stories in *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* portray the destructive provinciality that sometimes accompanies the rural way of life, such as the characters of the mother in “The Boat” and the crude, violent drover in “In the Fall” (1973). Yet as Cape Breton’s customary rural way of life appears to be increasingly threatened with extinction, traditional elements of Celtic identity have gained prominence in MacLeod’s fiction. MacLeod’s later stories in *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun* also express a stronger skepticism of modern notions of progress. “The Tuning of Perfection” (1984) depicts the marketing of traditional Gaelic music to illustrate the corrupting effect of

cultural imperialism. Television producers are shown turning traditional Gaelic ballads into commercial products, missing the point of the ballads entirely. Whatever appeal the ballads may have for a mass audience, after being stripped of their context and meaning, is left open to the reader's speculation. MacLeod criticizes the practices of cultural appropriation as the agents of modern mass marketing routinely practice them. Outsiders, whether academics or television audiences, view the ballads as representing something entirely different than what they represent to the singers; to outsiders, the ballads may even represent, with the heaviest irony, some form of cultural purity uncorrupted by the commercialism dominating their own lives. Whatever cultural purity may have been contained in the Gaelic ballads is lost. In their commercial broadcast, the ballads become empty, superficial pantomimes of forgotten history.

The mangling of the ballads in "The Tuning of Perfection" typifies the widespread mistranslation, literally and figuratively, of traditional, regional cultural products as they are made fit, in the eyes of mass marketing agents, for the commercial broadcast. In the context of Post-Colonial literary criticism, Arun Mukherjee refers to such mistranslation and misinterpretation of cultural products as a "neocolonial situation." Mukherjee condemns the "dictates of the metropolis" which she believes ignore social context and enforce the "trivialization" of the culture of people

inhabiting peripheral regions (Mukherjee 28-9). Her argument applies to the Maritime regional position, particularly to MacLeod's Cape Breton.

Archibald's Gaelic ballads are a legacy of the traditions of the Highland Scots forced from their homes by British landowners, as well as a legacy of the cultural autonomy of the Cape Breton Scots. The broadcasters and their audience are participants in the neo-colonial creation of an essentialist, generic image of Maritime folk culture. The imperialist undertones of the broadcast are not lost on Archibald, who is reminded of the Highlanders who had gone "with their claymores and the misunderstood language of their war cries to 'perform' for the Royal Families of the past" ("The Tuning of Perfection," *As Birds* 134). Archibald's ballads become another Maritime cultural product shaped to suit the tastes of consumers from beyond the region who are seeking "therapeutic" escapism (McKay, *The Quest* 53-5). To Archibald, the subjective meaning of the ballads is crucial, yet the television audience desires the objectification of the ballads as pieces of cultural exoticism. The nuances of the music evade outsiders, yet it is within these very nuances that the artistry occurs. The Nova Scotia folklorist W. Roy Mackenzie speculated that it is in culture that social differences are delineated (McKay, *The Quest* 53), and Archibald's ballad about his wife demonstrates that the ballad's meaning, and value, lies in its specificity.

The notion that outsiders to the region will appropriate cultural products and alter them to their own purposes is even given comical dimensions by MacLeod. In “The Boat,” the narrator’s father becomes the cultural artifact that tourists choose to appropriate and objectify:

In the winter they sent him a picture which had been taken on the day of the singing. On the back it said, “To Our Ernest Hemingway” and the “Our” was underlined. There was also an accompanying letter telling him how much they had enjoyed themselves . . . and explaining who Ernest Hemingway was . . . He looked both massive and incongruous in the setting. (116)

The tourists are also said to possess a tape of sea chanties sung by the narrator’s father, and the tape proves popular with the tourists’ friends (116), although readers may wonder what limited comprehension of the songs this audience may have.

MacLeod repeatedly employs music as a motif for the loss of cultural traditions and methods of communicating between generations. Hearing his father sing provokes a strong emotional response from the narrator of “The Boat,” who feels “young yet old and saved yet forever lost” by the experience, and his eyes weep “for what they could not tell” (115). “The Road to Rankin’s Point” (1976, *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood*) vividly shows how

MacLeod uses the music motif to reclaim the traditions of the past by investing them with new meaning for the modern generation. Calum, the narrator, is told by his grandmother that two gifts were given to members of the MacCrimmon family: “. . . the gift of music and the gift of foreseeing their own deaths. Those gifts are supposed to follow in all their bloodlines. They are not gifts of the ordinary world” (139). Calum and his grandmother follow in the MacCrimmon bloodline. Calum’s grandmother plays a dirge for him on her violin, “the lament of the MacCrimmons.” She plays the piece on “a very old violin” that “came from the Scotland of her ancestors . . .” (138), and she dies the following night. Calum, who knows he has cancer in an advanced stage, seeks an infinite truth that is not “of the ordinary world.” He would return to a pre-modern faith, “. . . back to the priest with the magic hands. Back to the faith healer if only I had more faith. Back to anything rather than to die at the hands of mute, cold science” (154). Calum apparently discovers that he possesses the gifts of the MacCrimmons. He hears the sound of a violin through the silence of a rural evening, shortly before learning that his grandmother has died, and the violin sounds “like a bell,” a death knell. And the story concludes with Calum foreseeing his own death by hearing in his mind the lament played earlier by his grandmother. As he apparently steps off the cliff to his death, the “darkness rises within” Calum just as the music rises, until the interior darkness meets and unites

with the exterior darkness, “enjoined and indistinct and as single as perfection” (156). Calum draws upon the ancient beliefs of his grandmother as a source of support in his final moments. MacLeod gives harmony and closure to this story through the clan lore of the MacCrimmons.

Traditional mythology becomes relevant as characters in MacLeod’s stories realize that there is meaning beyond the literal to be found in the folk tales. They are a way of connecting families through the generations and linking present experiences to those of one’s ancestors, as demonstrated in the “forerunning” motif of “The Road to Rankin’s Point” (1976, *Lost Salt Gilt*); the legacy of the vision of the *cù mòr glas a’bhàis*—“the big grey dog of death” (143)—for the narrator of “As Birds Bring Forth the Sun” (1985, *As Birds*); and the gift of *Da Sheailadh*—second sight, or prophecy (154)—that is said to be passed through the family of the narrator of “Vision” (1986, *As Birds*). In this element of his stories, MacLeod preserves the tradition by which Cape Breton storytellers were “knowledgeable in local history and geneology and in that respect resembled the bards of the homeland” (MacLean 24). In “Vision,” the events of the narrator’s life cause him to reflect upon the gift of second sight and the profound meaning of “vision” as a metaphor for acute perception. He also reflects upon how the story of the gift of *Da Sheailadh* came to carry meaning for him:



... I remember the first time I heard it and remembered it ... the first time it made an impression on me and more or less became *mine* ... Like trying to squeeze together the separated banks of a small and newly discovered river so that the stream will be subterranean once again. It is something like that, although you know in one case the future scar will be forever on the outside while the memory will remain forever deep within. (149)

The narrator of “As Birds Bring Forth the Sun” (1985) is equally unable to dismiss the relevance to himself of his own family’s mythology: “We would shut our eyes and plug our ears, even as we know such actions to be of no avail. Open still and fearful to the grey hair rising on our necks if and when we hear the scabble of the paws and the scratching at the door” (146). For these characters, Celtic folklore produces metaphors for understanding their contemporary experiences. Celtic folklore also offers them a connection to the clan culture of their ancestors, generating a strengthened sense of identity as they grasp the values represented by this heritage. The symbolism of Celtic folk beliefs, which may have been overlooked and forgotten as a result of modernization and the erosion of Cape Breton’s traditional culture, is given a new potency in MacLeod’s fiction.

The re-emergence of pre-modern traditions at a time when Cape Breton is becoming increasingly assimilated into mainstream culture, or as Frye puts it, “the moment when the peaceable kingdom becomes completely obliterated by its rival,” is evidence of MacLeod’s expression of the antimodernist strain of Maritime regionalism. Historian Ian McKay’s study of Helen Creighton’s antimodernist tendencies demonstrates the problems behind the presumed authority of the folklorists who did much to define Maritime culture as it is popularly viewed. From the 1920s to the 1960s, the era McKay identifies as the “antimodernist moment” (McKay, “Tartanism Triumphant” 3), the music, stories, and way of life of a minority of Nova Scotians was embraced as representative of the majority of Nova Scotians. By extension, Maritimers also became identified with this popularized image.

MacLeod’s short stories examine the changes wrought by modernization through his interpretation of pre-modern, oral culture from the perspective of one who is sometimes critical of modern culture. MacLeod’s stories show that progress comes at a cost. He adapts elements of antimodernism to this purpose by blending them with the literary symbolism of a regional mythos. The concept of a folk and its descendants represents Frye’s “eternal frontier.” MacLeod brings the eternal frontier into the reader’s consciousness by delineating regional identity, the culture of the region’s people. The relationship between regional insider and outsider

becomes mutually reinforced through the products of both cultures as they react against each other.

*Chapter Four: Region, Myth and David Adams Richards's River Community*

*Nights Below Station Street* (1988), *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace* (1990) and *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down* (1993) – the novels comprising Richards's second trilogy – explore life in an unnamed New Brunswick community through a regional context. Through his exploration of the region's assimilation of mainstream cultural values, Richards shows how social divisions within the community expose the conflict between the region's modern and traditional mores. Richards repeatedly focuses on the consequences faced by characters who must choose between conservative values or the temptations of fashion. The central characters of the trilogy are frequently outcasts searching for personal redemption, repeatedly rejected by their community for their adherence to such traditional values as self-sacrifice. Alienated individuals are ultimately cast in the archetypal role of scapegoat, with Richards's narrator acting as a bardic imagination arranging events into a regional mythos. This mythos incorporates archetypal imagery and rudimentary oral techniques within a sophisticated narrative structure. Throughout the trilogy, Richards reveals the experiences of the region's people through his use of mythic techniques to appeal to deep human sympathies.

Richards himself challenges any attempts to circumscribe his work within a "regionalist" interpretation. In interviews, he has expressed his

antipathy to the term “Maritime regionalist.” Richards views such a critical stance as a smug evasion of the universal problems examined within his fiction:

... there is a physical setting, and it's my own physical setting; however, that's not what they're really arguing about. . . .

Another thing they say is “he must be a social realist because he's saying stuff that doesn't happen to us but only happens in the Maritimes, so he must be a social realist regionalist because this is what happens down there,” but that's not really true because, and I say this without batting an eye, what happens to Arnold, in *Road to the Stilt House*, happens to everyone, and that's why I wrote about Arnold. I didn't write about Arnold because it only happened in a little house in the middle of nowhere, but because it also happens to people on Bloor Street in Toronto. (Scherf 160-1)

Yet, the particular “physical setting” of Richards's fiction is more than simply local colour, despite his efforts to downplay its importance. The town at the centre of Richards's fiction is a carefully constructed world of social, cultural and economic networks and hierarchies, within its own long history. The physical setting of his fiction thus far has rarely moved beyond the Maritime region, and infrequently beyond the River valley area, the fictional

counterpart of Richards's native Miramichi valley. Even Vera, the most ostensibly cosmopolitan of Richards's characters, only gravitates as far as Fredericton and Halifax, two of the chief cities of the Maritime region. Richards's characters are consistently in touch with the local and regional spheres of influence surrounding them.

Richards draws details from life in Newcastle and the surrounding Miramichi River valley to shape his fictional River community. Newcastle's role is sometimes conspicuous, for example in the title of *Nights Below Station Street*, which alludes to a working-class neighbourhood located "below" Station Street. Station Street is a notable local boundary separating the "haves" from the "have-nots." Richards's sense of place is reflected in his attempt to be representational, for he is

. . . seeking, out of the welter of phenomena, impressions, and events, those things that have a peculiar resonance for the writer and have been habitually overlooked by the reader.

Representation in this sense is no illusionist's substitution of cardboard words for elusive realities but a matter of integrity and honesty . . . (Keefer *Under Eastern Eyes* 7)

Richards integrates the elements of realist representation to explore what he believes to be eternal moral truths.

Richards's first trilogy—*The Coming of Winter* (1974), *Blood Ties* (1976) and *Lives of Short Duration* (1981)—introduced the unnamed River community through the interconnected lives of its inhabitants, and created a framework on which Richards has continued to build in his later fiction. The *Nights* trilogy departs from the naturalism and shifting narrative points of view of *Lives of Short Duration*. Moreover, relationships between several characters are explored throughout the *Nights* trilogy, which produces the opportunity to explore some characters in greater detail over the course of several decades. Richards explores what he believes to be eternal moral truths. Foremost among these truths is the desire for redemption that governs the lives of several characters, most prominently Joe in *Nights Below Station Street*, Ivan in *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace*, and Bines in *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*. *Nights Below Station Street* introduces most of the characters who appear throughout the trilogy, though it focuses on Joe Walsh's struggle to overcome alcoholism and to attain redemption in the eyes of his teenaged daughter Adele. Ivan Bastarache, a friend of Adele's husband Ralphie, becomes a community outcast in *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace*. Ralphie's sister Vera, among others, falsely accuses Ivan of beating his wife. The final novel, *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*, depicts the moral struggle of the murderer Jerry Bines as he faces the choice between his former life as a criminal or the opportunity to change at the cost of his life. Bines's

biographer, Vera, has evolved from the social misfit of *Nights* to an adept practitioner of community politics who falsely accuses her ex-husband Nevin of abusing their daughter. Throughout the trilogy many characters, like Vera, find scapegoats to sacrifice to their own self-interest. Richards creates a stark contrast between the reality of his River community and the idyllic pastoral myth often associated with small-town life in the Maritimes.

Richards believes that the desire to find redemption is a vital part of the human condition: "I firmly and ultimately believe that the price of salvation and internal integrity depends on the amount of suffering you have caused others. . . . I do believe that redemption is something that we are all seeking consciously or unconsciously" (Markle-Crane 24). This central redemptive quest requires an abundance of mythic imagery resembling what Northrop Frye describes as archetypal demonic symbolism. Frye points to the "inscrutable fate or external necessity" which dominates the tragic vision of such writers as Thomas Hardy, as well as the "sacrificed victim" who defies the collective will of society (*Anatomy* 147-8). Similarly, the novels forming Richards's *Nights* trilogy repeatedly allude to universal laws that influence events in the community. However, in the context of the redemptive theme underlying the *Nights* trilogy, the sacrifices of such characters as Joe, Ivan and Bines must be explained in terms of moral necessity. External principles of moral and physical necessity are invoked in



several instances throughout the trilogy, suggesting a common connection to a cosmic, perhaps divine, order. Ralphie, making an analogy from physics, reflects upon how he arrived at his situation, working in a mineshaft: “there was nothing unnatural or not supposed to happen” (*Nights* 220). Later in the trilogy, Adele brings up Ralphie’s observation about inevitable cause and effect as justification for her rejection of Bines. Ralphie then turns the same observation against her when he remarks: “Whose family is the only family on the river ever to love [Bines]? . . . And he’s come home now – asking forgiveness” (*For Those* 144). Bines’s search for redemption takes place in a moral system of uncompromising imperatives, so that he must abandon his routine self-interest and sacrifice his life.

The price of moral integrity within the River community is inevitably social ostracization. Although the characterization of Bines displays his ambiguous nature, Richards’ male central characters such as Joe and Ivan are generally portrayed as sympathetic Everyman figures of a similar type to the Nowlan Maritimer.<sup>9</sup> These protagonists are complex descendents of morality play heroes. Their extraordinarily selfless acts of atonement elevate their sacrifices into mythic heroism. Joe is an unemployed alcoholic, and he and his wife Rita are patronized and belittled by others in his community “for obvious reasons” (*Nights* 63), as when Joe is the subject of an untrue rumour that he hit Rita in a rage (158). His only apparent asset is his unusual

physical strength, displayed in colourful feats such as simultaneously lifting both a boulder and Rita, and, in another instance, snapping off a set of handcuffs (32, 39). Once Joe suffers a painful back injury, he can no longer work at the manual-labour jobs that he had always taken to support his family. Joe's great physical suffering emphasizes the exceptional moral strength that allows him to carry Vye to safety on his injured back, thus demonstrating his forgiveness of the contemptible treatment Rita and Joe had received from Vye (225). Similarly, Ivan's sacrifice of his life in an elemental cataclysm of fire and water earns him a remarkable epitaph:

"The granite marker in the ground simply read:

Ivan Bastarache

A Man

1957-1979

It was quite a famous marker for a while. And then it was overgrown and forgotten altogether." (*Evening Snow* 226)

Ivan, like Joe, recognizes that community politics have unfairly cast him in the role of an unenlightened abuser:

Ivan saw in these few days that Ruby wished for Cindi to once again have this fun, to bring her into it, in a manner which

would seem once and for all to exclude him. For if he advanced on them to stop it, it would only be proof of the puritanical, brutal strain Ruby was now convincing herself and Cindi that he had. (13)

Ivan's final actions before dying reveal his moral courage, as he is aware he has nothing to gain personally by risking his life. For a brief time, his actions raise him to a more heroic order than the ordinary, self-interested members of the community. Doomed characters such as Joe and Ivan struggle against the social current in their community rather than betray an inner sense of truth and morality.

In the *Nights* trilogy, truth and morality are frequently the domain of the rustic, the unfashionable, and the socially outcast. Individuals such as Joe Walsh and Ivan Bastarache are vilified by the community's gossip mongers and are effectively used as scapegoats. Although Joe is in fact innocent of any participation in illegal activity with Jerry Bines, many members of the community consider him guilty once he is implicated by Bines. The gossip continues long after Joe's death, despite the lack of evidence (*For Those* 226). Ivan becomes the target of vicious rumours as well. Ivan is boisterous and athletic, a man whose "horseplay would make most men turn pale" (*Evening Snow* 6), and it is this spirited quality that makes him an easy target for rumours that he beat his wife Cindi. Ivan realizes

... he was in a terrible position. He couldn't rely on anyone at the moment—and his perception had always served him well. He knew very well that, no matter his own part, he had become a scapegoat in some larger affair that he had no control over, until it ran its course. (*Evening Snow* 161).

Ironically, both Ivan Bastarache and Jerry Bines have their own mythic concepts of life along the river, Ivan's being expressed through his songs (*Evening Snow* 92), and Jerry's through the tale of the buck and the foolish hunter that he tells his son (*For Those* 90-4). Their constructive myth-making celebrates traditional values and satirizes local folly, and contrasts against the local maliciousness that destroys reputations and even relationships. Joe, Ivan and Bines stand as dark, suspect figures in the local lore of their communities, but are tragic heroes within Richards's *Nights* trilogy.

The myth-making of Ivan and Bines indicates the subversive nature of Richards's River mythos. Throughout his *Nights* trilogy, Richards articulates the values of people on the fringes of Maritime society who have experienced a historical cultural shift: the shift from a traditional rural culture (which is often predominantly oral) to a modern, mainstream culture. They find themselves on the losing side of a conflict with urban, literate, middle-class cultural values. This conflict is apparent when Bines approaches Vera with the aim of revising the autobiographical information he had provided.

Vera's reaction is dismissive: "Coldly self-sufficient, she had no idea he would come back and want to revise the story he wrote. He went to her office. To her this was a terrible imposition. She told him politely that she was very busy" (*For Those* 181). For Bines, Vera is "almost untouchable, a part of a world he would occasionally glimpse and swipe at, like a cat at an ascending bird" (182). Like Joe and Ivan, Bines is illiterate, part of a rural underclass alienated from urban mainstream culture.

Critics have commented on the inarticulateness of many of Richards's characters, and apparently equate this "inarticulateness" with the region's pre-literate (or post-literate) culture. H.W. Connor, in a review of *Road to the Still House*, states that "readers familiar with Richards's earlier novels will recognize Arnold as a natural extension of this ongoing study of the complexity, sensitivity and stubborn courage often hidden in rough, inarticulate people" (107). Merna Summers elaborates upon this perception in her "Afterword" to *Blood Ties*:

Richards's characters reveal themselves little by little. We understand at once that they are not articulate, not gentle of speech, but only gradually do we realize how deeply certain feelings run among them.... These people mean one thing and say another. Most of the time they say it twice. Their

language is inadequate for their emotions. They seem to have no language at all for some kinds of feeling. (359)

Douglas Glover suggests that the language of Richards's characters is a reaction against the "violence of prior assumption" that they have had inflicted upon them by the people who control discourse in contemporary society:

... the violence Richards' characters do to correct English, for example, is both an emblem of their debasement, of the place society has put them in, a way of behaving that society expects and allows, and it is also a badge of honour, a symbol of their revolt against "proper" forms of behaviour and speech.

(Glover 12)

This response indicates a critical fascination with the internal workings of Richards's characters, perhaps since they participate in a regional culture that had previously been invisible to outsiders.

Inarticulateness is evidently experienced by the "rough" characters of Richards's novels, yet it is also experienced by the more literate characters of his novels as well, people who, as the reader may assume, have an ample vocabulary but who also "have no language at all for certain kinds of feeling." Dr. Hennessey, one of the few members of the River community to have an extensive formal education, lives with a sister-in-law "whom he

could never tell he loved so she'd ended up marrying his brother" (*Nights* 30). In contrast, Ivan, who is considered "rough" by the members of his own community, possesses enough verbal dexterity to become an infamous local balladeer, following the lengthy tradition of Miramichi balladeers.<sup>10</sup>

"He had a bag of songs written by the time he was sixteen . . . and one which he could never sing on the river without getting into trouble was called 'Why Bigtooled Darlins Fight'" (*Evening Snow* 92). Even certain characters' speech pattern of emphatically repeating phrases, as noted by Summers, is a form of articulation standard to an oral culture. Bines repeats phrases in this manner, but this is not remarked upon as any sort of impediment by the narrator. On the contrary, the narrator's only remark on Bines's manner of speaking makes no specific mention of the habit of phrase repetition: "His voice was extremely soft, almost indescribably so, yet it had an unusual expansive quality to it. And it had with it, in its intonation, a completely uncomplicated River accent" (*For Those* 27).

The direct, explicit tone of oral language is used by Richards to produce a mythic narrative mode. The omniscient narrator himself speaks in an oral voice, using oral grammar. This includes the use of additive language, run-on sentences, comma splices and sentence fragments, similar to MacLeod's rhetorical technique:

Because [Joe] had not done anything for so long a length of time, he knew he would have to face up to the fact that no matter what had happened in his life he had to forget it and start a brand new life, whether or not he was ill, or whether or not he had the sympathy of the one person he loved more than all the others—Adele. (*Nights* 196)

Unlike MacLeod's narratives, Richards's are less sonorous and contain more grammatical irregularities, reflecting a rural, working-class Miramichi accent and betraying the narrator's sympathies: for example, "that is, *all as* Thelma would have to say is" and "*all as* Adele had to say was" (*Nights* 10, emphasis mine). In other instances, the narrator breaks away from straightforward description to directly address the reader: "Of course you don't always know where you are going – but for some reason all movements happen because they were meant to" (*Evening Snow* 4). Rather than degrading the narrative, the narrator's use of direct language is a creative augmentation of the mythic tone of the trilogy.

Richards's fiction, in attempting to articulate for a literate audience the experiences of people immersed in oral tradition, imparts validity to that traditional culture. Donald Cameron has interpreted the pervasiveness of Maritime prejudices towards outside cultural forces as "the gut reaction of a slighted people who feel shut off from the more glittering rewards of



Canadian citizenship. It's the tavern crouch of people who for generations have been put down for their accents, their values, their traditions" (Cameron 113). The influence of literate, academic discourses on the River community, and the values and lack of tradition that they represent, are targets for criticism in Richards's *Nights* trilogy. Ivan "felt unequal to words and writing, to books and knowledge of that kind, but he had a tremendous respect for it." His reverence for literate culture is extreme to the point that he "felt a book was sacred—even though he never read one—and you didn't put swear words in it" (*Evening Snow* 81). His notion of literacy as a culture of pristine, superior values is juxtaposed, however, against the overconfident actions of Vera and Nevin. Ivan considers himself "unequal to words and writing" (81), but nonetheless lives and dies according to an unyielding sense of ethics. Vera and Nevin, in contrast, are well educated yet choose to squander their education, refusing "to work at jobs their degrees might entitle them to" and spending several unproductive years on their failed farm. Their self-centered efforts to transform themselves lead them to wallow in ignorance masquerading as enlightenment, and their self-deception makes them prey to the wily Antony's various exploitative schemes (80).

The notion that modern literate culture may have a monopoly on "truth" is repeatedly questioned in the *Nights* trilogy. It is said of Jerry Bines that he "had never known truth, but he had conceived of it himself like some

great men conceive of truth and chisel it into the world. And it was his truth and no one else's." Bines's concept of truth is connected to an episode from his childhood when he and his father were victimized. As Bines recalls the experience,

Then you know the truth.

You don't know it before then. (This is what he could not tell Vera, of course.)

You don't know it before then. (*For Those* 79)

Bines's concept of the truth thus escapes Vera and her published academic study of his life. For despite many interviews, Bines is unable to communicate his most important insights to her, since her own radical feminist bias prevents her line of questioning from revealing his "truth." Tony Tremblay notes, "the fragmentary, polyphonic voices (protracted and unreliable to the end) ultimately deny us the fulfillment of ever knowing *who Bines really is*" (Tremblay, "Road from the Stilt House" 119). The superior status usually given to literary undertakings is dismissed altogether by Adele, to whom a book "was nothing:" "There were too many of them anyway—just heaps of them—and now Vera wanted to write one" (*For Those* 24). Vera's perspective, that of the politicized academic

observer, is reduced in significance to being merely one more fallible perspective among many. Through Vera, vanity and arrogance are associated with academic and political discursive power, thus undercutting Vera's presumed ability to know the "truth" about the River's larger-than-life figure, Jerry Bines.

Authenticity is closely linked to a sense of place in the *Nights* trilogy. Richards crafts a symbolic background against which his fictional characters, and his River mythology, can be placed. This background consists of the remembrance of a collective past which belongs to the inhabitants of the River area, and a profound sense of belonging to the River community and to the River setting where the majority of the inhabitants have lived their entire lives. Near the beginning of the trilogy, Vera returns home to the community after several years of university. She discovers that Dr. Hennessey, like the rest of the community, "*hasn't changed... He hasn't changed at all.*" Walking through the community after visiting Dr. Hennessey, she suddenly feels "happy and elated": "She did not realize that she was feeling the greatness of the river that she was once again upon. The very trees and houses made her feel this way" (*Nights* 134). The River, the site of convergence for all who belong to the community, is a reminder of constancy in the world. Ironically, Vera would be unable to maintain her identity—as a progressive individual—without the unchanging background

of the River community to serve as her foil. Vera's desire for progress on the River is contrasted against her odd sense of artificial tradition. The kitchen in her renovated farmhouse incongruously contains a mahogany table and a woodstove. Also unusual for a rural home are the "jars of spices, whole wheat flour, and packages of granola." Despite Vera's homespun touches, the kitchen is "dark and spooky" because of the styrofoam sheets used as insulation. The genuinely "old-fashioned" and "anachronistic" Dr. Hennessey seems "out of place" standing in Vera's kitchen, "where he would not look out of place in any other rural kitchen in the Maritimes" (*Nights* 161-6). As subsequent novels of the trilogy show, the constancy of life on the River provides Vera with a sense of purpose. She depends upon it to feed her crusading zeal to reform what she interprets as the community's ignorance and provincialism.

The River is a recurring motif for constancy in the trilogy. Richards's narrator invokes imagery that recurs with the enduring rhythms of the River. Adele's childhood bond with Jerry Bines is described by the narrator as having been "forgotten and swept away, down a thousand other avenues and years, until now" (*For Those* 21). The pulse of the community is associated with the River through Adele who, near the beginning of *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*, remarks auspiciously, "Something is going on—it's time on this river for something to happen once again" (32).

In many passages, Richards's River mythology contains an ironic correspondence to the pastoral myth as described by Northrop Frye:

At the heart of all social mythology lies what may be called, because it usually is called, a pastoral myth, the vision of a social ideal. This pastoral myth with its most common form is associated with childhood, or with some earlier social condition – pioneer life, the small town. . . . The nostalgia for a world of peace and protection, with a spontaneous response to the nature around it. . . . (*Divisions* 840)

The pastoral myth is repeatedly suggested throughout the trilogy. It appears in a comically ironic passage from *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace*, in which the jaded, middle-aged Nevin has a fleeting romantic encounter with a naïve teenager, Margaret Bastarache. Margaret takes a walk through the woods with Nevin, and shows him a "fort" she built. She tries to entertain Nevin by telling him a story about a hunting trip she had once been on with her brother. Margaret's story expresses a spontaneity and an innocence absent in Nevin's earlier reminiscing about his university days: "in her story there seemed more freedom than his could ever possess" (176). Nevin, "for the life of him, not knowing why, bent over and kissed her." Without "knowing why," he again tries to kiss Margaret, but his second attempt is witnessed by an enraged Anthony, who then drags Nevin to Vera's house. The scene

resonates with imagery alluding to Greek myths about mortals who call the wrath of the gods down upon themselves for expressing a decadent interest in virginal forest nymphs. Indeed, Margaret's innocent response to her situation is to say to Nevin "I've never been kissed before," and to run back to her father's house after he discovers them (178). Richards ironically adapts a traditional myth pattern to suit the context of the Miramichi and his fictional River community.

Richards uses the classic pastoral myth as an idealistic foil against which to contrast the flawed contemporary life of the River community, thereby exposing its weaknesses and corruption. The pastoral myth is presented as a desired ideal, and it even attains a degree of realization as *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*, and the trilogy itself, reaches its conclusion. Nevin finds redemption "in a community which had been cut out of the earth just two years before" (214). He is a spiritual pilgrim starting a "new life" marked by "simplicity and action" (216). Nevin assists in the community's effort to raise the cross atop their new church (218-21), and the pastoral myth appears to have become, for the moment, the reality for Nevin in this new community. Generally, however, the pastoral myth is an illusory ideal. The two ministers of Nevin's new church are stylish, self-serving entrepreneurs who own a trailer park, wear gold jewelry, and drive Buicks. They are also not above exploiting the loyalty of the faithful, notably Loretta

Bines, in order to extract free labour (213-4). The pastoral myth remains a source of contrast against present reality in the River community.

The retelling of a rural myth in Richards's *Nights* trilogy cycle is crucial in many ways to authenticating a specific regional identity. Richards focuses upon the immutability of traditional values in the face of the River community's drifting towards mainstream cultural values. As "Dorval" Eugene observes with detachment in *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace*, "he was captivated and surprised by the vitality and perception of [the Maritimers], and their often careless attitude" (91). The Maritime identity examined in these novels necessarily adapts to changing circumstances, the currents of history and outside cultural influences. Richards's *Nights* trilogy, moreover, affirms the validity of such an identity. Regionalism is more than mere local colour within these texts. It becomes a tool with which Richards is able to harmonize and illuminate varied elements of social interaction. Regionalism places the River community and its experiences into context, without excluding the opportunity to see analogies to broader human experience.

### *Conclusion*

Alistair MacLeod, Alden Nowlan, and David Adams Richards share the belief that a regional sense of place is a crucial foundation for their fiction, which moves them to explore the underlying cultural realities of Maritime life. As mainstream North American culture becomes increasingly homogenized and urban, its influence on the Maritimes has grown, although the continued economic, political, and demographic decline of the region has forced it into an increasingly marginalized position from the centres of power in the continent's metropolises. Through a close reading of the fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards, regionalism is brought into a literary context with an examination of the possible influences of regional identity upon theme.

The entrenched economic dependency of the Maritimes has created a neo-colonial relationship between the region and both Central Canada and the United States. These authors do not merely "write back" to the centre, however: they are also critical of certain aspects of Maritime culture. Maritime circumstances have nurtured social conservatism, and the parochial aspects of the region are resisted in such episodes as Kevin O'Brien's denunciation of the sexual Puritanism that scarred his childhood. MacLeod's, Nowlan's and Richards's visions of Maritime identity nonetheless expresses the hope that certain aspects of it can be retained by



Maritimers as they confront their future, as in the enduring value the characters of MacLeod's later stories find in the ancient Celtic folklore of their Cape Breton clans.

The Maritimes is a region in many ways haunted by its past. The tension between late twentieth-century progressivism and the region's traditional heritage provides the basis for many of the conflicts within these authors' fictions, such as the rural versus the urban outlook, local culture versus mainstream culture, and the clash between clan loyalties and modern individualism. Kevin O'Brien's attempts to comprehend his past repeatedly return to his regional legacy as a member of the local rural proletariat and the role that this cultural environment had in shaping his various identities over the course of his youth. Kevin's desire to reconcile this past with his modern, urban present leads him to vacillate between sentimental nostalgia and pointed irony. MacLeod's short stories address similar themes of exile and return, and the dichotomy between traditional rural folk culture and modern cultural pressures. In Richards's fiction, the tension between traditional and modern mores is frequently expressed as a clash between liberal relativism and social conservatism. MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards recognize that cultural transformation is inevitable as mainstream influences reach the Maritimes, yet they identify enduring values that can survive the vagaries of a fluid cultural milieu. Richards, for example, shows that in

cleaving to traditional values, his characters' actions can be elevated to acts of tragic heroism.

Literary definitions of regionalism have been a contentious topic for some time in Canada, and undoubtedly they will continue to raise problematic questions for critics. As Richards phrases it, "As far as regional writers [are concerned], we are supposedly limited not by the bounds of our human understanding, or human experience, but by the bounds of our garden or gate" (qtd. in Aster 3). Regional themes do not prevent MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards from addressing broader humanistic concerns. The regional elements in their fiction—the details of local setting, community relationships, and history—create a context within which common realities can be recognized and compared, for readers both within and beyond the Maritime region itself.

Richards continues: "The inner man cannot be fully known by exterior circumstances." Individual experience is elusive to the outsider. However, surface detail can be transmuted by literary metaphor, allowing the outsider a limited way of relating to a different experience. This is the creative bridge that allows the narrator of MacLeod's "The Closing Down of Summer" to empathize with the lives of his educated, professional adult children, who work in urban environments quite alien to his own experiences as a miner:

Yet perhaps those who go find the regions to which they travel but another kind of inarticulate loneliness. Perhaps the dentist feels mute anguish as he circles his chair, and the lawyer who lives in a world of words finds little relationship between professional talk and what he would hope to be his true expression. Perhaps he too in his quiet heart sings something akin to Gaelic songs, sings in an old archaic language private words that reach no one. And perhaps both lawyer and dentist journey down into an Africa as deep and dark and distant as ours. I can but vaguely imagine what I will never know.

(*Is Birds* 28)

The experiential gap created by external circumstances is vivid here, and as the narrator himself acknowledges, in some important ways it is insurmountable. Yet imagination can narrow the distance and produce at least a limited consciousness of what these different lives may have in common. The influence of mainstream cultural forces upon the inner life of Maritimers is brought into a wider cultural context through this fiction.

The fiction of MacLeod, Nowlan, and Richards is steeped in an awareness of regional identity. In their fiction, this identity moves beyond the romance and quaintness of essentialist imagery designed for tourists to

reveal a complex peripheral culture with its own inner social divisions. Despite the pronounced individual tendencies of each author, it is evident that their approaches also share many commonalities in their portrayals of late-twentieth-century environment of the Maritimes. They respond to regional divisions; regional conflict is acted out sometimes through irony, sometimes through myth, and sometimes through sentimentality. The Maritime identity present in their fiction undermines mainstream cultural hegemony, but these authors do not preach dogma or seek to convert masses to an overtly political regionalist cause. They do not want to be perceived solely as regionalists, yet regionalism is a vital part of their fiction. Regionalist issues are used to address larger humanistic concerns, and these larger concerns are used to address the specificities of life in the Maritimes.

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup> Westfall defines a “formal” region as a type of region connoting “an area that exhibits a similarity of features – the key feature, the one that defines the region, remains constant throughout the area. When this feature no longer exists, or falls below a certain level, then the region also ends.” He adds, “A formal topographical region is the type of region most people use when they consider the regional question” (4).

<sup>2</sup> For a statistical analysis of regional urbanization covering the period 1891-1978, see McCann 13-6; more recent statistics are taken from *1996 Census: Almanac and Canadian Sourcebook*. Ed. Barbara Law, Don Mills: Southam, 1995 5-5, 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> A recent *Quill & Quire* article cites Dan Walsh’s *Games, Dreams and Paper Bags* as a praiseworthy example of a novel “set in an unidentified decaying city centre,” “that could take place anywhere in North America” (Lowe 8).

<sup>4</sup> In Richards’ most recent novel, *The Bay of Love and Sorrows*, Karrie is overwhelmed at the moment of her murder by a similar humanistic longing, for “a reconciliation between her and the entire world—to hope in love and justice for all humanity” (Toronto: M&S, 1998) 152.

<sup>5</sup> *The Wanton Troopers* was completed in 1960 and submitted to one publisher, who rejected it. Nowlan then consigned the manuscript to his

personal papers, where it remained until its publication in 1988 (“Note,” *The Wanton Troopers*, n. pag.).

<sup>6</sup> A briefer version of this scene appears at the climax of “Nightmare” (*Will Ye Let the Mummies In?* 8-12).

<sup>7</sup> MacLeod strives to write aurally harmonious narratives and phrasings: “I read things aloud to myself, to hear how they sound, and if they work aurally, I find that persuasive” (Nicholson, “Alistair MacLeod” 197).

<sup>8</sup> This folk identity often proves to be deceptive and simplistic once antimodernist politics and empirical evidence are considered. Ian McKay argues that Nova Scotia cultural producers such as Helen Creighton and Mary Black have created a “Tourist State” based on the myth of a pre-modern, and therefore Innocent, rural “Folk.” McKay reveals, for example, that Cape Breton folksongs have been transformed by centuries of cultural transfer with other ethnic groups, thus demonstrating the distortion behind the essentialist notion of the Folk’s organic unity (McKay, *The Quest* 51).

<sup>9</sup> The “Nowlan Maritimer” is the embodiment of the Maritime rural proletarian as an Everyman figure who reveals “basic humanity [and] the physical show of emotion or genuine feeling” (Pacey 14).

<sup>10</sup> A detailed biography of Miramichi balladeer Larry Gorman provides a fascinating history of this tradition: Edward D. Ives, *Larry*

*Gorman: The Man Who Made the Songs* (Fredericton: Goose Lane Editions, 1993).

*Bibliography*

- Anderson, M.J. "Letters to the World: The Writing of Alistair MacLeod." *Arts Atlantic* (Fall 1990) 51-2.
- Armstrong, Christopher and Herb Wyile. "Firing the Regional Can(n)on: Liberal Pluralism, Social Agency, and David Adams Richards' Miramichi Trilogy." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 22.1(1997): 1-17.
- Aster, Andrea. "Blurring the Boundaries of Regions and Nations." *Telegraph-Journal* 5 August 1996: 3.
- Atherton, Stanley S. "Fighting Back: The Regional Renaissance in Recent Canadian Fiction." *World Literature Written in English* 24.1 (1984): 127-35.
- Beck, J. Murray. "The Maritimes: A Region or Three Provinces?" *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 15 (1977) 301-13.
- Becker, George J. *Realism in Modern Literature*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1980.
- Bemrose, John. "Harmed and Dangerous." Rev. of *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*, by David Adams Richards. *Maclean's* 23 Aug. 1993: 47.
- Berces, Francis. "Existential Maritimer: Alistair MacLeod's *The Lost Salt Gift Of Blood*." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 16:1 (1991): 114-28.
- Bly, Robert. "For Alden Nowlan, with Admiration." *Playing the Jesus Game*. Trumansburg: New Books, R.D. 3, 1970: 5-10.
- Bogaards, Winnifred M. "The Fiction of David Adams Richards: The Maritimes as a State of Mind." *Pottersfield Portfolio* 19.1 (1998): 67-9.
- Brym, Robert J., ed. *Regionalism in Canada*. Toronto: Irwin, 1986.
- Burrill, Gary. "More Grandfathers, Less Alpine." *Toward a New Maritimes: A Selection from Ten Years of New Maritimes*. Ed. Ian McKay and Scott



- Milsom. Halifax: Ragweed, 1992. 311-12.
- Byrne, George. "The Blood Hardened and the Blood Running: The Character Of Orville in *Blood Ties*." *Canadian Literature* 7.1 (1982): 55-62.
- Cameron, Donald. "The Maritime Writer and the Folks Down Home." *Canadian Literature* 40 (1975) 113-21.
- Canton, Jeffrey. "Richards reaps rich harvest in Miramichi." Rev. of *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace*, by David Adams Richards. *Quill & Quire* (Nov. 1990): 19.
- Cogswell, Fred. "Alden Nowlan as Regional Atavist." *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* 11.2 (1986): 206-25.
- . Rev. of *Bread, Wine and Salt*, by Alden Nowlan. *The Fiddlehead* 75 (1968): 73-4.
- Compton, Valerie. Rev. of *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*, by David Adams Richards. *Quill & Quire* (Sept. 1993): 61.
- Connor, H.W. "Coming of Winter, Coming of Age: The Autumnal Vision of David Adams Richards' First Novel." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 9.1 (1984): 31-40.
- . "A Controlled Poetic Naturalism." Rev. of *Road to the Stilt House*, by David Adams Richards. *Fiddlehead* 147 (1986) 107-9.
- . "A Note on George Byrne's Argument that Orville is the Central Character in *Blood Ties*." *Canadian Literature* 8.1 (1983): 142-5.
- . "The River in the Blood: Escape and Entrapment in the Fiction of David Adams Richards." *World Literature Written in English* 26.2 (1986): 269-77.
- Creighton, Helen. *Bluenose Ghosts*. Halifax: Nimbus, 1994.
- Currie, Sheldon. "David Adams Richards: *The People on the Roadway*." *Down East: Critical Essays on Contemporary Maritime Canadian Literature*. Wolfgang Hochbruck, James D. Taylor, eds. (Trier:

- Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1996): 133-42.
- Davey, Frank. *Post-National Arguments: The Politics of the Anglophone-Canadian Novel Since 1967*. Toronto: U of Toronto, 1993.
- Davidson, Arnold E. "As Birds Bring Forth the Story: The Elusive Art of Alistair MacLeod." *Canadian Literature*. (Winter 1988): 32-42.
- Davies, Gwendolyn. "The 'Home Place' in Modern Maritime Literature." *Studies in Maritime Literary History, 1760-1930*. Fredericton: Acadiensis, 1991. 192-99.
- DeMont, John. "Returning to MacLeod Country." Rev. of *No Great Mischief*, by Alistair MacLeod. *Maclean's* 8 Nov. 1999: 88.
- Ditsky, John. "'Such Meticulous Brightness': The Fiction of Alistair MacLeod." *The Hollins Critic* (Feb. 1988): 1-9.
- Donovan, Stewart. "Surviving Shared Worlds: the Parish and the Province. Alden Nowlan and Patrick Kavanagh." *Down East: Critical Essays on Contemporary Maritime Canadian Literature*. Wolfgang Hochbruck, James D. Taylor, eds. (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1996): 197-206.
- Doyle, James. "Shock: Recognition." Rev. of *Lives of Short Duration*, by David Adams Richards. *Canadian Literature* 94 (Autumn 1982): 128-30.
- Ferguson, Trevor. "Two voices tell varying tales from shared Maritime ground." Rev. of *Nights Below Station Street*, by David Adams Richards. *Montreal Gazette* 4 June 1988, n.p.
- Fetherling, Douglas. "Ordinary People." *Saturday Night* (June 1986): 57-9.
- Forbes, E.R. *The Maritime Rights Movement, 1919-1927: A Study in Canadian Regionalism*. Diss. Queen's U, 1975. Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1978.
- , and D.A. Muise, eds. *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1993.
- Ford, Jesse Hill. "Local Color –The Myth and the Cult." *The Fiddlehead* 81

- (1969): 41-45.
- Francis, R. Douglas et al. *Destinies: Canadian History Since Confederation*. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.
- . *Divisions On a Ground: Essays On Canadian Culture*. Ed. James Polk. Toronto: Anansi, 1982.
- Gibbins, Roger and Sonia Arrison. *Western Visions: Perspectives on the West in Canada*. Peterborough: Broadview P, 1995.
- Glover, Douglas. "Violent River." *Books in Canada* (May 1988): 9-12.
- Heward, Burt. "Novelist trudges further down poverty road." Rev. of *Road to the Stilt House*, by David Adams Richards. *Ottawa Citizen* 17 Aug. 1985: n.p.
- Hochbruck, Wolfgang. "Centre and Margin: Literature from the Maritimes." *Down East: Critical Essays on Contemporary Maritime Canadian Literature*. Wolfgang Hochbruck, James D. Taylor, eds. (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier (1996): 9-21.
- Holman, C. Hugh and William Harmon, eds. *A Handbook to Literature*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: MacMillan, 1992.
- Homel, David. Rev. of *Nights Below Station Street*, by David Adams Richards. *Books in Canada* (May 1988): 32.
- Hovey, Joan Hall. "A Promise Kept." *The Atlantic Advocate* (Jan. 1990): 19-21.
- Ives, Edward S. "Alden Nowlan's Poetry: A Personal Chronicle." *The Fiddlehead* 81(1969): 61-7.
- Jackson, Marni. "Dignity Intact." Rev. of *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace*, by David Adams Richards. *Books in Canada* (Dec. 1990): 38-9.
- James, William C. "Road that go nowhere." Rev. of *Road to the Stilt House*, by David Adams Richards. *Kingston Whig-Standard Magazine* 17 Aug. 1985:

20.

- Jenish, D'Arcy. "Exploring the Dignity of Downtrodden Lives." *MacLean's* 25 Dec. 1989: 34-5.
- Jordan, David M. *New World Regionalism: Literature in the Americas*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1994.
- Kaplan, Fred. *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987.
- Keefer, Janice Kulyk. Rev. of *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun and Other Stories*, by Alistair MacLeod." *Antigonish Review* 66-67 (1986): 113-16.
- , *Under Eastern Eyes: A Critical Reading of Maritime Fiction*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1987.
- Lampert, Gerald. "A Fistful of Dolours." Rev. of *Dancers at Night*, by David Adams Richards. *Books in Canada* (June-July 1978): 21-2.
- Lauder, Scott. "Decency of Feeling." Rev. of *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*, by Alden Nowlan. *Canadian Fiction* (Apr.-May 1975): 61-2.
- Lever, Susan. "Against the Stream: The Fiction of David Adams Richards." *Australian-Canadian Studies* 21.1 (1994): 81-89.
- "The Long and Winding Detour to Prosperity." *Quarterly Report of the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies* 2.3 (1996): 1-3.
- Lowe, Lezlie. "Newcomer Second Room aims to fill gap between 'zine and mainstream culture." *Quill & Quire* (May 1999): 8.
- MacDonald, Frances. "War of the Worlds: David Adams Richards and Modern Times." *Antigonish Review* 104 (1996): 17-24.
- MacLean, R.A. *A State of Mind: The Scots in Nova Scotia*. Hantsport: Lancelot P, 1992.
- MacLeod, Alistair. *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun and Other Stories*. Toronto: M&S, 1986.

- , "'At the Moment': Notes on Fiction." *Antigonish Review* 17-18.
- , "David Adams Richards: On Staying the Course." *Pottersfield Portfolio* 19.1 (1998): 75-77.
- , Interview. "Alistair MacLeod: The World Is Full of Exiles." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* By Laurie Kruk. 20.1 (1995): 150-9.
- , Interview. *Books in Canada* By Mark Fortier. (Aug.-Sept. 1986): 38-40.
- , Interview. "Letters to the World: The Writing of Alistair MacLeod." By M.J. Anderson. *Arts Atlantic* (Fall 1990): 51-52.
- , *Island: The Collected Short Stories of Alistair MacLeod*. Toronto: M&S, 2000.
- , *The Last Salt Gift of Blood*. Toronto: M&S, 1989.
- , *No Great Mischief*. Toronto: M&S, 1999.
- McKay, Ian. "Tartanism Triumphant: The Construction of Scottishness in Nova Scotia, 1933-1954." *Acadiensis* 21 (1992): 2-10.
- , *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth Century Nova Scotia*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1994.
- Maggs, Randall. Rev. of *Alden Nowlan: Early Poems and Will Ye Let the Mummings In?* by Alden Nowlan. *The Fiddlehead* 139 (1983): 93-7.
- Markle-Craigne, Sylvia. "Redemption for the Wounded." 31 Mar.-13 Apr. 1994: n.p.
- McCann, L.D., ed. *A Geography of Canada: Heartland and Hinterland*. Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1982.
- Milner, Philip. "Structure in David Adams Richards' Unfinished Miramichi Saga." *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 31 (1985): 201-10.
- , "Yoknapatawpha, N.B." *Books in Canada* (Oct. 1980) 4-6.
- Milton, Paul. "Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien: Nowlan's Novel Response

to the Critics." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 23.2 (1998): 36-48.

Mukherjee, Arun. *Oppositional Aesthetics*. Toronto: Cardiff, 1994.

Nicholson, Colin. "Alistair MacLeod." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 21 (1986): 188-200.

-----, "Signatures of Time: Alistair MacLeod and His Short Stories." *Canadian Literature* 107 (1985): 90-110.

Noonan, Gerald. "Understanding Paradox." Rev. of *Nights Below Station Street* by David Adams Richards. *The Fiddlehead* 160 (1989): 118-21.

Nowlan, Alden. Interview. "Alden Nowlan." *Canadian Literature* By John Mercalf. 63 (1975): 8-17.

-----, "A Friend for Margaret." *The Fiddlehead* 40 (1959): 1-5.

-----, *Double Exposure*. Fredericton: Brunswick P, 1978.

-----, "He Sees a Lot by Night." *Telegraph-Journal* (Saint John, N.B.) 24 June 1978: 7.

-----, "An Interview with Alden Nowlan." *The Fiddlehead*. By Robert Cockburn. 81(1969): 5-14.

-----, *Miracle at Indian River and Other Stories*. Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1982.

-----, "Something to Write About." *Canadian Literature* 68-69 (1976): 7-12.

-----, *Various Persons Named Kevin O'Brien*. Toronto: Clarke Irwin, 1973.

-----, *The Wanton Troopers*. Fredericton: Goose Lane, 1988.

-----, *Will Ye Let the Mimmers In?* Toronto: Irwin, 1984.

Oliver, Michael. *Alden Nowlan and His Works*. Toronto: ECW, 1991.

Pacey, Peter. Rev. of *Between Tears and Laughter*, by Alden Nowlan. *The Fiddlehead* 93 (1972): 114-6.

- Pennee, Donna. "Still More Social Realism: Richards's Miramichi." *Essays On Canadian Writing*, 41 (1990): 41-5.
- Perkin, J. Russell. "Learning About the Crucifixion: the Religious Vision of For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down." *Pottersfield Portfolio* 19.1 (1998): 52-6.
- Perkin, Russell. "Moralizing on the Miramichi." Rev. of *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace*, by David Adams Richards. *The Atlantic Provinces Book Review* (Feb.-Mar. 1991): 11.
- Precosky, Don. "Seven Myths About Canadian Literature." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne* 9 (1984) 86-95.
- Raddall, Thomas H. *The Nymph and the Lamp*. Toronto: M&S, 1950.
- Rapoport, Janis. "Deeply in Luxuriant Gloom." Rev. of *The Coming of Winter*, by David Adams Richards. *The Globe and Mail* 5 October 1974: 34.
- Richards, David Adams. *The Bay of Love and Sorrows*. Toronto: M&S, 1998.
- , *Blood Ties*. Toronto: M&S, 1992.
- , *The Coming of Winter*. Toronto: M&S, 1992.
- , *Dancers At Night*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1991.
- , *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace*. Toronto: M&S, 1990.
- , *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down*. Toronto: M&S, 1993.
- , *Hockey Dreams: Memories of a Man Who Couldn't Play*. Toronto: Doubleday, 1997.
- , *Hope In the Desperate Hour*. Toronto: M&S, 1996.
- , Interview. *Australian-Canadian Studies* By Susan Lever. 12.1 (1994): 91-7.
- , Interview. "David Adams Richards: He Must Be a Social Realist Regionalist." *Studies in Canadian Literature/Études en littérature canadienne*

- By Kathleen Scherf. 15.1 (1990): 154-70.
- Interview. "An Instinct for Life." *Books in Canada* By R.M. Vaughan. (Sept. 1993): 15-18.
- Interview. "Redemption for the Wounded: David Adams Richards Offers His Characters Salvation." By Sylvia Markle-Craine. 31 Mar. 13 Apr. 1994: n.p.
- Interview. *Speaking for Myself: Canadian Writers in Interview*. By Andrew Garrod. St. John's: Breakwater Press, 1986: 209-27.
- "Unravelling the Mystery." Interview. *The New Brunswick Reader*. 26 Sept. 1998: 14-17.
- "Just Singing Along." *A Lad from Brantford and Other Essays*. Fredericton: Broken Jaw Press, 1994: 29-31.
- *Lines On the Water: A Fisherman's Life On the Miramichi*. Toronto: Doubleday, 1998.
- *Lives of Short Duration*. Toronto: M&S, 1992.
- *Nights Below Station Street*. Toronto: M&S, 1989.
- *Road to the Still House*. Toronto: HarperCollins, 1990.
- "The Turtle, the Handbook, the Dark Night Air." *The Nashwaak Review* 3 (1996): 67-75.
- Rigelhof, T.F. "Mysticism on the Miramichi." Rev. of *Nights Below Station Street*. by David Adams Richards. *The Atlantic Provinces Book Review*. (Sept.-Oct. 1988): 1.
- Roberts, Charles G.D. *The Heart That Knows*. Sackville, N.B.: Ralph Pickard Bell Library, Mount Allison U, 1984.
- Scherf, Kathleen. "David Adams Richards' *Blood Ties*: Essentially Women." *Room of One's Own* (Dec. 1991): 23-39.
- Scollon, Ronald and Rose Wong Scollon. *Intercultural Communications: A*



- Discourse Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.
- Spettigue, D.O. Rev. of *Road to the Stilt House* by David Adams Richards. *Queen's Quarterly* 94.2 (1987): 366-75.
- Sullivan, Thomas P. "Atlantic Writers Find Divergent Worlds in Their Own Backyard." *Quill & Quire* (May 1986): 25.
- Summers, Myrna. "Afterword" to *Blood Ties* by David Adams Richards. Toronto: M&S, 1992. 357-62.
- Sutherland, Fraser. "Modern Myths." *The Canadian Forum* (Aug.-Sept. 1986): 35-6.
- Taylor, Michael. Rev. of *Blood Ties* by David Adams Richards. *The Fiddlehead* 111 (1976): 127-9.
- Tremblay, Tony. "Introduction: Richards Among His Readers." *Pottersfield Portfolio* 19.1 (1998): 6-10.
- , "Road from the Stilt House." Rev. of *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down* by David Adams Richards. *The Fiddlehead* 180 (1994): 116-20.
- Vauthier, Simone. "Time and Space in Alistair MacLeod's 'The Road to Rankin's Point.'" *Down East: Critical Essays on Contemporary Maritime Canadian Literature*. Wolfgang Hochbruck, James D. Taylor, eds. (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1996): 157-77.
- Waddington, Miriam. Rev. of *Under the Ice*, by Alden Nowlan. *Canadian Literature* 9 (1961): 71-2.
- Westfall, William. "The Regional Patterns in Canada and Canadian Culture." *Perspectives on Regions and Regionalism in Canada / Perspectives sur les régions et le régionalisme au Canada*. 5 (1983) 2-13.
- Wonders, William C. "Canadian Regions and Regionalisms: National Enrichment or National Disintegration?" *Perspectives on Regions and Regionalism in Canada / Perspectives sur les régions et le régionalisme au Canada*. 5 (1983) 16-53.
- Woodcock, George. "Fires in Winter." Rev. of *Lives of Short Duration*, by

David Adams Richards. *Books in Canada* (Mar. 1982): 13-14.

Woodford, Gillian. "Voices that Sputter Against the Background":  
Communication in the Novels of David Adams Richards." U of New  
Brunswick, 1995.

Young, Alan R. Rev. of *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun and Other Stories*, by  
Alistair MacLeod. *Dalhousie Review* (Fall 1986): 340-44.

Zagratzki, Uwe. "Neil Gunn and Alistair MacLeod: Across the Sea to  
'Scotland'." *Down East: Critical Essays on Contemporary Maritime Canadian  
Literature*. Wolfgang Hochbruck, James D. Taylor, eds. (Trier:  
Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1996): 181-95.