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A Stadium of Small Things: Collecting Contemporary Canadian Fiction

by

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the figure of the collector and the trope of collecting in recent Canadian fiction in order to propose new theoretical and thematic strategies of reading critically within the field. "A Stadium of Small Things" takes the form of a collection itself; it gathers together dreams, memoir, architecture, archives, cultural studies, and literary theory in its reconsideration of the desires of fictional and real Can Lit collectors, and the narrative possibilities born of their collections as objects, representations, and allusions.

Taking its major theoretical lead from Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, the thesis begins by proposing a theory of collecting as a means of constructing, recreating, or continuing narratives that aim to resist their own conclusion and closure. It reads objects for the subjectivity they acquire as part of collections, and it treats those collections, variously, as presence, absence, and arcade. Collections, though, are examined not merely as thematic constructions, but as structural and narratological strategies functioning in distinctive ways within several recent Canadian fictions as both products and ongoing processes of reading and writing.

This project finds its title and its inspiration in Michael Ondaatje's attempt to collect his father's past in the memoir *Running in the Family*, and it undertakes critical readings of the collectors and collections in fictions by Robert Kroetsch, Timothy Findley, Thomas King, Alice Munro, Alissa York, Margaret Laurence, Dionne Brand, Timothy Taylor, Jane Urquhart, Kyo Maclear, Robert Majzels, and C. S. Richardson. It argues, ultimately, that Can Lit collections—both *in* and *as* narratives—can be endlessly reordered and reinvented

in order to proffer fantastical processes of resistance to the monological national, historical, political, and social master-narratives that purport to order our everyday lives.

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An excerpted version of my first chapter, entitled "Eric Harvie: Without and Within Robert Kroetsch's *Alibi,*" is forthcoming in the anthology *The West and Beyond* edited by Sarah Carter, Alvin Finkel, and Peter Fortna. Thank you to the editors for including my work, and for guiding me towards sources that have benefitted the rest of my dissertation.

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And for my father. Ur-collector and frequent inhabitant of dreams.

With warmth and gratitude, I would like to dedicate this study to Robert Kroetsch.

Thank you for sharing your collectors with me.

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"You must get this book right," my brother tells me, "You can only write it once." But the book again is incomplete. In the end all your children move among the scattered acts and memories with no more clues. Not that we ever thought we would be able to fully understand you. Love is often enough, towards your stadium of small things. Whatever brought you solace we would have applauded. Whatever controlled the fear we all share we would have embraced. That could only be dealt with one day at a time—with that song we cannot translate, or the dusty green of the cactus you touch and turn carefully like a wounded child towards the sun, or the cigarettes you light.

Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family*

Introduction

The Dream of the Collection

> A popular tradition warns against recounting dreams on an empty stomach.
> Walter Benjamin, "One-Way Street"

> Each epoch dreams the one to follow.
> Jules Michelet, "Avenir! Avenir!" as quoted in
> Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (Exposé of 1935), *The Arcades Project*

> Every epoch, in fact, not only dreams the one to follow but, in dreaming, precipitates its awakening.
> Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (Exposé of 1935), *The Arcades Project*

Since my childhood I have had a recurring dream that takes place in the basement of my family's home. In the dream I am alone, but sense that I am not. I have the terrible feeling that someone or something lurks just around the corner. I find a hallway that I do not recognize. Why have I never seen it before? I walk down this previously unknown corridor, and discover that it is lined with doors, some closed, some open. The hallway seems endless. My basement apparently has an infinite number of rooms. The rooms that I can see into are filled with towers of board games sloping precariously to one side. Pine bookshelves, flush against the concrete walls, house bobble head dolls (celebrities, sports figures, cartoon icons), beer steins, baseball caps, and, suitably, books.

The basement of my childhood home does not, obviously, have an endless hallway or an infinite number of rooms. But some of the objects in those conjured rooms do in fact exist. My recurring dream augments the real-life contents of this basement: my father's collections.

A decade after my father's death, his collections continue to inhabit the basement. My mother still lives in the house where I grew up, and when she goes to sleep at night,

two floors below her exists a nest of objects that is likely the neighbourhood's biggest fire hazard. In addition to the thousands of books lining the walls and stacked in piles, smaller or thinner objects are stored in cardboard boxes that are labeled with a felt pen in my father's cursive handwriting. *Sports Cards. Comics. Stamps.* Some boxes are organized according to generic items while others take their organizational auspices from a connection to a specific place or event. *Canadian National Exhibition. Niagara Falls. The Island.* Many of these collections (books, trading cards, figurines) gesture towards a recognizable community of other collectors and like-minded *amateurs*, but several seem to reflect little more than a fear of letting them go. The business cards of other people. Promotional flyers and junk mail. The envelope of movie ticket stubs could perhaps be called a collection, but what about the cartons full of dried-up pens, the tray of pencil stubs, and the ball of rubber bands? It would be painless to throw away the apparently obsolete and useless objects were it not for the fact that they are juxtaposed with my father's obviously sorted and labeled, purposefully salvaged, and overtly cherished *collections*. The pens, the stubs, the rubber bands, and the business cards all somehow remain my father's possessions, and because they were acquired and collected according to his prerogatives, we—his survivors—have not been able to disperse them. In the decade since my father's death, my family and I have remained aware of these boxes and their contents; we sort through them and visit them from time to time. However, we have yet to decide what to *do* with the boxes or with the stacks of books that lean against the legs of my father's desk. Can we move them? Shelve them? Sell them? The busiest corner of the basement still houses a dartboard, rolled-up posters, and tattered back issues of magazines, guarded by a Wayne Gretzky doll, in its original packaging, perched on a shelf nearby.

Early one Saturday morning many years ago, my father returned from a garage sale with drinking glasses originally sold at an Esso gas station. A series: collect all four. I have a vivid memory of my father washing these glasses with warm soapy water in the kitchen sink (even though both he and I knew we would never drink from them). They would go "down in the basement," an expression frequently uttered by my father as a request for safekeeping ("Could you put that down in the basement for me?") and my mother as a demand to tidy the main floor ("When are you going to put that down in the basement?"). I knew that the Esso glasses would soon re-accumulate dust and grime.

It is possible that my father was not actually washing Esso glasses that morning, but other items made of glass (figurines) or plastic (game pieces). We manipulate all of our memories to some extent. I may have even invented this one to serve as a metonymical moment revived from my past that represents my father's routine of collecting, cleaning, and stowing away objects. Still, I retain a vision of my father with his hands in the kitchen sink and his shirtsleeves rolled up, looking at me, his dark eyes filled with genuine worry. Did I appreciate his endeavours, or did they embarrass me?

My father often professed that he was saving objects that my brother and I would surely have use for later in life. While he was certain of the educational and recreational value of all the books he kept, he fervently believed in the imminent extinction of paper and paper products. For this reason, in addition to books he collected periodicals, pamphlets, and postcards (and flyers, and junk mail). He also held onto paper things that had the potential to preserve a record of where he (and we as a family) had been, including brochures from day trips and summer vacations, maps from visits to museums and galleries, programs from plays, not to mention the products—drawings, essays, stories, and

art projects—of my brother's and my schoolwork. The paper parade spilled into several cardboard boxes that held otherwise transient, disposable objects and documents such as coasters, magazine inserts, and even tags from clothing.

Cleaning my own desk the other day, I found the tag from a pair of running shoes I bought months ago. It seems that I too have a habit of keeping the evidence of purchases. Only recently did I convince myself to shred and recycle a crate of receipts for items I had purchased several years ago, many of which I no longer even possess. Why had I kept these receipts? I can say that the alternative, to throw them away, seemed strangely discomfiting. I realized that as a collection my stockpile of receipts composed a narrative about places I have been, decisions I have made, investments, splurges, and changes in living arrangements and eating habits. As I went through the box and shredded these proofs of payment, I was flooded with memories. This habit of collecting *beyond* the conventional suggests that a person with the instinct to salvage may preserve a narrative about a past that might otherwise be discarded. The question becomes, though, in addition to keeping objects that have an apparent use (such as books, for educational and recreational purposes), do we keep other things *just* because they can be interpreted as remnant or residue of an event or an experience?

Even if it is difficult to ascertain someone else's reason for keeping certain items (let alone an *abundance* of artifacts), the inheritor of a collection must presume that the collector collected with a greater significance in mind, even if that significance was the collection itself. My family fears that the dissemination of my father's possessions will amputate a part of something that seems, somehow, almost alive. His collections frustrate us as a scattered nuisance, but they also demonstrate, materially, his past, represented,

remaining, and outliving his death in our present. And so, we continue to seek the company of my father's collections. We lose all sense of time as we wade through the basement, unpacking the contents of an old briefcase or rearranging the contents of a box. By way of our present and intimate involvement with its matter, the collection lives on.

I have moved several of my father's books into the Calgary home that I share with my husband. When we read these inherited books, my mother's annotations or my father's handwriting occasionally interrupts us. My mother borrowed these books from my father when she was a student at the University of Toronto's Victoria College in the early 1970s. She was quite moved by a class on religion in literature co-taught by Northrop Frye and Jay Macpherson, and the left-hand margins of her course texts are filled with her neat, dutiful observations of anything remotely religious in the language. In some of these palimpsestic texts there exist also slightly fainter markers of my father's education from a few years before my mother's, including caricatures of other students, professors, authors, himself, lyrics for a song, a poem in progress, a riddle. Their dueling marginalia, in two columns, inscribes a narrative in two languages. A game. Love notes. The books that they shared are now objects literally imprinted with the past. I was bequeathed a great library and it has made me realize that a collection's products are inextricable from the processes they go through in becoming collected. As a result, I inherited from my father both things and a theory of things.

The collection shares significant characteristics with the archive even though these systems of objects remain distinct from one another. First, for both collection and archive, the products *are* processes. Michel Foucault posits in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that the archive *is* the very mode of becoming and standing for something else. He argues:

> Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have in the density of discursive practices, systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call *archive.* (145, his emphasis)

Foucault's "archive" does not embody the desire to accumulate every possible thing that can represent a culture or history, just as it does not solely refer to the container or method by which documents are preserved. Rather, Foucault's "archive" refers to "*the general system of the formation and transformation of statements*" (146, his emphasis). The contents of an archive are not simply articles, papers, records, or statistics. They spin language into action as utterances of past events that continue to take place within, and comprise, the archive. In this way, the archive and collection mimic one another as the containers of objects that become inextricable from, and translated by, the very processes of their organization and collation.

Mieke Bal, in "Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting," wonders whether things, once collected, speak for themselves autonomously: "can things be, or tell, stories?" (99). Bal surveys the different ways in which collecting has been studied in the past (as fetishism, as ideology, as psychology), but tends to focus on collection as a theory of narrative. I see both archive and collection as systems of storytelling. As Jacques Derrida states, there is "*no archive without outside*" (11, his emphasis); a container's contents always speak of their origins, their past lives, and yet become coded by the conditions that result in their eventual containment. Certainly Foucault's archive of statements seems

similar to the process of fictionalizing (and thus altering) places, persons, or events within a work of literature. In terms of the *Derridean* container, "the meaning of 'archive,' its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons,* those who commanded" (Derrida 2). But within the word *arkheion* exists the word *arkhe*, thus within this place or house "things *commence*—physical, historical, or ontological principle" (1). Whereas Foucault focuses on the archive's insides, Derrida also looks beyond. The second principle of *arkhe,* of archive as a "*there,*" is a place "where men and gods *command,*" a "*there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from which *order* is given" (Derrida 1). Perhaps one could accept this command or order as the archive's very process, the formation of its statements or the "power of *consignation,*" the act of "*gathering together signs*" with the objective to "coordinate a single corpus, in a system or synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration" (3, his emphasis). But the passive voice unsettles me, and the question I cannot ignore is '*whose* power?' The archivist, author, or collector inevitably organizes signs and decides which ones will be included in the first place, even if their ultimate *collective* meaning comes, as it so often does, as a delightful surprise. In *The System of Objects,* Jean Baudrillard exaggerates this agency when he writes about owning objects, and observes that "they become mental precincts over which I hold sway, they become things of which I am the meaning, they become my property and my passion" (85). The distinct difference between the archive and collection is that articles within an archive may not have been severed from their original meaning (for example, essays or photographs) in the same way that the objects in a collection necessarily are when they

become possessed. The very *possibility* of what objects could *mean*, once collected, kept my father gathering wherever he went.

My father referred to attending garage sales as "sailing," and as a child I unintentionally started some rumours about my father's (nonexistent) passion for boating. After all these years, I have come to understand "sailing" as an apt name for the kind of questing inherent to collecting. Bruce Littlefield, in his guide to antiquing and scavenging, *Garage Sale America*, refers to those who frequent flea markets as "anthropological voyeuristic warriors" (12), which seems appropriately demonstrative of the two conditions necessary for the thrill of acquisition: history and potential. Objects are attractive as vessels of individual histories (hopefully with some traces of past ownership), while at the same time they have the potential to connect with the buyer's own life, notably his or her own past. Littlefield claims that this combination "is at times a strange dichotomy—trash to one, treasure to another—but what people are drawn to at garage sales is ultimately a study of what makes us [or, I would specify, collectors] tick" (12). What one person will not go near and what another cannot live without is often designated by subjective longing. Littlefield states, "[n]ostalgia is certainly part of the hook for both buyer and seller. The seller is selling it because said item no longer needs to be a part of her life and the buyer is buying it because it has to be a part of his" (15). My father perused the objects of others laid out on folding tables on driveways and in the kiosks of flea markets in order to claim something for himself that he believed would be of value for his children in their future. Ultimately, my father assembled and left a narrative that continues to exist into his family's present, but also speaks of his life and his past.

Items with this kind of double life should be studied conscientiously. I will argue that there are two ways in which the inheritor, the spectator, or the scholar of the collection can come to classify a collection's contents. The first is as object (artifact or relic), specifically something that has been manufactured, manipulated, or objectified in one way or another. Although one may instinctually refer to the contents of a collection as just, simply, things, things are distinct from artifacts. Things can be defined as inanimate forms or beings not conditioned by possession, even though this definition is famously challenged by Bill Brown's highly influential criticism of thingness. Brown asks, "can we think about the ideas *in* things without getting caught up by the idea *of* them? Probably not" (*Sense* 2). In his introduction to *A Sense of Things,* Brown states, "no matter how much common sense convinces us that things are matter-of-fact and mute, concrete and self-evident, apprehending the *mereness* of things can become a difficult task" (1, his emphasis). Baudrillard attempts to limit thing as utility, as opposed to an object that has been altered according to the desires of its apprehender:

> If I use a refrigerator to refrigerate, it is a practical mediation: it is not an object but a refrigerator. And in that sense I do not possess it. A *utensil* is never possessed, because a utensil refers one to the world; what is possessed is always an object *abstracted from its function and thus brought into relationship with the subject.* In this context all owned objects partake of the same *abstractness,* and refer to one another only inasmuch as they refer solely to the subject. Such objects together make up the system through which the subject strives to construct a world, a private totality. (85-86, his emphasis)

If "utility" is a thing's only identity, perhaps it can remain "merely" a thing. But, as Baudrillard explains, a collector does not use his or her collected objects as utensils or appliances; a collected object does not have a practical or social but "a strictly subjective status: it becomes part of the collection. It ceases to be a carpet, a table, a compass or a knick-knack and becomes an object" (86). This process of substitution fosters synonym, even metonymical hyperbole (a toy standing for one's childhood, for example), and shatters the original relationship between signifier and signified (a sword as a trophy rather than a weapon). The relationship between the collector and the collection is an uncanny one because collecting defamiliarizes both the everyday and the exotic object.

In his article "How to do Things with Things (A Toy Story)," Brown makes a distinction between the value of the thing and that of the object: "If the use value of an object amounts to its preconceived utility, then its misuse value should be understood as the unforeseeable potential within the object, part of an uncompleted dream" (956). The archive may re-contextualize a document as archival-statement, but each collected thing-turned-object has *infinite* potential for statement(s) and synonym(s). This is why, as Baudrillard specifies, for the collector "just one object no longer suffices. ... a whole series lies behind any single object, and makes it into a source of anxiety" (86). Brown states in his article that "[i]f the history *of* things can be understood as their circulation, the commodity's 'social life' through diverse cultural fields, then the history *in* things might be understood as the crystallization of the anxieties and aspirations that linger there in the material object" (935). Worries, memories, regrets, and longings swarm objects in a collection because of the power of representation the collector appoints to a thing, which severs it from its original signified, and imagines for it a new life.

Brown argues that "[t]aken literally," the belief that there are not just ideas associated with things, but there are actually ideas *within* things "amounts to granting them an interiority and, thus, something like the structure of subjectivity" (*Sense* 7-8). The second way in which the collected object, the thing-objectified, may then be classified in a study that considers collecting a form of storytelling is as the *subject* of the collection's *narrative*. The different perspectives offered by the multiple objects in the collection comprise a polyphonic story. Even if the objects are collected under the same *consignation,* and they bear physical or symbolic similarities, they speak to their individual origins. Then, as more objects are added, or the collection is reordered, its make-up and pattern change. Each object, depending on its placement and its proximity to other objects, offers a different point of view and tells a slightly different story from within the collection. This study will consider the things in a collection as both subjects and objects, and will, accordingly, use narratives as case studies: select works of contemporary Canadian fiction, a collection of my father's that I added to once it became my own.

As the collection is dreamlike and structurally surreal, I intend to avoid any reading of these fictions that might suggest collections to be singular in meaning, ideology, structure, or national affiliation. The collection, of course, is not solely Canadian, and within the larger field of Canadian literature it manifests itself in multiple ways. I do not aim to analyze the representation of every collection portrayed within contemporary Canadian literature, and for the purposes of this study I have limited my exploration to fiction alone. Additionally, throughout this study, references to recurring dreams will themselves recur. Many of the fictions I discuss refer to dreams, either those of specific characters or the dreamlikeness of collections themselves. With the dreamlike collection

(somewhere) in mind, it is interesting to consider Freud's philosophy that while dreams may be comprised of trivial material, dreams themselves are never trivial. The objects in a collection, big or small (or even tacky or absurd) are of great significance as the constituents of a dream that stands for something greater. Freud believed that "something greater" was a deep and unconscious desire. A great lover of word play, Freud interpreted the dream as riddle: a metaphor in the present, surreptitiously representing a desire or longing that originated in the past. Susan Stewart, in *On Longing,* suggests, "[t]he collection replaces history with *classification,* with order beyond the realm of temporality. In the collection, time is not something to be restored to an origin; rather all time is made simultaneous or synchronous within the collection's world" (151, her emphasis). For Freud, dream interpretation is an act of analysis that has the ability to uncover an authentic truth from the past. As Stewart contrastively observes, the dream of the collection does not restore but reorders, and enters into the realm of the surreal and the synonym. A collection looks forward, depends on the quest that acts as *conduit* and enables artifacts to transcend their internment as something irrevocably defined. With that in mind, this study uses as its foundation a project on passageways about the exquisite nature of conduit as both architectural form and a superb analogy for the system of collecting, written by a marvelous, meticulous archivist.

For thirteen years, Walter Benjamin wrote about Paris's arcades, creating a collection of excerpts, quotations, and writings posthumously assembled as *The Arcades Project.* According to the *Project's* translators, Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Benjamin considered these "*passages*" "the most important architectural form of the nineteenth century" (Foreword ix, their emphasis). In his twice-written exposé of Paris

(once in 1935, again with revisions and additions in 1939) included in *The Arcades Project,* Benjamin cites an *Illustrated Guide to Paris*'s comparison of the arcade to the metropolis that states, "the *passage* is a city, a world in miniature" ("Paris" qtd. on 3). But Benjamin was interested in arcades not only as microcosm, nor just for their role in the history of the marketplace as the "forerunners" of department stores (3). He investigated the connection between the arcades and several "phenomena characteristic of that century's major and minor preoccupations" (Eiland and McLaughlin ix) and the notable figures perpetuating these passions, including the sales clerk, the *flâneur*, and the collector.

First established in Paris "in the decade and a half after 1822" (Benjamin, "Paris" 3), the arcades exhibited a vast array of products available for purchase, and aroused in their patrons a desire to acquire more objects beyond those they merely *needed*, particularly those that could furnish their private homes. Benjamin notes, "[t]he private individual, who in the office has to deal with reality, needs the domestic interior to sustain him in his illusions" (8). This proliferation of unnecessarily lavish private property draws attention to the potentially capitalist complicities of collecting. Yet the collector, "the true resident of the interior," "makes his concern the transfiguration of things. To him falls the Sisyphean task of divesting things of their commodity character by taking possession of them. But he bestows on them only connoisseur value, rather than use value" (Benjamin, "Paris" 9). Benjamin closely observed how a collector reappraises goods, abstracts objects from their utilitarian functions, and thus dislocates commodities from their *intended* market values.

Benjamin's "model" for analyzing the figure of the collector was "[n]ot conceptual analysis but something like dream interpretation" (Eiland and McLaughlin ix). This is not dream interpretation as psychology, an objectification of external desires and memories for

which the dreamlike collection is a false (or at least insufficient or transparent) substitute. Rather, "[t]he collector dreams his way not *only* into a distant or bygone world but also into a better one—one in which, to be sure, human beings are no better provided with what they need than in the everyday world, but in which things are freed from the drudgery of being useful" (Benjamin, "Paris" 9, my emphasis). The collector inevitably constructs a subjective and incomplete representation because the collection does not retrieve the past truth but a *version* of that truth, seen *through* the collector's lens, and affected by his or her dreams. In his essay "Surrealism," Benjamin ponders whether the process by which "this world of things is mastered" is actually just a "trick" ("it is more proper to speak of a trick than a method") because it "consists in the substitution of a political for a historical view of the past" (182). The collector, indeed, conducts a surreal act of substitution, *savoring* a thing's presence instead of *using* it. Additionally, the collector's choices of things through which to reflect the past (not to mention *which* or *whose* past) are subjectively and inherently political. The collector's bias inflates only selected things with meaning and significance, which discriminates in the same way that every historical version of the past adheres to its author's desires. The real "trick" of presenting the past is to somehow suggest that—structurally—there is always room to collect more things, to add more subjects and more stories, that is to say, to posit the collection not as finite testimony, but as fantastic, recurring reverie.

Despite the symbolic underpinnings of the recurring dream I had in childhood, the basement that contains my father's collections itself is (of course) not an arcade; it is not open to the public, inviting spectators to wander within, select, and take home objects to furnish and represent fantasies within their own domestic interiors. Yet because *The*

Arcades Project remains, in my opinion, the most vibrant, titillating, and creative consideration of collecting in existence, I find it difficult to speak about collections without referring, in some way, to the structural concept of the arcade or *passage.* In a contemporary Canada marked by burgeoning department stores, franchises, and, significantly, online retailers lacking physical venues altogether, the arcade still exists as ex-centric retail space. One could follow, then, Canadian "anthropological voyeuristic warriors" (Littlefield 12), those who go sailing, who frequent the last vestiges of flea markets and antique shows, who still scour the Saturday paper for advertisements for yard and garage sales. I spent a great part of my childhood touring a variety of these venues. The operations and interactions that take place at these auctions and shows illustrate an integral and fascinating aspect of the collecting process, and one may witness the phenomena of the modern *flâneur* or *flâneuse*, the sales clerk, and the collector in heated negotiation. As relic of the past, a VHS tape or vinyl record brushes the hands of someone living in the present, wearing new sneakers, carrying the latest mobile phone or technological gadget upon which he or she has become dependent. The sites for these sales, the warehouses, school gyms, church basements, garages, can still remain modern day *passages,* and each plays host to a "world in miniature" (qtd. in Benjamin, "Paris" 3)—at least on the weekends. However, for this study I have chosen to focus on the other kind of arcade represented within Benjamin's *Project,* the kind I can hold entirely in my hands. *The Arcades Project* itself is a series of literary arcades.

The foundations for these textual arcades began to form in 1927 when Benjamin started compiling notes for a newspaper article on Paris. As a collector, he kept looking at his notes, kept seeing room for more commentary, and kept on writing. According to Eiland

and McLaughlin, by the time of his death, "the entire *Arcades* complex (without definitive title, to be sure) remained in the form of several hundred notes and reflections of varying length, which Benjamin revised and grouped in sheafs, or 'convolutes,' according to a host of topics" (x). Even though Benjamin collected with the dream of his project's eventual completion, these convolutes are an appropriate way to represent arcades. Each note in a convolute of a unifying topic exists as its own window display. A reader can wander at his or her leisure from one kiosk of text to the next. There is a palpable atmosphere of the *incompleteness* of the work, and as a result, the notes can be read *as* notes, theories, and thoughts in progress. The gaps or white spaces separating these notes make way for the acts of reading that take place in the present. In addition, although the criticisms and commentaries of each convolute are joined under a common *consignation,* the fragments originate from different sources, creating markedly intertextual territory. Benjamin's reminders to himself of the phenomena he witnessed in the arcades sit alongside quotations from writers and philosophers whose own statements and fictions he felt enhanced his observations, including Dickens, Proust, Baudelaire, and Marx. Benjamin's convolutes, radiant with the promise of all that the theorizing of the collector has to offer, *are* his own collections caught in progress.

This self-conscious, in-progress literary arcade blends fact with fiction. It is arranged in unpredictable, contradictory, monstrous, and playful ways. Imperatively, the contemporary Canadian fictions that I discuss can be read as literary arcades themselves.

Collecting Canada

> Could we classify the luxuriant growth of objects as we do a flora or fauna, complete with tropical and glacial species, sudden mutations, and varieties threatened by extinction?
>
> Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*

In *Roughing it in the Bush*, Susanna Moodie, upon arriving in Canada, turns to her new surroundings in search of solace. She is relieved to find some of her "favourite garden shrubs" from back home amongst the "great variety of elegant unknowns" (32). Her recognition of these shrubs comforts her; she feels unsettled after witnessing her fellow emigrants leap into the water all around her, some of the women immodestly "tuck[ing]" their "scanty garments" "above their knees" (30). Those who had already arrived along the shore less than a day before Moodie enact "Babel" (30) and punctuate their uncivilized conversations with horrific "violent and extraordinary gestures" (30-31). Her clinging to familiar foliage in the face of the chaotic unknown of Canada is, however, ironic. Moodie fails to understand that while the shrub may represent a comfortable, conceivable past to her, it remains definitively part of a new Canadian collection of flora and fauna. In another twist of irony, Moodie's sister Catharine Parr Traill would go on to develop a great interest in collecting, cataloguing, and commenting upon specifically indigenous botanical specimens (much of which was later published in *The Backwoods of Canada*). In the face of financial struggle, Traill's husband's depression, and signs that their transition to a new country would not be an easy one, Traill worked *to* adapt, while Moodie sought refuge from change in familiarity. Jay Macpherson, in *Literary History of Canada*, emphasizes that Moodie's memoir is purposely shaped as an "object-lesson" (618). However, Moodie's intention is not to instruct readers 'How to Rough it in the Bush,' but rather 'How to Remain English in Canada'; Moodie herself is the subject of her lesson, while the object is

Canada, depicted as an arcane, unruly landmass. As an object/obstacle to be overcome, Canada, despite being gradually settled, stubbornly persisted in being unsettling to the emigrant.

Over a century later, Northrop Frye worked to change the nation's representation as an object from which to withdraw to a suitable "place [in which] to look *for* things" (Frye 827, my emphasis). I cannot help but picture Frye as an intrepid, determined collector. One of my mother's favourite stories about her university days is of Frye spontaneously summoning his class to follow him to the student lounge after a December lecture. He sat down at the piano, launched into a round of Christmas carols, and soon had the whole class singing along. Frye was charismatic, Frye was convincing, and why should one not want to follow him on his quest for classic archetypes? In his contribution to the landmark *Literary History of Canada,* he reflects that the essays preceding his famous Conclusion successfully survey Canadian literatures that portray what the Canadian collective imagination "has reacted to" (822). Despite the fact that he states that this imagination "tells us things about this environment that nothing else will tell us," he still claims that the natural question to ask is: "why has there been no Canadian writer of classic proportions?" (822). Ultimately, Frye suffers from the same myopia as Moodie: he does not consider that the very appearance or representation of the "classic" writer might be different in a new country. Frye assumed the flowering of new literature in Canada, literature indigenous *to* Canada, would still bear archetypal fruit, and that its blossoms would be recognizable to the Romanticist.

Frye's most famous literary student, Margaret Atwood, published her tract entitled *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* only one year after her mentor had re-

published his Conclusion in *The Bush Garden* (named, in a fit of reciprocity, after an Atwood poem). Atwood modified the objective of the Canadian literary quest. Rather than asking where all the "classic" Canadian writers were, she wondered (more reasonably), "[w]hat's Canadian about Canadian literature, and why should we be bothered?" (11). Both Frye and Atwood invest in the existence of a Canadian collective consciousness, a shared and communal set of concerns, preoccupations, and archetypes applicable to a vast population. Atwood goes so far as to reveal to her readers that she has "treated the books [that she discusses in *Survival*] as though they were written by Canada, a fiction I hope you'll go along with temporarily" (12). But, in Benedict Anderson's terms, *all* countries are necessarily imagined communities, because "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Frye and Atwood are agents who speak on behalf of their fellow-members by conceiving and perpetuating the concept of a cohesive, unified, national imagination.

Incidentally, many of the kinds of disasters or tragedies that appear in the fictions that Atwood discusses also appear in the fictions that I examine in the chapters to follow, including apocalypse (Robert Majzels' *City of Forgetting*), avalanche (Robert Kroetsch's *Alibi*), flood (Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* and Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*), drowning (Jane Urquhart's *The Whirlpool*), disappearance (*Alibi,* once again, Kroetsch's *The Puppeteer,* Kyo MacLear's *The Letter Opener,* and Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*), massacre (Alissa York's *Effigy*), and death in general (all of the above—as well as Alice Munro's "Vandals," Timothy Taylor's *Stanley Park,* and C. S. Richardson's *The End of the Alphabet*). But where Atwood bases her study upon the

communal Canadian trope, I remain more interested in the contradictions and incongruities of survival. What is salvaged after disaster and by whom? How are surviving objects collected and arranged, and what/whose stories do they *revive*?

Although thematic criticism of Canadian literature has come under recent siege, the question underpinning these studies 'Is there anything essentially Canadian about Canadian texts?' remains an undercurrent of much contemporary criticism; it is just that each updating of the question alters and reframes the quest in a slightly different way. Certainly, there are images that repeat themselves throughout Canadian literature. Certainly, some of the most iconic images within Canadian literature have to do with disaster, with the elements, or isolation with(in) the great outdoors: a painted door in a blinding snowstorm, a nun flying off of a bridge, a researcher's unusual relationship with a bear. But these images are parts of *my* collection as a reader of Canadian literature; they do not represent a *collective* Canadian reading experience. In *Survival,* Atwood argues that "[i]f the patterns are really there, variations of them will be found in the work of writers I may have overlooked, excluded because there was something that exemplified the pattern more obviously" (12). This willful effacement of variation suggests a consequent dismissal of complexity, incongruity, and overall diversity for the sake of the exemplification of unity; it denies rather than acknowledges Atwood's agency in making *her own* collection in *Survival*. The quests that Frye and Atwood embark on as scholars do not lead them to determine the characteristics of the classic Canadian writer, the national imaginary, or iconic Canadian literature. They assemble their own collections of Canadian literary texts. In doing so, they proffer studies that are inevitably rife with gaps and absences. If we read their studies as collections, in the context of the present, their gaps and absences (in conflict

with their *desire* for coherence and unity) are just as significant as the works of identifiably "Canadian" literature they discuss. Atwood and Frye are landmark Canadian collectors in the literary history of Canada.

Today, collectors searching for a sense of what it means to be Canadian still fall into the trap of collecting on behalf of, or for, Canada as a whole. Consider, for example, Douglas Coupland's *Souvenir of Canada* series: two books of photographic essays (a project later echoed in Coupland's Vancouver-focused *City of Glass*) and one documentary film. Coupland's film follows the construction and exhibition of a surreal and dreamlike artistic installation: Coupland designs an emblematically 'Canadian' house. Coupland added 'quintessentially Canadian' objects to a completely white residence (the walls, floors, even the insides of the windows were spray-painted), including hockey sticks, catalogues and magazines, ornamental geese, even certain brands of canned goods. The opening of Canada House coincided with the publication of Coupland's first *Souvenir* book that featured everything from comestibles, including rye (104), beer in "stubbie" bottles (104), vinegar, poutine (86-87), and maple-walnut ice cream (70), to collectibles, from artwork by the Group of Seven (48) or stamps featuring paintings by J.E.H. MacDonald and Emily Carr (50), to the Ookpik (83). On the inside flap of the front cover, Coupland writes: "You could call this book a very personal X-ray of Canada. It's something I want to hand to visitors and say, 'Here. This is what makes us, us'" (*Souvenir* cover). This is a frightening concept for those who despise hockey. Or geese. Coupland is, to a degree, being playfully hyperbolic, and his irony is often clearly on display; in *Souvenir of Canada 2* one notably "Canadian" object is the promotional "Scary Bank Calendar" from the Royal Bank (90). Nonetheless he suggests that his collection can reasonably represent Canada to

someone outside of the space. But this is inevitably Coupland's (in Anderson's terms) "imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). Coupland does not present what makes all Canadians Canadian (or, in the case of *City of Glass,* all Vancouverites Vancouverite), but rather *his* material installation about Canada (and Vancouver) comprised of the objects that arouse nostalgia for him.

It seems that, after Frye and Atwood, Coupland was trying not only to articulate the geography of the collective Canadian imagination, but to materialize it for the visitors of Canada House, the readers of his *Souvenir* books, as well as the viewers of his corresponding documentary. *Souvenir*-as-institution suggests that there are not just dominant tropes but also objects that can remain standing for the Canadian cultural imaginary. There does seem to be a polemical objective to Coupland's series, in that he patriotically demands that people see, once and for all, what materially demonstrates and speaks on behalf of the nation. In her editorial introduction to the two-hundredth issue of *Canadian Literature* on strategic nationalisms, Laura Moss suggests, "popular cultural nationalism in Canada means, at least in some part, institutional and public support of culture" (8). Interestingly, Coupland—bent on being our flag bearer—brings his institutionally-funded collections to the table in an attempt to turn them into a kind of institution themselves. But what Coupland ignores, and what Moss underlines, is the fact that "cultural nationalism is not a static concept, or, at least in this recent iteration, necessarily a celebratory one or one based on nostalgic longing for coherence or national commonality" (8); moreover, "the current round of cultural nationalism no longer seems to be driven by a desire for a common understanding of Canada" (8). In Coupland's *Souvenir* documentary he wonders, "what do you call it when you're nostalgic for something that

isn't gone yet that you know you're going to be nostalgic about?" Coupland is assuming that, in the present, we can prophesize our nostalgia for the future; but longings change, and nostalgia is not a coherent, nor collective, state of consciousness. Thus the relevance Coupland assigns to a Christmas issue of an Eaton's catalogue (*Souvenir 2* 18) or a Grade Seven Royal Conservatory of Music piano exercise book (*Souvenir 2* 88) has to do with his passions as a collector according to his particular past. He will likely share the iconography of these objects with several readers. (I shuddered when I saw that Royal Conservatory exercise book). But Coupland's *Souvenir of Canada* series depicts collected things (that are then photographed or filmed, apprehended and analyzed) that ultimately speak to Coupland's own dominant desire and investment in these objects as author and collector.

Canadian literature cannot be written by or for a collective "we." As a result, when I refer to "we" throughout this study, I choose to employ the word as Diana Brydon does in her influential article, "Metamorphoses of a Discipline: Rethinking Canadian Literature within Institutional Contexts." Brydon states, "[i]n employing the word ["we"], I am not trying to ignore differences within a particular community but rather to suggest ways in which people might want to get together to talk about a common purpose, employing their disagreements to generate productive debate" (1-2). *We* are *individually* influenced by sometimes complementary and sometimes opposing theories for reading narratives, theories that deconstruct and decipher fictions as systems. We read literature in light of poststructuralism (there is a shifting value of *things* according to exchanges of signifier and signified), postmodernism (the self-conscious polyphonic narrative is structurally a *collection*), postnationalism (fluctuating identities of physically independent contemporary groups or cities are *objects* networking within a global *collection*), or postcolonialism (there

is a need for the *retrieval* or (re)*collection* of marginal or ex-centric subjects and their stories). "Post"-ness effectively splinters solitary or monological ideologies and cracks the centre of the homogenous, unified planes of national imagination into more nebulous national imaginaries. As Moss contends, "[t]he more exclusionary nationalism of the past has been replaced by popular cultural frameworks that allow room for a multiplicity of Canadas" (9). Furthermore, "Post" is not a fixed border, boundary, or wall, but instead provides a platform for discussion. Texts are like nation states, imagined political communities "to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 6). "Post" sets the stage for the narrative's display, but also its imagining, its reenactment, and its subsequent performances.

In the following chapters, with tactical embellishment (not unlike Coupland's), I have juxtaposed landmark (the Glenbow museum) and archetypal collection (Noah's ark) with texts that give the familiar title of collection to less conventional, even surprisingly collectable collectibles: taxidermic specimens, the debris of a city, and the belongings of disappeared subjects. My own quest is not for a collection that can stand for Canada, but an exploration of how Canadian writers narrate objects in order to represent the past (or a longing for the past) in the present in sometimes morbid, sometimes tyrannical, but often provocative ways. There are four integral elements of a collection's system that I will address throughout my exploration of these contemporary Canadian fictions: the collection as process, the collection as united disunity, the collection as absence, and the collection as arcade.

First, unlike a completed record or a closed system, the collection is always in progress and showcases process. The collection's ability to continue to exhibit the past in

the ever-changing context of the present makes it continually relevant. Linda Hutcheon emphasizes this interdependence between the search and the sought-after in her 1988 study *The Canadian Postmodern.* Hutcheon affirms that,

> today's metafictions—those novels that, by definition, are self-referential or auto-representational—suggest that the mimetic connection between art and life (by which we still seem to want to define the novel genre) has changed. It no longer operates entirely at the level of *product* alone, that is, at the level of representation of a seemingly unmediated world, but instead functions on the level of *process* too. (61)

The postmodern Canadian writer, using literary devices such as irony, parody, or satire, playfully "subvert[s] the authority of language, language seen as having a single and final meaning" (Hutcheon 7). It is my contention that the collector, too, illuminates the duplicity of things and, in doing so, the duplicity of language (in terms of the words that name, describe, by which we classify and understand objects) in order to extend the potential of what an artifact can stand for. As Baudrillard argues, the collection is in a constant cycle of responding to various "demands" beyond functional ones, such as the demand that an object play "witness" to some previous act or experience, that it reenact "memory," that it answer to "nostalgia," or that it facilitate the collector's own desire for "escapism" (73). Similarly, the postmodern narrative, through effective word play, portrays layers of meanings and splinters previously established *singular* stories or ideologies; anything perceived as recognizable, such as a well-known myth, history, or literary or historical figure, is fair game. What was once familiar becomes distorted, distended, and undoubtedly dreamlike. *As* a dream, there are unpredictable and unexpected ways in which the collection

can (and cannot) [re]present the past. Moreover, because collections are continuous processes, they challenge not only the fixity of histories, but insist upon the proliferation of representations of the past.

The year after the publication of Hutcheon's study, Robert Kroetsch released *The Lovely Treachery of Words,* in which he revisits and rephrases a question imperative to Frye's Conclusion to *Literary History of Canada*: "How do you write in a new country?" (2). Kroetsch's question recurs throughout the essay "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues," which collects Kroetsch's multiple beginnings as a child, as a writer, and as "a dreamer" (9). The more his question repeats itself, the more it becomes a rhetorical testimony to the fact that one's self, one's nation, and one's history are always multiplicitous and ever-changing. There can never be one answer to the question "How do you write in a new country?" There are always already several. There is always room for more memories, more perspectives, and ultimately this series of possibilities does not so much show a pattern as it highlights contradictions and incongruities. For this reason, Kroetsch proposes the relevance of a literary archaeology over that of a linear literary history: "Archaeology allows the fragmentary nature of the story, against the coerced unity of traditional history. Archaeology allows for discontinuity. It allows for layering. It allows for imaginative speculation" (7). Kroestch suggests that the dream of origins in the prairies can be represented by collection: photographs, tall tales, journals, as well as the 1917 seed catalogue that Kroetsch himself unearthed in the Glenbow Archives and translated into an eponymous long poem. Kroetsch's own fiction is influenced by classic myth and archetype, but Kroetsch *collects* archetype alongside other archaeological deposits of the past. He parodies previously established hierarchies by posing new arrangements and structures. In

another essay, Kroetsch theorizes "Disunity as Unity: A Canadian Strategy," and explains how,

> [a] great Canadian critic like Northrop Frye is at heart a modernist, trying to assert the oneness, the unity, of all narrative. But the writers of stories and poems nowadays, in Canada, are not terribly sympathetic to Frye and his unifying sense of what a mythic vision is. Against this *over*riding view, we posit an archaeological sense that every unearthing is problematic, tentative, subject to a story-making act that is itself subject to further change as the 'dig' goes on. (24, his emphasis)

The collector is not just confronted with but is inspired by scatter.

In Canadian literary criticism, Kroetsch's 'dig' goes on, and the previously established architectures of reading continue to be shaken down to their foundations. Words like "Unsettled," "Unsettling," and "Unhomely" grace the covers of anthologies of Canadian postcolonial criticism (edited by Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte, Laura Moss, and Sugars, respectively).[1] Jonathan Kertzer's text *Worrying the Nation: Imagining a National Literature in English Canada* has the similar objective of disturbing established metanarratives of the nation, while also speaking to Anderson's theory that any uniting ideologies for a community are imagined. Justin D. Edwards, in his book *Gothic Canada: Reading the Spectre of a National Literature*, cites Anderson, along with Sugars and Homi K. Bhabha, as thinkers who consider the nation itself to be an imaginary concept. Taking his cue from their studies he contends that "[w]hat these critics show us is that the nation is

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[1] Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte, eds. *Unsettled Remains: Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic.* Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2009; Laura Moss, ed. *Is Canada Postcolonial? Unsettling Canadian Literature.* Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2003; Cynthia Sugars, ed. *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism.* Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2004.

not just a socio-political fact, but also a ghost story" (xix). Sugars and Turcotte state in their introduction to *Unsettled Remains* that the "Postcolonial Gothic" is "becoming a distinctive, though by no means homogeneous, subgenre" (x) of Canadian literature, and that "the postcolonial Gothic has been put to multiple uses, above all to convey experiences of ambivalence and/or split subjectivity resulting from the inherent incommensurability of conflicted subject positions that may have emerged from a colonial context and persisted into the present" (xi). Sugars and Turcotte explain that,

> [t]he Gothic, as a mode, is preoccupied with the fringes, the unspoken, the peripheral, and the cast aside. It is populated with monsters and outcasts, villains and victims, specters [sic] and the living dead. The Gothic is often located in a realm of unknown dangers and negotiates both internal and external disquiet. It is a literature of excess and imagination, but one that is used as well to reassure and compartmentalize unreason. It is therefore a literature that both enacts and thematizes ambivalence. (xv)

The preoccupations of this genre are similar to the concerns of the collection as a narrative of excess that acknowledges what it lacks, the perceived absences in its set.

One of the most predominant tropes of absence within the Gothic genre is the spectre, which, as Edwards states, exists as "a sign of instability, insecurity and colonization" (back cover). He contends, "if a nation is imaginary, a precarious fabrication that is built upon questionable cultural narratives, then a nation is also haunted by the spectral figure of its own fabrication" (xix). While it is Urquhart's first novel *The Whirlpool* that I will focus on in a later chapter, Sugars's article on *Away* is relevant to a

consideration of how spectres haunt literatures as well as the narratives of collections. Sugars writes:

> If nations are precarious fabrications, founded on some sense of cultural belonging and authenticity (even if they are continually being renegotiated), they are also "haunted" by the delusional quality of this fabrication (hence haunted by an awareness of a lack), a kind of willing suspension of disbelief that enables the nation's members to "imagine" that they constitute a cohesive whole, while at the same time realizing that this illusion is always partial and tentative. (1-2)

The haunting of hegemonies disturbs or dismantles the illusion of completeness, and draws murky attention to things outside of the collection that could potentially (and potentially should) belong within.

Although not often considered as a primarily Gothic or postcolonial text, Atwood's poetry collection *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* provides an interesting demonstration of spectrality. Moodie, whose sister did not believe Canada had any of its own ghosts,[2] returns in Atwood's poetry to haunt the land that she felt had alienated her. The collection concludes with a poem where a Moodie-incarnate rides public transit through the concrete wilderness of Toronto, a city slightly west of where she lived in the early nineteenth century. Even though *Journals* renders Moodie's life in Atwood's language, informed by Atwood's poetics (in "The Bush Garden," planted objects "puls[e] like slow amphibian hearts" [34], their bloody disposition suggesting that even the familiar in Canada is

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[2] As cited by Jonathan Kertzer in *Worrying the Nation*: "'As to ghosts or spirits they appear totally banished from Canada. This is too matter-of-fact a country for such supernaturals to visit. Here there are no historical associations, no legendary tales of those that come before us. Fancy would starve for lack of marvelous food to keep her alive in the backwoods. We have neither fay nor fairy, ghost nor bogle, satyr nor wood-nymph; our very forests disdain to shelter dryad or hamadryad'" (qtd in 38). Original source: Traill, Catharine Parr. *The Backwoods of Canada.* 1836. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989. Pg. 128.

violently defamiliarized to the emigrant), the collection frames aspects of Moodie's life with the implication that they have surfaced of their own (or Moodie's own) volition: "Though they buried me in monuments/of concrete slabs, of cables/... it shows how little they know/about vanishing: I have/my ways of getting through" (60). Although it is Atwood's poetry collection, Moodie, as the original collector of these hopes, opinions, fears, and experiences, lurks within these passages.

In David Staines's foreword to the illustrated *Journals,* he quotes Atwood's suggestion that the inheritor of a story, the new author of the collection, may sense and be affected by this same spectral presence. Atwood recounts the "particularly vivid dream" that spawned *Journals*: "I had written an opera about Susanna Moodie, and there she was, all by herself on a completely white stage" (qtd. in Staines xi). Staines is convinced that "Susanna Moodie began to haunt [Atwood]," and further quotes Atwood:

> [w]hat kept bringing me back to the subject [of Moodie]—and to Susanna Moodie's own work—were the hints, the gaps between what was said and what hovered, just unsaid, between the lines, and the conflict between what Mrs. Moodie felt she ought to think and feel and what she actually did think and feel. (xi)

Atwood is interested in what Moodie's anecdotes refuse to say, the pauses and silences in between them—the white spaces of her collection. At the same time, these interstices, in any collection, seem inevitably haunted and occupied by the traces of a collector. Is this why, in my recurring dream in which I walk down an empty corridor that cuts through my father's collections, I never feel alone? Perhaps; but still it seems suspiciously sentimental, and a little too Romantic. Rather than suggest that my father's ghost haunts me, I prefer to

believe that when I am in the presence of his collections, I am keeping company with a system of hyperbolic synonyms, fantastic substitutions, and an altogether very lively crowd of meanings. The collection is a site stamped with the impression of the original collector. In this sense, as a lingering phantom presence, the collector, too, becomes memorialized by the collection and subject to reinterpretation by the collector's inheritor.

These spectral presences, ghosts of the original lives of objects and the original collector of those objects, are the "phantasmagorias of the interior" (Benjamin, "Exposé" 9) of the arcade. Any collection, whether stored or displayed in a cluttered basement, a museum, a warehouse, an attic, an ark, a workshop, a garden, an office, a bunker, a studio apartment, a shopping cart, a suitcase, or a journal (and whether its contents are in a state of dishevelment or neatly lined up along a mantle), exists as an arcade because it never just *occupies* space. The collection *operates* a system that transforms functionality and renovates the familiar. The collection is a channel between the past and the present. And the arcade, as open passageway, as flowing space, symbolizes a tolerance, and indeed an expectation of an encompassing architecture of containment. In communication with one another, literary arcades constitute the rows and aisles of a grand stadium, while the stadium itself is a structure designed to accommodate a crowd.

I take my title for this study from Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family,* in which he articulates his desire to collect all the things he could know about his father: his habits, his preferences, and his memories. At the same time, as Ondaatje pursues these intangibles, he acknowledges that he will never grasp them. What makes these omissions bearable is that Ondaatje's desire alone (the longing of the person constructing the collection) is enough to sustain an incomplete set of memories. "In the end," Ondaatje

states, speaking of his absent father, "all your children move among the scattered acts and memories with no more clues. Not that we ever thought we would be able to fully understand you. Love is often enough, towards your stadium of small things" (172). A stadium is not a finite or sacred architecture, but, as considered by Ellerbe Becket, more of a "stage set" with a "festival atmosphere" (82-83). In Rod Sheard's *The Stadium: Architecture for the New Global Culture,* Sheard suggests that stadiums "are the 'new' places of public assembly. They complement, and to some extent have replaced, the cathedral square, the market place, the souk and the piazza" (169) to say nothing of the arcade. Meanwhile, the stadium, taken as metaphor, symbolizes a fabrication like the nation, an imagined community of spectators and performers. It is a venue that encircles and embodies a platform for performance. The seats of the stadium are full of small things, ready to rush down the aisle, interrupt, and change the outcome of the show. They will not participate independently, however; these things are grouped together in respective rows, in fictions-as-arcades. Significantly, it is within our criticisms of these fictions that the literary arcades grace each other's presence and come together in a more grand, if crowded, arena of desire.

Chapter One:

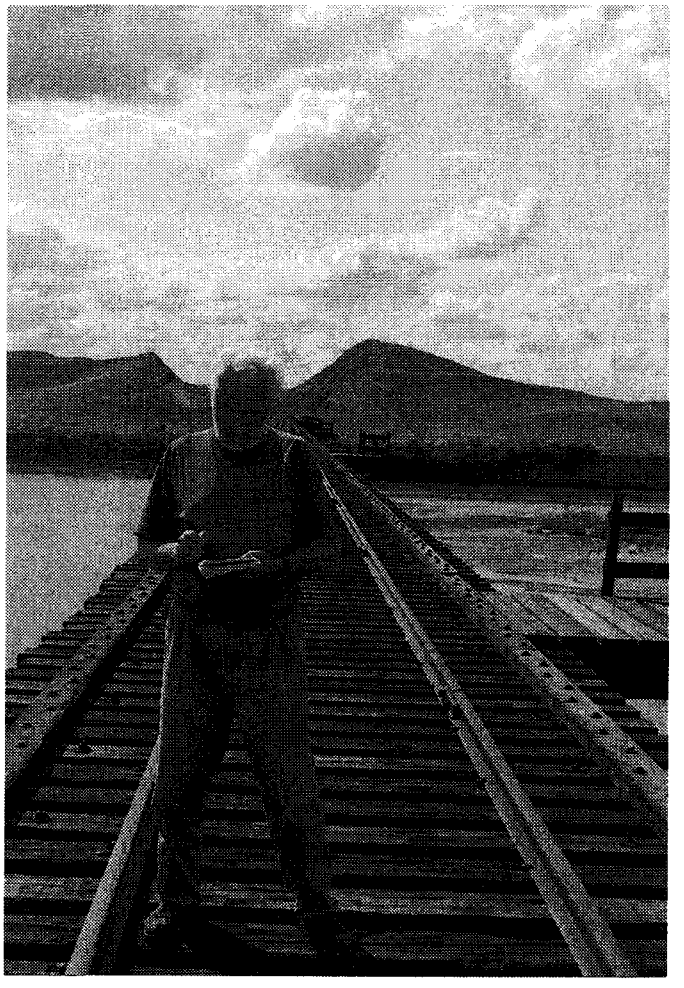
The Collector

O bliss of the collector, bliss of the man of leisure! Of no one has less been expected, and no one has had a greater sense of well-being ... For inside him there are spirits, or at least little genii, which have seen to it that for a collector—and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be—ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them.

Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library"

What else is there but the dream?

Robert Kroetsch, *Alibi*



Robert Kroetsch on a research trip for Alberta (early 1990s) just outside Empress, AB. This bridge has since been torn down as salvage.

On February 13, 1947, Eric Harvie became a collector. He received a telephone call informing him that the drilling team at his Leduc No. 1 site had struck oil. Over the years, while working as a lawyer, Harvie had purchased the mineral rights for close to half a million acres of Alberta land, from Vermillion, on the Saskatchewan border, into the interior of the province, and stretching west beyond Edmonton. The Leduc site happened to be situated on land that he had optioned to Imperial Oil; his royalties were to be substantial. But this was just the first spurt of what would become the veritable geyser of his oil wealth. When the belly of the same Devonian formation that fed Leduc No.1 bloated to feed other proximal wells, Harvie suddenly found himself in a financial position to be able to satiate his desire for almost anything in the world. Instead of one particular item though, Eric Harvie developed a desire for everything in the world.

To propose that Harvie *became* a collector during that significant phone call from the president of Imperial Oil is a fabrication, or at least a fiction. For, in fact, then fifty-five, Harvie had already been a collector for most of his life. The vast array of Aboriginal artifacts that he had accrued over the years made his basement resemble what biographer Fred M. Diehl refers to as "a 19th century pawn shop" (xiii). His sister-in-law Marjorie believed Harvie's collecting hobby to be genetic, grouping him with the other "pack-rats" in his family, from his hometown of Orillia, Ontario (Diehl 2). His son Donald, like Marjorie, claimed that his father was not so much a collector as simply a man who "wouldn't throw anything away" (Diehl 2). The highly private Harvie himself, granting rare and uncharacteristic consent "to lift the veil slightly and talk ... about aspects of his career" (Brennan 10) to journalist Peter C. Newman shortly before his death, "was willing to impart only one sage bit of advice: 'Never throw away old socks, old underwear or old

cars'" (qtd. in Brennan 10). While the recommendation certainly reflects Harvie's lifetime proclivity to salvage, it does not even begin to articulate the historical significance of the collections he purposefully built and left in trust to his beloved Alberta. With donations totaling over one hundred and fifty thousand objects (Ainslie, "Deaccessioning" 174), what began as Harvie's personal collection established the foundation for what is today the largest museum in Western Canada, the Glenbow.

On one level, a museum's objects, encased in glass or plastic, made familiar and accessible by affiliated commentary (provided on adjacent panels), are static. If such collections are touched (legally) it is only by cotton-gloved hands. The spectator remains aware that the display did not arrange or collect itself autonomously. But *whose* touch has graced the collection (not just that of the curator, and not just "touch" in terms of dusting or dismantling)? What remains unknown or private about the *past* processes that created the public collection in the first place? This shadow of the collection slides across the floor, escapes set confines, and gestures to *outside* influence. The original collector haunts the collection. In *Audacious and Adamant: The Story of Maverick Alberta*, Aritha van Herk suggests that the spectre of Harvie, "the inspired and inspiring ghost of the 'eclectic collector,' haunts the province" of Alberta itself (94); I will focus here, more specifically, on how Harvie continues to haunt his collections, but also, later, on how this haunting is itself then collected into narrative by yet another Alberta maverick, Robert Kroetsch.

Death or dispossession physically disappears the collector from the collection's aisles, but the collector never leaves silently, nor totally. He or she always leaves a trace, often unclear, but always clearly *there*, marked by the presence of the objects. The collector's relationship, then, to the inheritors and future audiences of the collection is akin

to the author's relationship to the reader of a text. Texts themselves, after Roland Barthes, signify the death of their authors, or at least the severing of the body of the text from the body of the author; the two do not *need* to be read or considered in tandem. Yet, as Barthes states in *The Pleasure of the Text*, "in the text, in a way, *I desire* the author" (27, his emphasis). The spectral presence of the author takes shape according to the reader's perceived understanding of the condition of a text's authorship, just as the spectre of the collector *within a collection* takes shape according to the spectator's own subjective set of longings. The collector's spectral presence is neither "stereotype" (Barthes, *Pleasure* 42) nor banal mimicry, as it is a *surreal* extension of his or her life *as* a collector and not a coherent or complete representation. The boldness of this presence depends upon what the spectator desires of the collection.

The haunting presence of Harvie's spectre in Kroetsch's 1983 novel *Alibi* and its 1992 sequel *The Puppeteer* speak more to the desire of the spectator/writer who must himself collect a version of Harvie, and, in doing so, must to a large extent imagine the oilman's own desire. Both novels feature a scout (easily seduced and distracted by his own desires) working for an elusive, affluent Calgary oilman-turned-collector. In *Alibi,* the collector is literally phantomlike, never seen, encountered only once in a cave that becomes suddenly shrouded in darkness. In *The Puppeteer,* the collector is an outside presence as the narrator of the novel; when he enters the body of the text, he cross-dresses, demonstrating that if one glimpses any sense of the collector within his or her collection it will be the collector in disguise, as playful, mischievous *doppelgänger.* The collection thus always *reinvents* its collector; the collector does not achieve eternal life by preserving objects that speak to his or her past, but gains a new life through the spectator's dream. Accordingly,

both *Alibi* and *The Puppeteer* trouble the concept of collecting as singular or coherent ideology: everything can be considered collectable, and everyone acts as a collector in some capacity. But before I discuss how Harvie-as-collector haunts these postmodern fictions, I feel it pertinent to provide the background of his ghost story.

Eric Harvie: An Oilman's Orchestrated Accrual

Faced with his sudden wealth, yet middle-aged and determined to die penniless, Harvie decided he would direct his passion for collecting towards "the research, assembly, preservation and display of Western Canadian history" (Diehl 157). He established the privately funded Glenbow Foundation in 1954 (Dempsey 17) and hired a team of local consultants, caretakers, and curators to run it. During its inaugural years, the Glenbow's primary mandate was "to collect, not to exhibit" (Dempsey 14), until Harvie opened the Glenbow Foundation-Alberta Government Museum to the public in 1964. Two years after that, he officially turned the entire Glenbow Foundation, all of its findings, plus an additional five-million-dollar investment in the collection, over to the province of Alberta under the agreement that his Riveredge and Devonian charitable foundations would continue to support the museum.

In addition to consciously preserving the history of Western Canada, Harvie endeavoured, in no small way, to bring the history of the rest of the world *to* the West. Diehl imagines[1] Harvie wondering aloud "I can afford to travel the world and see these things but where is the average youngster growing up in the prairies ever going to see a suit

[1] I feel it pertinent to point out the conditional modifiers prefacing most of Diehl's quotations, for example, Harvie "*would* reply—his black eyes sparkling" (xiv, my emphasis). This suggests that Diehl cites what he believes Harvie would 'commonly' say in certain situations. As a result, Diehl is authoring these quotations. He too is subject to the position of spectator of Harvie's collection; Harvie, as conceived in this biography, is to a certain extent *Diehl's* imagined spectre of the collector.

of armour?" (xiv). Harvie contracted scouts from all over the world to join him in the considerable task of collecting for this cause. Frances W. Kaye lauds the "depth" and "greater context" that this global scope produced for the Glenbow Museum's audiences (137). She suggests that "[e]ven Harvie's most eclectic objects, collected out of any coherent context, served the purpose of bringing the globe to Alberta" (137). For example, in addition to First Nations headdresses, Harvie acquired military paraphernalia, Crown Jewel replicas, and even undergarments once owned by Queen Victoria (van Herk, *Mavericks* 392). While he stored away taxidermic specimens and minerals indigenous to his own region, mounted butterflies were shipped to him from overseas, and his vast collection of international artwork and antiquarian books grew steadily. In wanting to bring home to Alberta what the average prairie citizen did not have the financial resources to go and see him or herself, he created a markedly Western Canadian narrative comprised of what lay both within and without Western Canadian history.

According to Hugh A. Dempsey, the Glenbow's Chief Curator Emeritus who started working in the Archives Department in 1956, Harvie's staff (secretly) had their own system for classifying some of their boss's less obviously relevant acquisitions. While a great majority of the accrued objects could be considered "Canadiana," those less easily labeled by national or historical adjectives were regarded instead as "Harvieana" (19). It may seem that the collector is at least initially operating according to one desire, but along the way that longing erupts into multiple, less apparent aspirations (one object leads to another), and results in delightful unpredictability and mystery—hence "Harvieana." As a museum display, however, "Harvieana" eventually became a financial nuisance.

Patricia Ainslie, former curator of art and vice-president of collections for the

Glenbow, was part of a management and strategy team that, from 1993-2006, developed several initiatives to ensure the museum could remain afloat despite being financially weighed down by its mixed blessing of an abundance of artifacts. At the time of this committee's creation, the museum was suffering from the strain of tremendous debt and the threat of bankruptcy was looming. When Ainslie published her article "Deaccessioning as a collections management tool," the Glenbow held approximately 1.3 million objects in need of care and attention (173). As the article's title proclaims, one of the strategies that Ainslie and fellow team members employed in order to regain stability was the deaccessioning of select international collections. Ainslie recognized that "Harvie collected with the passion and enthusiasm of a collector in the true Victorian sense of the word, and not with the professional eye of a curator" (174). As a result, "[c]ertain collections have outstanding range and depth, while others lack cohesion, focus, and relevance to Glenbow's mandate" (174). The plan was immediately controversial, as it involved selling off the collections that had been Harvie's gift to Alberta rather than disseminating them throughout other museums and galleries in the province. The strategy also seems antithetical to the ethos of the collector, who instills a value in objects that is personal, related to the artifact's and/or collector's history, but is not economically driven. But deaccessioning was deemed necessary in order to prevent the possibility of the absolute diffusion of what was by then renowned as the most important museum in the West. Ainslie, left to manage the collection in the wake of Harvie's passion, employed a team to reassess the coherence of a collection, and set out to define a clear aesthetic that would proclaim, by the rationale of these assessments, which objects *belonged* under the Glenbow's roof and which did not. It became clear that some dissemination was necessary for the collection's larger sustenance.

As Ainslie states, "[m]useums cannot be static, fixed institutions. They must be dynamic and respond to our changing environment" (178-179). The positive result of deaccessioning is similarly evident in the fluid and ever-changing character of the arcade; as an arcade's items are sold off, others can come to the forefront, be properly displayed, and seen.

In a twist of irony, this very flux also speaks to Harvie's ultimate philosophy of acquisition that is an inquiry of not just *what* can be collected but *what else* or *what next* can come to the forefront of the collection. This is a continual process that inherently resists conclusion. Harvie's emphasis on process as in some ways *beyond* product was becoming, by the mid-twentieth-century, characteristic of the more general creative processes of collection and narration in the cultural and sociopolitical spheres of Canada. Jonathan Kertzer reflects how, in this same era of Harvie's collecting renaissance, rather than ascertaining a definitive Canadian literary voice or consciousness, "several critics were claiming that only a tentative/unending/fruitless quest for authenticity defines [Canadian] literature" and also that "[t]he questing itself grants authenticity, even when it is unsuccessful" (22). Harvie's life as a questing collector, his methods of acquisition, and his collections in and of themselves comprise their own narrative, a historical fiction, at least partially imagined by the spectator or scholar. As a fiction, though, it lacks the obvious borders and limitations that govern traditional conceptions of objects that are intended to stand for History.

Derrida, consulting *Civilization and its Discontents,* reads into Freud's self-effacing comments regarding the transience of his own work: "Why archive this? Why these investments in paper, in ink, in characters? … Aren't these stories to be had everywhere?" (Derrida, *Archive Fever* 9). But, of course, even if they seem derivative to Freud, as

'Freud's writings' they become significant historical records; they *will not* be available everywhere in the future. Derrida argues that the question 'why archive?' is not

> a question of the past. It is not the question of a concept dealing with the past that might *already* be at our disposal or not at our disposal, *an archival concept of the archive.* It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. (*Archive Fever* 36)

The collection, an exhibit in *and* about process, is open-ended, faces and embraces the future, and is readily amenable to change. The collection does not remain strictly (chronologically) allegiant to the past. It embraces addition and reordering, according to the contextual forces of *any* present, which enables its continual relevance.

For Harvie, the passage was always just as significant as the product, and Diehl argues, in fact, that he was "more interested in the race than in the prize" (xiii). Dempsey recalls that one of the first directives of the Glenbow Foundation (and, it seems, the most quotable) was Harvie's order to his staff in the early years of the organization: "I want you to go out and collect like a bunch of drunken sailors!" (qtd. in Dempsey 14). The utterance of this command achieved infamy in its repetition, regularly cited in articles and essays about Harvie.[2] The frequency of its reference renders what might have been something muttered in passing, out of frustration, or in a rare moment of facetious humour into an iconic statement illustrative of the workings of the collector. According to Walter Benjamin, there *always* resides a kind of passionate madness in the collector's mind.

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[2] Ainslie, Patricia. "Deaccessioning as a collections management tool." *Museums and the Future of Collecting.* Ed. Simon J. Knell. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 1999. 174; Ainslie, Patricia. "Glenbow: The Legacy of Eric Harvie." *Alberta Museums Review* 26. 1 (2000): 20; Brennan, Brian, "The Man Who Gave Everything: Eric Harvie." *Alberta Oil History* 1. 2 (Spring 2005): 10; Kaye, Francis W. *Hiding the Audience: viewing arts and arts institutions on the prairies.* Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2003. 93.

Benjamin notes in "Unpacking my Library" that

> there is in the life of a collector a dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order. Naturally, his existence is tied to many other things as well: to a very mysterious relationship to ownership … to a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is, their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate. (60)

Although Harvie's proposed methodology of 'intoxicated' acquisition would likely incite disorder, Benjamin's conception of the collector suggests that this initial unruliness is necessary to incite a *re*ordering of things once they are at the stage of being collected. The meaning of Harvie's collections is, as a result, doubled: he collected in order to preserve, and ultimately re-present Western Canadian history, but these collections also reflect his preferences, choices, and desires, and his agency in the very act of gathering.

Any posthumous attempt to *fully* know Harvie's life as a collector is necessarily destined to failure. With all of his rambunctious collecting it is unlikely that there was time to record the process adequately, let alone entirely. However, the notes that do exist in the Glenbow archive, the fonds of Harvie's personal notes, memoranda, agendas for meetings, photographs, newspaper clippings, and his significant correspondence with his scouts, provide a crucial appendix to his resulting collections. It is an appendix that speaks to the individual histories of collected objects as well as the contexts behind their respective accruals. Harvie's contemporary (though not Canadian) collector Benjamin, for his part, strategized the survival of the large spectrum of his own writing and collecting life, making sure to leave "manuscripts, notebooks, and printed papers in the custody of friends and acquaintances in various countries" (Wizisla 1). As for Harvie (like Benjamin, born in

1892), the continued engagement with his collecting oeuvre has been made possible by the materials preserved within the Glenbow Archives that narrate some important details concerning his collecting practice.

When John Gilroy, a British portrait artist who painted both the Queen and the Harvie family, sent Harvie an unsolicited portrait, Harvie requested that Gilroy remove the canvas from the collection of paintings that he *had* commissioned. He insisted, in a letter to Gilroy dated December 16, 1962, "I am really not interested in having the second portrait of myself. One I think is enough, particularly when it is such a good one" (Glenbow Museum G-1-156). One *portrait* of himself may have been enough, but Harvie was far from averse to fostering his own doubleness. His collecting agents across the globe regularly and happily stood in for him as they did their bidding and acquiring on his behalf. Peter Cotton, for example, an architect from Victoria, British Columbia, responded with great enthusiasm to Harvie's invitation to be an agent for him, writing on January 15, 1963: "Were I to take your injunction seriously I could spend all my time, cheerfully, in such a pursuit; to our mutual advantage" (Glenbow Museum G-1-155). Indeed, as Kaye observes, Harvie "did not operate in a vacuum. He had his family, his comrades, and his employees to support and guide him" (94). This was fortunate, as illness and old age eventually prevented him from putting his own boots to the ground in search of treasure. Harvie, the collector with his face on the cover of every provincial paper, thanked by government officials and corporate moguls alike, could never have accomplished his mission were it not for the assistance of his many agents around the world.

Despite his fierce protection of his privacy and his frequent absences from his home in Calgary on either collecting missions or vacations (and the two often collided), Harvie

kept up assiduously with professional correspondence to his scouts. His courteous and detailed letters often carry the generous tone of the one he sent to H. Russell Robinson (keeper of The Armouries of the Tower of London) on January 22, 1963: "We don't care to put any limit on the amount you spend or the time you spend on the individual items. I suggest that as you begin to run shy of funds, you give us a little warning and we will either renew credit or otherwise" (Glenbow Museum G-1-158). The largesse of this gesture may seem in keeping with the bold gathering methods of "a bunch of drunken sailors," but in much of his correspondence with his scouts, Harvie (or others by proxy, such as Foundation Vice-President E. J. Slatter) were meticulous in their appraisal of artifacts should they reach the stage of being considered for his collection. Harvie was acutely concerned with the quality and authenticity of the items that he was receiving, often needing photographs or sketches to preview objects before their acquisition. He regularly negotiated over the price of collections and compulsively checked on the shipping of these packages. It would seem that given Harvie's business savvy and his adherence to fastidious protocols he was a collector in control. But the collection has a way of slipping through the accounts. Despite Harvie's best interests to notarize, to plan, to budget, pushing him forward was always his dream, a big dream, the fantasy that he could construct a narrative that could speak for Western Canadian history. This inevitably resulted in some collections that appear to us now as strange, monstrous, and, indeed, even dreamlike.

The Glenbow's Harvie fonds contain over a decade of correspondence with Robert Wotherspoon, mayor of Inverness, vice-chairman of the Scottish Tourist Board, proprietor of several hotels and theatres, and self-affirmed eyewitness of the Loch Ness monster. The *Calgary Herald* published the Scot's Nessie claim on October 28, 1957, quoting

Wotherspoon comparing the occasion of the sighting to "a hole in one in golf. Once it happens to you, everything else seems comparatively unimportant" (Glenbow Museum G-1-159). This is a rather ironic statement, considering that Wotherspoon used the article as a platform to promote what *was* most important to him, Scottish tourism, by informing readers that the current season was "phenomenal—the best we have ever had" (Glenbow Museum G-1-159). Once acquainted with Wotherspoon, while Wotherspoon obtained antique furniture on Harvie's behalf, Harvie, in turn, became Wotherspoon's compatriot in matters of all things Scottish. He fleshed out his warehouses and his city with items of Scottish heritage, and organized regular lectures and film screenings sponsored by the local St. Andrews Society. Perhaps most famously, in 1967, Harvie arranged to have a twenty-seven-foot equestrian Robert the Bruce erected just below the entrance to Calgary's Jubilee Auditorium (Diehl 162). This Bruce itself was an exact copy of the statue Harvie had commissioned for the historic site of the Battle of Bannockburn near Stirling, Scotland three years earlier. Harvie tested the bounds of *what* he could collect, and also began to consider the possibility that he could collect *place* itself.

The transplantation of place plays a large part in who Harvie was, and what he was capable of, as a prosperous possessor. In 1961, he purchased the entire Frontier Ghost Town, "a carnival and museum of western Canadian History" then based in Vancouver (Ainslie, "Glenbow" 21). The town, once collected, was valued for its thousands of individual contents and for its tremendous size as an entire closed community. Dempsey recalls Glenbow employee John George "Red" Cathcart describing the collection as "most interesting" because its "historical value is beyond imagination. I think I have looked at more than six thousand items and there seems no end to it" (qtd. in Dempsey 30).

Additionally, in the south of his own city of Calgary, Harvie created Heritage Park. As Kroetsch describes in his 'non-fiction' work *Alberta,* "the Foundation has helped recreate the West itself in a sixty-acre prairie settlement" (180). By having the funds and means to acquire buildings such as a blacksmith shop once operational in Airdrie and a general store from Claresholm (Kroetsch 180), Harvie enabled objects from the past to become part of a fully functioning historical village and literally take on new life in the present. The resulting narrative of Heritage Park is completely surreal. Like the Frontier Town, it is a carnival in which people from the present participate in the ritual of a historical West that has been self-consciously resurrected, immediately and performatively transgressing the boundaries between the past and the present.

In *Treasures of the Glenbow Museum*, Dempsey cites a reference to the largesse of Harvie's collecting:

> Harvie's travels, often on winter vacations, took him to such places as the Mediterranean, Europe, and the West Indies. Speaking of his Caribbean tours, former law partner George Crawford commented that "For a while it seemed every time he went on vacation he'd rape an island." (19)

Despite the inherent violence in such a statement, the colonialist complicities of Harvie's collecting have never been directly critiqued, most likely because Harvie's intentions were benevolent ones, ardently allegiant to the preservation of history. If he was taking, it was for the benefit of the people of Alberta. On December 16, 1964, Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta J. Percy Page chose the following Francis Parkman quotation to describe the actions of Harvie at the official gala opening of the Glenbow Foundation-Alberta Government Museum: "Faithfulness to the truth of history involves far more than research.

... The narrator must seek to imbue himself with the life and spirit of the time. ... He must himself be, as it were, a sharer or spectator of the action he describes" (Transcript, Glenbow Museum G-1-141). Harvie's attributes of "avid enthusiasm, boundless curiosity, and the financial backing to indulge his passion" as "a collector in the grand Victorian style" (Ainslie, "Glenbow" 19) were accepted unquestioningly because he was gathering artifacts in order to tell a story to, and about, Western Canada.

For Harvie and Wotherspoon, men of wealth and power, nothing was too large to be owned, moved, claimed, and re-established as part of their collections' narratives. When any kind of check was placed upon their authority, they fought acquiescence. For example, later in life, both men took frequent trips for their health and were often ordered by physicians to lessen their workloads. Shortly before his death, Wotherspoon wrote to Harvie (on September 26, 1962): "I find all these rules and regulations rather irksome, but I am informed that if I do not strictly adhere to them, a worse fate awaits me" (Glenbow Museum G-1-160). There is something compelling about the phrasing of this sentence, for the fate implied, death, awaited Robert Wotherspoon regardless. But the subjunctive tissue within this statement, the "if," epitomizes a fascinating quandary for collectors, particularly those endowed with wealth and accustomed to testing their capabilities. By resurrecting the past in the present, can the collector outwit an end to things and perhaps, in a sense, his or her own death?

The short answer is the obvious one: no. The long answer is that even if a collector's desires, experiences, and achievements live on through his or her collection, in order for that life to be heard, and to achieve immortality, the artifacts need to be able to speak or narrate. Again, just as Bal wonders "can things be, or tell, stories?" (99), the

relinquishing of such agency to an inanimate object unsettles me. Even if the objects *are* stories, even if there are ideas *in* things, *who* is reading them? Have these artifacts already (wittingly, or not) been translated by a curator or an inheritor of the collection? With the passing of time, the collection unavoidably undergoes amputation, but also prosthesis, be it the addition of another suitable and similar object, or a change of the shelf, the gallery, or corridor where the objects are displayed. The re-possession of artifacts enacts a departure from their past lives, original collectors, previous owners, and former habitats, whether known or unknown.

For Benjamin, the collection presents a scene; it signifies fate only as a stage, a conduit for a new beginning of what objects can *come to* mean. As Benjamin states, "I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the acquisition of an old book is its rebirth" (61). For Harvie, as it would have also been for Wotherspoon, the "worse fate" to suffer is not just the erasure of a life's work, but also of the testimony of one's involvement and investment in that work. Extraordinarily, the collection does not merely memorialize but grants the collector a second life, one imagined by a collection's readers, and a life that may be continuously reappraised after the other life, the one lived in public, has ceased to exist. The former is the life of Eric Harvie that surfaces in Kroetsch's novels *Alibi* and *The Puppeteer.*

***The Collector Acquires an* Alibi**

In his article "Disunity as Unity," Robert Kroetsch identifies one of the meta-narratives that "asserted itself persistently in the New World context" (31) as "the myth of the new world" (32). This myth is imagined from a Western Canadian perspective in Eric Harvie's collection-as-a-national-narrative, while Kroetsch contends that this myth is "a

dream" that "haunts Canadian writers ... from Susanna Moodie, arriving from England into Quebec and Ontario, to Stephen Leacock, making his comic readings of life in a small town, to contemporary writers like myself" (32). Harvie's legacy poses connections to at least the latter two writers: Kroetsch parodied Harvie's collecting self following Harvie's death, whereas, when Harvie was just a young boy, he mowed Leacock's lawn in Orillia, Ontario. As a matter of fact, the Harvie family believed that one of the characters in Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912) was directly based upon Eric's father, and resented his depiction as grim and humourless (although it is Diehl, Harvie's unapologetically impassioned biographer, who recollects this anecdote, making it difficult to distinguish to whom the resentment truly belongs [11]). What is missing in this protective resentment, though, is an understanding of Leacock's work as not just a "dig" at a community but as a parody of one in which any resemblances to real people are always complicit with the apparatus of fiction.

Master theorist of parody Mikhail Bakhtin unfortunately did not work with the ethos of an archivist like Harvie or Benjamin, and following his death, a great dig for manuscripts of his work commenced. His survivors discovered that some of his writings "were partially lost during his forced moves; some disappeared when the Nazis burned down the publishing house that had accepted his large manuscript on the *Erziehungsroman*" (Holquist xv). Bakhtin's own theoretical and critical archaeology was much more successful, famously uncovering obscure authors and texts, and then exhibiting the complex composition of their literatures as heteroglossic, polyphonous, and carnivalesque. It is within the Bakhtinian carnival of *Alibi* that, almost seventy years after a trace of the Harvie family might first have surfaced in a Canadian satire, the unmistakable

spectre of Eric Harvie emerges more pronouncedly. It is appropriate that for *Alibi,* which according to Kroetsch's early hand-scrawled notes for the novel is "the story of a man who is looking for a spa" (Special Collections U of Calgary 38.14), Kroetsch employs the tradition of the carnival which goes back to the "baths and to the marketplaces of ancient Greece and Rome" (Kroetsch, *Lovely Treachery* 95). Bakhtin's philosophies significantly influence Kroetsch's approach to prose fiction, as *Alibi* experiments with re-positing and parodying the infamous Albertan philanthropist, Harvie, while also playing with the concept that the collection exalts process over product. Kroetsch takes as inspiration not only Harvie as a character, but also his work, and the actual contents of his collection as historically documented. But, as Bakhtin states, when other genres (history, for one) are novelized,

> [t]hey become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the "novelistic" layers of literary language, they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody and finally—this is the most important thing—the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the openended present). (*Dialogic* 7)

Harvie did collect a carnival in real life: while the Frontier Ghost Town is considered to be "a carnival and museum of western Canadian history" (Dempsey 30), Harvie also created his own carnival with Heritage Park, a self-conscious masquerade of "how the West was once" (*Heritage Park Historical Village*). But alternatively, when Kroetsch fictionalizes Harvie-as-collector within the carnival-as-fiction, it is Harvie, rather than the town, that is

given new life. Imagining the collection's *future*, rather than sticking to its past, Kroetsch satirizes Harvie's riddle: what *else* can be collected? If an object transcends utility and becomes the site of the collector's desire, what properties does a collection gain? Can it provoke reverie, can it create community, can it initiate love affairs, or can it incite war? In *Alibi,* the collected object's audience does not merely observe or obtain it; they are seduced by it. They enter the collection (impinging upon the collection's body) while the collection, in turn, arouses desires within them.

The narrator of Kroetsch's *Alibi* is the libidinous William William Dorfen (who most often just goes by "Dorf"). A museum curator-turned-agent, Dorf works as a scout for the god-like collector Jack Deemer, a "millionaire Calgary oilman whose pastime it was to collect anything that was loose" (Kroetsch, *Alibi* 7). Like Harvie, Deemer is described as a private man, sometimes suspected to be living on a ranch elsewhere but who remains, in fact, reclusively hidden away in his Calgary mansion: "He's simply a name. And a legend, of course; the richest of the many rich men spawned in the Alberta oil patch" (13-14). Although he remains unseen, Dorf states that "[e]veryone knew about [Deemer], the man who had so much money, the man who made such a fortune in Alberta oil he was collecting collections. Collecting the world, people said. That's the way they liked to put it; the statement made them part of the conspiracy" (25). Just as Harvie was known to purchase entire collections sight unseen, "Deemer simply collects. It is not a matter of what to collect. He has that kind of money" (13). Deemer never communicates with Dorf in person but rather through written correspondence (and the occasional phone call). *Alibi* opens with a clue in the form of a telegram from Deemer: "Find me a spa, Dorf" (7). And so, Dorf's mission in the novel is to collect for his boss the perfect naturally flowing spa.

Not only does Dorf's employer provide an amusing allusion to Harvie, but immediately after Dorf reads Deemer's telegram he thinks of Karen Strike, an aptly named photographer and documentary-filmmaker with an interest in spas, and a woman he last saw at an art show in the Glenbow Museum. Dorf even likens Strike, who figures prominently in both *Alibi* and *The Puppeteer,* to Deemer, narrating, "[l]ike my boss, she's a lunatic on the subject of history" (8). Additionally, Kroetsch invites comparisons to a member of the crew responsible for the Glenbow through the Kroetschian character Fish. The real-life Jim Fish, according to Kaye, was one of the Glenbow employees whose "formidable managerial skills" were continually "challenged" by Harvie's less than conventional "tastes and methods" (103). Jim Fish was the Glenbow's personal accountant during Harvie's tenure with the Foundation, while Kroetsch's Fish reappears as a tour bus driver in the mountains. The fictional Fish used to work for Deemer in some geological capacity, but the specificities of his job and his reasons for leaving are obscured by a conflicting backstory that ebbs away from him as he swaps stories or quaffs beer with tourists.

In addition to the twists and turns away from factual event or person, what has perhaps dissuaded any published literary criticism on *Alibi* from discussing its allusions to the Glenbow or Eric Harvie is that Jack Deemer embodies Harvie in not only an obscure but also a slightly splintered way. Deemer, of course, gestures towards the legacy of Harvie as an oilman and reclusive benefactor to a collection of considerably ostentatious proportions. However, in his research notes for the novel, Kroetsch considers whether there should be a moment in the novel in which Dorf visits "the Glenbow to study the collections of Deemer's great rival, Harvie," or when Deemer plans "to make an even greater

collection" than that of "Harvie [no][?]" (Special Collections U of Calgary 38.9). As parody, Kroetsch's Deemer embodies and embellishes a representation of Eric Harvie without having to adhere to it rigidly, because Jack Deemer is *not* Eric Harvie, nor is he *explicitly* based on Harvie as he was; he is based on Harvie's *other* self, the spectre of his life as a collector, that remains even today subject to rumour and reinterpretation.

In real life, Eric Harvie was a friend of Norman Luxton's. Harvie helped Luxton establish the Luxton Museum in Banff in the early 1950s, while, Dempsey speculates, "Harvie's involvement in collecting may very well have been ignited by his association with Norman Luxton" (17). "Red" Cathcart, who would become the first curator of the Luxton Museum and came to Calgary to work for the Glenbow Foundation in 1959, wrote a report (dated 14 July 1956) entitled "A Museum is Born." In this report, Cathcart affirms that "[a]long with Norman Luxton's many dreams was one he had for many years, 'To build a Museum.'" (Glenbow Museum M 203 3). Here, Cathcart succumbs to a kind of sentimentalism, as, he notes, tears welled up in Luxton's eyes at the moment he was confronted with Harvie's question, "Norman, what is going to happen to all this collection of yours?" Harvie, of course, already had the answer: "Let's build a museum" (Glenbow Museum M 203 3). While Deemer's ambition for collection is certainly similar to Harvie's, several of Deemer's less benevolent, perhaps more exploitative traits share much with those reputed to have belonged to Luxton. According to Mark Simpson, Luxton, a renowned taxidermist in Banff at the turn of the twentieth century, once abandoned a sailing voyage across the Pacific in favour of raiding Aboriginal graves on the Queen Charlotte Islands. He sought the permission of neither Native community nor government before taking a significant number of human relics into his possession (91). And there is indeed something

about collecting bones, and skulls in particular, that seems symbolic of the despotic spirit of a collector such as Deemer. Furthermore, on this mission Luxton contracted a fever that necessitated his moving to a place where his body could heal and where he could get back to his taxidermic and collecting practices. When Simpson expounds, "Where else but to Banff, health spa and wildlife paradise, could he go to make himself new…?" he connotatively underlines the "revivifying" capital that Luxton could make running a taxidermist's shop (91) while simultaneously regaining his health. What Luxton and Deemer have in common, with Harvie and Wotherspoon as well, is that inasmuch as they covet specific forms of capital, they also covet a place in which to heal; the spa is the most prominent object of Deemer's desire throughout *Alibi.* The very first spa that Dorf visits is also, in fact, in Banff. At this spa, the dense fog hovering over the steaming mineral waters momentarily skews Dorf's perception and he believes he is encountering a space "full of floating heads" (10). In his notes for the novel, Kroetsch debated whether Deemer should turn out, after all, to be just a "floating head; not a man at all, but a woman; the rich man's wife … or mistress … or even daughter…" (Special Collections U of Calgary 38.15). The ellipses seem to suggest that Kroetsch himself did not rule any option out, but rather kept an entire collection of possibilities in mind for his collector. In turn, the collector, Deemer, the one who deems what should be gathered, remains a mutable character, parodied as one whose intense desire is fueling the operation, but whose identity is multiplicitous and ultimately unknowable.

In portraying a larger-than-life collector, Kroetsch accordingly hyperbolizes the act of collecting itself; every object in the novel can be (and is) considered collectable. Robert Wilson identifies this "concept of a collection" employed "for absurdist ends," as the

novel's "vehicle for making serious (or seriously playful) comments upon the nature, scope and limitations of human conceptuality" (93). If so, then the trunk of Jack Deemer's vehicle is packed full: with ceremonial masks, walking sticks, locks and keys, miniature buddhas, broken stones, skeletons, shrunken heads, and Japanese armour. Some of these artifacts parallel those in Harvie's collection, and Deemer commanding Dorf to find him a place also invites comparisons to Harvie's aforementioned collecting oeuvre. But the spa is a different kind of collected entity because, in *Alibi*, it retains agency. It can be collected but not entirely claimed because it brings the collector to its location rather than the other way around. In a way, it collects the collector through its resistance to being appropriated, and it contains the collector as it immerses his or her body in its waters. When Dorf tells Karen Strike of Deemer's request she explains, "Water cures were big in the nineteenth century. … The mineral hot springs were developed so the well-to-do might suffer their ills in comfort" (8), thereby elucidating the potential motivation behind the presumably aged Deemer's particular desire. Ironically, as a younger collector Eric Harvie spent a great deal of time searching for reservoirs of fossil fuels, and so, as Kaye notes, "the very essence that made Harvie wealthy and enabled the collection, also fuelled farm consolidation, the demise of the small towns, and drilling on reserve, sacred, and environmentally fragile lands" (102). *Alibi* changes the constitution of the sought-after earthly deposit from non-renewable oil to life-sustaining mineral water, offering more of a parallel to Harvie's many geological mineral specimens—an exhibit that continues to be part of the Glenbow today. In addition to its playfulness, however, the spa in *Alibi* figures for much more than mineral constituents, or waters that heal the body. The spa demonstrates how the collection's space invites participation, and can come alive as carnival.

After traveling throughout the novel from Banff to England, Wales, Portugal, and Greece in search of the perfect spa, Dorf eventually finds Deemer's prize startlingly close to home. Deadman Spring (Ainsworth Hot Springs, renamed and reinvented in the novel) is about thirty miles north of Nelson, British Columbia. The ultimate prize in *Alibi* is not a pristine or polished trophy. Deadman Spring is downright dilapidated:

> Deadman Spring is a little ramshackle run-down spa with a mineral hot spring that runs from deep inside a cave into a small swimming pool. The whole damned thing was up for sale, lock, stock and barrel: the owner was going belly up, waiting for customers to drive west through the Rocky Mountains into the next mountain trench, into the next range of mountains. (200)

As a spot yet unfrequented by the tourists who visit three of the finest hot springs in the country on the other side of the lake, this spa proves to be the quintessential collector's treasure. It provides opportunity for rejuvenation, but has yet to be truly *found* by the world.

This search for a spa is not the first hunt that Deemer has assigned to Dorf in which the object[ive] represents the literal extension or preservation of life itself. Once in Budapest, for example, Dorf found value in a rare collection of "teeth," because teeth "will survive when all else is gone. Teeth … may well be our only immortality" (106). But in addition to collections that can figure for eternal life, at one point early in the novel Karen reads Deemer's collecting as the way that he distracts himself from the inevitability of death. She encourages Dorf to pursue buying a spa for Deemer, and why not also "[a] spring, a forest, a mountain—if that'll keep him from seeing that he's got to die" (21). Dorf contends,

> [s]he had it all figured out, she was certain. Jack Deemer, there in his mansion behind its guardian row of spruce, its tall and northward facing windows staring down onto the clustered skyscrapers in the bowel of the city; Deemer, his house and his trees and his privacy looking down from the rich seclusion of Mount Royal, had seen one day, maybe late one evening, instead of his own Midas wealth, his own death. (21)

Eric Harvie's collecting was dedicated to restoration, to enabling the preservation of a historical narrative of the land that would exist even after all the oil had run dry. *Alibi* exaggerates the concept of restorative practice, proposing an embalming not of a past, but of vivacious motive, of the *jouissance* of the collector. Kroetsch's Fish speculates that Deemer's ultimate (re)quest is for a way "to go on living forever" (57). Dorf finds a healing spa, and there is no guarantee it will save the bodies that enter its waters—but it *could.* It is a pool with an unknown centre, and as it churns within its cave it allows for the spectator to not just enter its contents but to fantasize about what supernatural properties it might hold to restore, repair, and provide new life. The bather in the spa asks the question that the apprehender of every collection comes to face, as the desire to collect is infectious, as it arouses within the spectator an appetite to acquire: what *else* might be contained or hidden within the spa's currents?

At one point in *Alibi,* Dorf attempts to distinguish himself as one who does not ask these kinds of questions, merely the neutral scout for a collecting zealot. He announces, "I am only the collector's agent. I only act out the collector's desire. The desire is his" (133). Yet, towards the end of *Alibi,* Dorf finds his actions betraying these words. In the chapter "Deadman Spring About To Fulfil [sic] Its Promise, Nature Itself Awaits The Moment," on

the evening of August 1st, fifteen minutes before Dorf plans to close the spa for the evening, word arrives that a limousine has pulled in. Dorf narrates, "Deemer had come to find me. I was ready to be found. He had come to find my finding. And that was ready too; the rocks listened; the water was stilled" (223). Karen's cameras are set up to tape Deemer's entrance, and Dorf, who has never met his boss, attempts to envision "what Deemer might be in the flesh. That legendary man who had collected Borneo and Tibet and Lake Titicaca, tablets in languages that couldn't be read, a fragment of the moon, and Bronze Age spearheads, into his four warehouses" (223). But suddenly, the collector's scout-turned-spectator, waiting to see how the collector appears in the presence of his collection, is greeted with *tabula rasa,* white space. After a flash of blinding light (likely a malfunction of Karen's cameras—but not *definitively*), Deemer becomes a ghost, "etched in a white whiter than white, as if a shadow itself, instead of being dark, was whiter than its shadow obduration" (224). Dorf swears Deemer does not walk towards him, in the flesh, but that he is a "walking skeleton" (224). But after the initial confusion and fear, terror yields to delight as Dorf and his neighbouring bodies in the spa touch, ask for one another all at once. The resulting Babel creates disorder, "[t]he lovely maze of our naming," as it reorders "[o]ur naming ourselves into new names" (227). There is laughter, and abundant happiness, and embracing, and the site of the spa, of the collection, becomes a carnal carnival. Dorf fails, in the end, to actually meet Deemer in the flesh; but he believes in the spectral presence that lingered at the mouth of the cave. He retreats to a cabin to transcribe his journal, and breathe life into his collector as character in his manuscript.

Shortly before Dorf's liminal encounter with Deemer, and although he has insisted the desire that drives the collecting process is *not* his, he does recognize a unique ability of

his own: that he has a life to give away. First, in name, Dorf is William William Dorfen. Dorf tells the mysterious and beguiling Julie Magnuson in the first spa in the novel (in Banff) that he,

> had two grandfathers by the first name of William, both with the same first name, and my parents, farming people northeast of Calgary in the Battle River country, in a futile hope that I might receive at least one inheritance, named me after both of them. Billy Billy Dorfen. And all I got from my ancestors, it turned out, was the conviction that I needed two of everything. ... Two lives, possibly. (13)

However, it is not until an ailing visitor *in need* of a name arrives at the Deadman Spring that Dorf realizes he can part with one of his 'William's, and realizes that "[s]omehow I had two lives. I had one that I could give away. I saw that. Maybe that is the human condition. We have each two lives. We each have one that must be given away" (204). Here, when Dorf speculates on what could be considered the "human condition" (204), he speaks to the collecting condition, a division, doubling, and extending of a self. This doubling is echoed by Julie's observation that we live "by our alibis. ... We were somewhere else when it happened. Or should have been. Or shouldn't have been" (125). The novel's title might indeed refer to the removal, retrieval, and reassignment of a thing's natural habitat, a sequence implicit in the act of collecting. It also speaks to a collector's employment of scouts, agents, of Dorfs—a name that is, as Robert Lecker points out, a play on "the anagram for 'fraud,' for fiction," but not the real thing (89). Significantly, while "alibi" gestures to Deemer's absence throughout the novel, Dorf authors Deemer's life as a collector out of the clues he is given. Dorf wonders, "What else is there but the dream?" (35); while the collection formed, especially by an ambitious collector such as Deemer (or

Harvie), defies the assumptions of *what* can be collected, it dares an onlooker or an accomplice to dream beyond the conventional. In turn, Dorf as narrator of *Alibi* dreams Deemer into existence, considering, imagining, and, once, briefly facing his ghostly presence.

As Deemer's agent *and* author throughout *Alibi*, Dorf keeps pace as the novel's self-conscious narrator, drawing consistent, if subtle, attention to how the processes of collecting and writing mirror one another. He alludes to the many ways of apprehending the narrative/object (when he first receives Deemer's message to find a spa, Dorf turns "the piece of paper upside down and [tries] to read it that way" [7]), to the fact that words themselves can appeal to a writer and become subject to repetition throughout a work ("'A bath of desire,' I said. I liked that, had used it twice before Karen protested" [25]), and, most of all, to the understanding of both writing and collecting as ongoing, sometimes exhilarating, and often frustrating processes ("I cross out *I am* and write in *He is* ... He ... I... What does it matter? I am, he is, at last, this morning, trying to catch up" [51]). As Wilson states, "the concept of the collection" displays "the actual limitations of human thought and language. If its handles upon 'reality' are as slippery, elusive, arbitrary, and groundless as a collection (any and all), then what shall one say about 'reality'? What remains of it? How else could it be reached? What shall one say about fiction?" (94). Kroetsch's novel *says* something about fiction through the slippery, elusive, arbitrary quests of both Deemer (the authority) and Dorf (who authors Deemer); the spa, after all, does not provide a definitive solution for the collector, and the novel remains open-ended. While *Alibi* literarily refuses closure or resolution, its figurative theme of "openness" is repeatedly rendered by the recurring imagery of falling or wading into the unknown. For

example, the mysterious Julie Magnuson who seduces Dorf in various places throughout the novel eventually plummets off a cliff in Dorf's rented car; Dorf pitches forward into the darkness of Deadman Spring after the confusion that ensues following Deemer's arrival; Dorf shoots Julie's lover, Manny de Medeiros, as he approaches Dorf's cabin at the end of the novel, and Manny tumbles over the side of his canoe and into the lake. This groundless venture into the unknown or the unseen, this loss of control, reminds readers of the journey of both collector and writer. Both fictions and collections "emblematize the inherent openness of language and textuality, the netted nestworks of possibilities" (Wilson 100). Accordingly, *The Puppeteer* does not conclude the narrative(s) of *Alibi*; it repeats, recycles, and inverts them.

The Puppeteer: *Parody of The Collector*

In an interview with Lee Spinks, Kroetsch explains that, rather than consider *The Puppeteer* a sequel to *Alibi,* he sees the two novels existing "as a diptych," that is, "the notion from art of two facing pictures" (14). Certainly, and in many ways, *The Puppeteer* seems like a reflection of *Alibi.* Both novels are collections of in-common characters (Dorf, Deemer, Fish, and Julie) and similar literary forms (quest narrative, murder mystery, romance, travel writing, detective novel). But, in typical Kroetschian fashion, *The Puppeteer* does not merely mimic *Alibi*; it reflects its funhouse-mirror image. Jack Deemer loses any shred of resemblance to Eric Harvie, and as narrator of *The Puppeteer* is a spying, thieving, tyrannical, omnipresent *voyeur* of the behaviour of others. Additionally, as Lynette Hunter observes, *The Puppeteer* is a novel in which "[t]he narrator changes: It is no longer evasive [as in *Alibi*] but shuttling, not juxtaposing devices from a variety of genres but mixing voice and so dislocating the sense of a posi-tioned speaker/writer/author. There

is no disruption here but rather a braiding together of other voices between which a writer might shuttle" (201). Where *Alibi* showcases an accumulation of objects, *The Puppeteer* cycles through a series of collectors. Significantly, the collector's self may not be fixed as an individual, but as a phantom self so spectral and mysterious that it might be taken as disguise. Furthermore, the collector may appear as different selves at various points in the life of the collection. *The Puppeteer*, then, subverts the possibility that any single point of view can be capable of telling the life story of a collector in its entirety.

The novel opens with Maggie Wilder, a woman in her forties recently separated from her husband Henry Ketch, a collector of Greek icons. Living temporarily in her cousin's Vancouver home, Maggie is writing an autobiography of an icon of her own (despite Henry's insistence that it can only be considered a biography): her wedding dress. She bought the dress second-hand, and has always been curious about its previous life. She sits up late at night with great expectations, drinking beer, eating pizza, wearing the dress. She has discovered that when she puts the dress on, she can finally "hear the story she intended to tell" (2). Throughout the novel, on a quest to recover her dress's history, Maggie ends up discovering that her garment has a rather disastrous past. Its first owner was Julie Magnuson, and her groom, one Jack Deemer, now wants the dress back. When wearing the dress, Maggie becomes inextricable from the object that Deemer wishes to collect. But Maggie's investigation into the identity of her dress, a journey that takes her from *Alibi's* Deadman Spring, to Italy, and eventually to Greece, turns the tables on Deemer. The more Maggie travels, the more fragments for her autobiography she accumulates, and the more it becomes clear to the reader that Maggie is not the *collected*; she is also a *collector.*

In addition to William William Dorfen and Jack Deemer, Maggie Wilder can be added to the roster of collectors in Kroetsch's fiction. While holed up for days at a time in her cousin's house waiting for her wedding dress to speak to her, Maggie orders pizza after pizza. In addition to simply reflecting her poor eating habits, the half-eaten pizzas occupying the fridge form a kind of collection themselves. Deemer-as-narrator reflects how "[t]he rubble and design of a pizza, its ordered blur of colours and textures and shapes, arouse in me the collector's will to win" (112). Picking up on this in his review of *The Puppeteer,* Laurie Ricou likens the "formula" for pizza to both collection and fiction: "put anything in you like, don't fret over the combination, cover it in cheese and bake in a very hot oven. Presto. A novel you can read with your fingers" (141). A pizza and a wedding dress may be immediately distinguishable from one another (as heirloom and perishable), but Kroetsch playfully subverts the assumption that one should be appreciated over the other. After all, objects, when collected, lose their utilitarian function and their intended economic or market value; they are reinscribed, and rewritten, by the collector. It may seem that some sort of hierarchy or comparison is taking place in the act of collecting itself, as only specific objects are gathered under the umbrella of a specific collection. While Kroetsch states in his interview with Spinks, though, "I think [the collector] has a strong impulse to make the world cohere in any way possible" (15), any modernist aspect to the collector's impulses and habits is overruled by the very fact that, in order to collect, the collector must address "things out of context" (15). Kroetsch contends,

> Nowadays we tend to believe that context is so important; but by taking things out of context and placing them in a museum, or whatever, it's possible to radically alter their meaning. And that makes us uneasy. Just look at our contemporary

> unease about past archaeological and anthropological studies. We live in an age of enormous doubt and the urge to collect is an interesting expression of this condition. (15)

Maggie does not bother to take off her vintage dress when eating her sloppy meals of beer and pizza; what she cherishes is the unknown history of the dress's *past*; what she longs for is to find out what she does *not* know about the man delivering her pizzas.

Maggie immediately assumes that "the pizza man" ("[t]hat was her first name for him" [1]) could be considered something *other* than a pizza man when he crosses her threshold wearing a "tall black hat with … straight sides and [a] flat top"; this, and "his unruly reddish-grey beard, made him look like nothing so much as a Greek Orthodox priest" (1). The woman who answers the phone at Midnight Pizza when Maggie calls back to order another pie refers to this monk-pizza-courier as Papa Vasilis, also known as Papa B. Unable to shake her curiosity concerning his surprising appearance, Maggie invites Papa B in for coffee. A relationship forms between the two, eventually providing him with an opportunity to offer his own thoughts on the subject of Maggie's autobiography, and to confirm Maggie's belief that "in its own way that dress—it might just be talking" (29). Through a little detective work of her own, Maggie accumulates enough evidence to suggest that her pizza man, Papa B, is actually *Alibi's* Dorf, on the run from the police after supposedly shooting Manny de Medeiros (although Karen Strike has been photographing the bottom of the lake, section by section, for years, and has yet to capture the image of a body). After returning from Deadman Spring where she collects this final clue, Maggie discovers that Dorf has snuck into her cousin's house and secreted himself away from the authorities in the attic. And although she calls him out on his slippery identity ("You

haven't even got a name I can get hold of" [99]), she decides to collect and contain him in the attic until she can figure him out. With its walls lined with warehouse-like shelves full of Maggie's cousin's botanical samples and specimens, the attic is an immediately appropriate museum in which to keep her subject/object. Within this space, the pizza-man-Papa-B-William-William-Dorfen decides to dramatize, for Maggie, the story of a collector. Significantly, Dorf retells the story of *Alibi* as shadow puppet show, a performance in which the bodies are visible only through negation and are never entirely exposed.

Dorf tells Maggie that it was the Greeks who discovered that shadow puppets could "say what couldn't be said" (106). Using Karaghiosi (to whom he refers as the most popular of all the Greek shadow puppets), Dorf stages an epic, fantastic re-enactment of *Alibi* in which the puppets dramatize several scenes that were never "said" by Dorf as *Alibi's* narrator, including the narrative's moments that he did not even witness (like Julie's plunging over the cliff). The characters in Dorf's puppet show include Julie, himself, Maggie, and Dorf's boss, Deemer. Tellingly, the puppet that Dorf uses to represent the collector is constructed entirely out of objects: "a calendar for a head, a pair of spectacles where one might have expected private parts. His arms were six, and certainly not human, his fingertips each concealed in a thimble," while "[h]is legs, attached to the outline of an old-fashioned wooden cradle, were rows of dominoes" (135), the first collection ever mentioned in *Alibi*'s narrative. Accordingly, this puppet's body, as hodgepodge of objects within *The Puppeteer*, shares characteristics with *The Puppeteer* as a collection of fragments *from Alibi itself*, all retold in a new context. Maggie is aroused by the shadowy figures of seductresses, scouts, and the mysterious man set on a stockpile that comes to life in the puppet show. However, she lacks the awareness that her intrigue is the same as that

brought on by the donning of her dress; when she puts it on, she, like these puppets, performs a past life. Just as Maggie *imagines* life into the dress, Dorf is at the helm of these object-puppets, manipulating them into animation.

In a Japanese print found on one of the many calendars (yet another collection) in Maggie's cousin's kitchen, a man is depicted reading a love letter "while behind him his mistress, raising a mirror to cast more light, trie[s] to read over his shoulder, while under the verandah a spy read[s] the trailing end of the long letter" (6). The budding romance that Deemer (as narrator) describes in *The Puppeteer* eerily mimics this very pantomime: Maggie is writing her autobiography while Deemer is a ghostly presence "[r]eading over her left shoulder" (17). As a spectre, Deemer insists that he is Maggie's "loving supporter, the champion of her need to get the story of her wedding dress down on paper" (17). But because there are three main characters in the novel involved in writing, recording, recounting, or representing story, one might wonder if it is not Dorf, the uninvited houseguest, reading over Maggie's shoulder, and if Deemer, as the absent narrating collector, is no more than a voyeur or a "spy" narrating "the trailing end" (6) of the story after the fact (the novel is, after all, written in past tense). While the assignment of such roles may be argued, what cannot be said to change is the plurality of each life depicted. The collection initially speaks to the desire of the collector, but inevitably other lives, other desires, become implicated. Those who assist or inspire the collector, and those who visit, or regard, or ogle, or simple read the collection, implode the possibility that a collection can stand for a single or dominant ideology.

By *The Puppeteer*'s conclusion all the characters are engaged in various acts of collecting. Dorf and Maggie have, independently, arrived on the Greek island of Siphnos

where Henry is poised to sell his collection of icons to Deemer. Julie and Manny are also present, alive and well in spite of their destructive disappearances in *Alibi.* And even though they slink along the outskirts of the action, remaining hidden and preoccupied with their own quests, they too end up exposed as collectors: Manny finds his own spa in Italy, while every single one of Julie's three homes ends up filled to the rafters with acquired figurines. Deemer finally appears in the novel's closing pages, veiled in the wedding dress which he puts on "simply as a disguise," before realizing that, in it, he is "no longer simply [him]self" (251). As a result, in the chapel where the exchange of Henry's icons for one million dollars is set to take place, Dorf again faces an only partially visible Deemer. Despite this obfuscation, and still denying his own claim to the collector's desire, Dorf speculates the scope of Deemer's appetite aloud. Deemer narrates:

> [Dorf] accused me of wanting, in my collector's need, to box up the very darkness that I lived in. I ignored his exaggerations. He said I would crate up lakes and beaches if I could find a way. Tell me how, I told him, and I'll make you a rich man. He said I wanted to put words themselves under lock and key and I said, mocking his unstoppable tongue, good enough, I'll buy that too, go on out and get me a collection. (252-253)

In exaggerating what he understands as both the *what* and the *how* of Deemer's desire, Dorf ironically fails to understand the way in which that desire has doubled *in him.* In addition to the intangibility of Deemer's actual private desire, Dorf has dreamed the desire he imagines Deemer to harbour into extraordinary existence. Dorf, who began his manuscript at the end of *Alibi,* shows at the end of *The Puppeteer* that he (like Kroetsch) has invented out of his

own invention. Dorf has fabricated a more exaggerated, tyrannical, and parodic version of his boss than can possibly be said to exist.

The Puppeteer's last move as diptych inverts the ending of *Alibi.* Where *Alibi* concludes with Manny de Medeiros shooting Dorf from a distance, *The Puppeteer* ends with Dorf plummeting over the side of the cliff outside the chapel. This is not the same venture into open, ungrounded space that *Alibi* explored at length; Dorf's body does not disappear into thin air, but lies as evidence of his death on the rocks below. Deemer, overlooking this body, wonders, "[w]ho would presume to describe another's motive? Do we pretend to understand our own motives?" (254). Directly, here, he refers to Dorf's shooting of Manny in *Alibi*; indirectly, he refutes Dorf's presumptions of knowing, as his agent, what Deemer actually wants. Similar to Foucault's sense that the archive cannot be fully comprehended or read from those within its own borders, someone is required *outside* of the collection, an editor, a curator, a reader (distinct from the writer, collector, or scout) to interpret its construction. And, of course, without the original Deemer present, the collector can only ever be understood as spectre, ghost, shadow, or trace. The spectator watches the show on the other side of the puppet show's scrim, and must imagine what she cannot see. She is the figure on the steps outside a house, with the trailing end of a narrative curling in her hands; knowing how it ends, it is left to her to imagine its beginning.

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Eric Harvie at Official Opening Ceremonies, Glenbow Foundation-Alberta Government Museum Old Court House building, 16 December 1964, Glenbow Museum Archives Image 151-1

During the opening ceremonies of the Glenbow Foundation-Alberta Government Museum in 1964, Eric Harvie apologized for Glenbow Vice-President E. J. Slatter's absence from the podium, explaining that, unfortunately, he happened to be without his voice that day (Transcript, Glenbow Museum G-1-141). The alibi is a polite one that refuses to disclose much personal detail; the apology makes it sound not so much that Slatter suffered from an ailment, but rather that his voice is an object he happens to have forgotten at home. After reading the transcript, I wonder how closely I would have been able to pay attention to Harvie's careful, conservative speech, when (as in the above photograph) it appears that speakers were positioned behind the enormous hide of a polar bear, facing, like a diptych, that of a ferocious looking feline creature draped across a banquet table. These artifacts

represent a life dedicated to collecting an average of one hundred objects a day from more countries than "[Harvie] could count" (Transcript, Glenbow Museum G-1-141); they represent Eric Harvie's life. But what if, not just Slatter's voice, but the man in the nice suit behind the podium politely thanking his government was absent from the day's proceedings? What if the hides were displayed autonomously? They would still gesture to the outside presences of their hunter and their collector. But *how* would that collector be envisioned, in his or her absence? The imagined ghost of the collector does not replace the life he or she lived, but does augment it.

If Harvie's life as a collector is to be imagined through a reading of his collections, and these are flexible, mutable, multiplicitous structures, can a portrait of that life ever be completed? For the life that continues to haunt the collections is undoubtedly a shapeshifter, just as history is always informing the present in new ways. The original incarnation of the collector's desire is marred by the movement and passing of time. But perhaps this is an instance of the form protecting its content; just as the collection preserves the past, the clandestine form of the collector's desire ensures the obedience of the collector's wishes for the wholeness of that life to remain private. Empathizing with his reclusive boss in *Alibi*, Dorf states, "I was sick of having my life described and analyzed and remembered and predicted. I wanted to be left alone" (98). The collector lives on through his or her collection, but also blends into or within it.

In *Alibi,* when Jack Deemer finally arrives at the spa that Dorf has located, following the bright electrical surge, the cave is plunged into darkness, vanishing it, and Deemer and Dorf from each other. At the end of *The Puppeteer* the men meet again, and Deemer disappears within his latest acquisition and becomes disguised by his former

bride's wedding dress. Benjamin concludes the unpacking of his library by writing, "[s]o I have erected one of [his own, the collector's] dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting" (67). This vanishing act tempts one to believe in ghosts. The collector's disappearance inspires inquisitive, in-depth readings of collections, looking within for the clues left behind by their creators. The ghost is a liminal presence, and so, as Kroetsch demonstrates, the appropriate telling of a ghost story is a fractured and frenetic fictionalization. Suitably, the haunting is a collective one, and the more diverse the collection, the greater the potential to imagine that the collector was joined by other selves (scouts, scholars, and spectators) along the way. Those who are implicated by, and who loiter on the outside of the collection, may not all seem immediately to be collectors: I am only the collector's agent, critic, or witness. The desire belongs to the collector. Except, when Maggie wears her wedding dress, when Dorf performs with shadow puppets, and when Deemer dons his disguise, they are no longer simply themselves. The desire belongs to the collector; but who does a spectator become when he or she attempts to understand, or narrate, or claim a collection? When longing to know its passages, when pining for the being responsible for the acquisition and assembly of artifacts—dusting for prints, sensing a chill, glimpsing a shadow, until, finally, locating a tangible clue—how can one avoid becoming a collector him or herself?

Chapter Two:

The Collected

> "So I am starting a rumour, here and now, of yet another world. I don't know when it will present itself—I don't know where it will be. But—as with those other worlds now past—when it is ready, I intend to go there."
> Lucy, in Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage*

> Do not feed the apocalypse. Metamorphoses please.
> Robert Kroetsch, *The Lovely Treachery of Words*

Genesis, chapter six: God becomes a collector. God decides that he will purge the world of "wickedness" (*King James Bible* Gen. 6.5), "violence," and "corrupt[ion]" (6.11), but salvage samples of each species. With Noah will God "establish [His] covenant" (6.18). He tells Noah to build a cabinet of appropriate size, and then enclose within it his family and "two of every *sort*" of "every living thing of all flesh" (6.19, editor's emphasis). Like most ambitious collectors, He has a lofty conception of what he can save: "Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every *sort* shall come unto thee" (6.20, editor's emphasis). In the next chapter, as Noah enters the ark, God specifies, "Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that *are* not clean by two, the male and his female" (7.2, editor's emphasis). Then God floods the earth. As a result, only His selection of creatures survive the deluge; the ark as collection literally provides the foundation for all new life on earth.

The similarities between God and Jack Deemer as collectors are difficult to ignore. Both authoritatively dictate their demands but then remain noticeably absent throughout their respective narratives. Noah and Dorf are left on their own to accomplish the grunt work of gathering, although not on their own terms. Unlike Dorf,

however, Noah does not simply solicit objects for his boss. He takes on the subsidiary role of caretaker of the collection. In fact, editors John Elsner and Roger Cardinal classify Noah, not God, as "the first collector" (1) in their introduction to the anthology *The Cultures of Collecting*. Whereas Dorf insists that he maintains emotional distance when scouting on Deemer's behalf ("I am only the collector's agent. ... The desire is his" [Kroetsch, *Alibi* 133]), Elsner and Cardinal suggest that Noah, made in God's image, also takes on his creator's desire. Noah "represents the extreme case of the collector: he is one who places his vocation in the service of a higher cause, and who suffers the pathology of completeness at all costs" (Elsner and Cardinal 1), and this "higher cause" consequently inflates Noah's role in larger narratives of Western civilization. After all, in accordance with the tenets of Christianity, the salvation of this particular collection accounts for the very survival of life on earth.

Elsner and Cardinal state that within the "myth of Noah as ur-collector resonate all the themes of collecting itself: desire and nostalgia, saving and loss, the urge to erect a permanent and complete system against the destructiveness of time" (1). Certainly, when one considers the major theorizations of the 'character' of the collector, Noah seems to epitomize the figure. Susan M. Pearce, in her discussion of the relationship between people and objects, suggests that our passionate investment in the objects around us is linked to (and perhaps even perpetuated by) "our constant need to create and re-create our world, constantly reworking, reinterpreting and remaking through the only medium available to us, our physical surroundings organized by internal narrative" (2). Walter Benjamin identifies the collector as one who takes this relationship with objects to the next level, and as one who attempts not only to create his/her own version

of the world, but a version which will "renew the old world—that is the collector's deepest desire" ("Unpacking" 61). Noah is, then, the archetypal collector at the helm of modern Western civilization's quintessential act of collection.

The archetype—an intact and definitive character, concept, or image—defined Northrop Frye's career. Frye thought it was undeniable that the recurrence and reappearance of mythological tropes and structures echoing one another comprised all of literature. Specifically, the archetypes of the Bible set up for Frye "an imaginative framework" or "a mythological universe" within which he believed "Western literature had operated down to the eighteenth century and is to a large extent still operating" (Frye, *The Great Code* xi). This was the ideology behind *Anatomy of Criticism* that dominated literary criticism throughout the 1960s and 1970s, inspired *The Great Code* of the 1980s (which surveyed the content within the Bible more thoroughly), and that influenced how Frye approached Canadian literature for the rest of his critical writing career. And yet the notion of applying a rhetorical formula to literature (which suggests that it always presents a problem to be solved or a thesis to be proven) seems useful only to a society that garrisons itself away from change, difference, and Otherness. Frye's critical practice of ascertaining what existed 'in the beginning' rests on the premise that readers could share a comprehension of archetypes. But as Mikhail Bakhtin suggests, the novel is a genre that does not adhere rigidly to 'beginnings,' but rather is "determined by experience, knowledge and practice (the future)" (*Dialogic* 15), and thus remains "a genre that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review" (39). While the archetype of Noah the collector does indeed recur throughout the history of literature, the stories that have

sought to fill in the gaps in the biblical story have never been in perfect agreement about what exactly took place 'in the beginning.'

Green Grass, Running Water? Not Wanted On the Voyage!

> Everyone knows it wasn't like that.
> Timothy Findley, *Not Wanted on the Voyage*

> So. In the beginning there was nothing. Just the water.
> Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water*

Both of the Canadian novels invoked by the title of this section actively rewrite the Christian story of Noah, his ark, and the great deluge. More specifically, both of these alter-narratives respond to perhaps the most immediate question that the intrepid reader of Noah's story must ask him or herself: how did Noah accomplish the incredible feat of collecting and containing "every *sort*" of "every living thing of all flesh" (*King James Bible* Gen. 6.20) on his ark? Moreover, by *what means* did Noah manage and maintain such an enormous, varied, and volatile collection?

Genesis, chapter seven: Noah rolls out the register, and, following its guidelines, collects more clean than unclean beasts. It rains for forty days and forty nights. Readers are informed that "Noah *was* six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth" (7.6, editor's emphasis). Readers are reminded who goes on board. Readers are told about the duration of the rain, which "was upon the earth forty days and forty nights" (7.12). God shuts the door. Then there is a lengthy description of the flood and all the vengeance it imparts until, chapter eight; God remembers "Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that *was* with him in the ark" (8.1), and God makes the waters recede. Yet, chapter seven has enclosed the activities of its collection

within the darkness of the ark (which, incidentally, is Hebrew for box or chest) rather than putting them on display.

If one is willing to be metaphorical, we might consider how Frye's philosophy of criticism is not unlike Noah's ethos of collection. After studying theology at Emmanuel College at the University of Toronto, Frye briefly was a student Methodist minister in Saskatchewan in 1934 (Forst 400). Even after Frye ended his tenure as a minister, he continued to believe in the higher power of the Word and to obey its corresponding doctrine. Noah and Frye follow (what they interpret to be) pre-ordained edicts, and do not challenge (what they interpret to be) higher authority. Ideologically, however, their practices do not seem on par with the theories of those directly impassioned by the art of collecting, like Walter Benjamin, Eric Harvie—or Robert Opie. In the same anthology in which they argue that "Noah, perhaps alone of all collectors, achieved the complete set, or so at least the Bible would have us believe" (1), Elsner and Cardinal interview Opie who argues that *by its very definition* the collection can never be complete but is infinite and always expanding:

> My whole philosophy is that there should be no limit [to what you are prepared to collect], because otherwise one is limiting the collection. There are some collectors of postcards who will only collect ones that fit into their album. If they get a postcard that won't, because it's a fraction of an inch too big—dammit! You know, they virtually chuck it away because it doesn't conform. I know collectors who collect tins of a certain size because that's all they want to do. They're not really collectors, to my mind, they are just gatherers, people who want to put things up on a mantelpiece to look interesting. (32)

As a world-famous collector who has saved the packaging from every perishable item he has ever consumed (the only exceptions being milk cartons and meat wrappers which gain exemption for hygienic reasons), Opie tells his interviewers that the system of collecting "has to be ever-expanding" (28). Like Noah and Frye, Opie, as a collector, is urged on by a "mythical list of a thousand items" (37), thus insinuating that he follows the directions of some higher or outside power. However, his practice explodes with the *jouissance* of the unknown when he adds, "some of that list I will know, and some of that list I won't know, because I don't know some things exist until I actually find them" (37-38). As a result, a collector like Opie contrasts boldly with the figure of Noah-as-archetypal-collector, especially when Opie contends that a person who does not respect the limitless potential of collecting has the ability to "wipe out history" (42). The Genesis story inherently argues for Noah as a *preserver* of history through his collecting. But how would the story change if it were to self-consciously acknowledge the limitations Noah imposed (or had imposed) upon his accrual? How might Noah's discriminatory adherence to a list highlight the probable incompleteness of his collection? How does Noah, the 'archetypal collector,' in fact fail to operate with the collector's genuine desire?

Findley and King take on these questions directly. In *Not Wanted on the Voyage,* Findley adopts the joyful excessiveness of Opie's gaze, portraying the ark as an ever-expanding collection subject to secrets, stowaways, and subversions. In *Green Grass, Running Water,* King unsettles or un-creates myth itself, and through the act of deconstruction, his novel becomes subject to surprises and spectres that upend Noah's closed collection. Before registering the collectors and collections in these novels,

however, I will examine how the icon of Noah-the-collector came, through the years, to be prime fodder for such comically contrary novels, and how, beyond simply signifying the archetypal collection, the ark *as* antique and artifact now exists as quite a valuable collectible itself.

From Archetypal Collector to Ark as Collectible

> "You don't have to believe me, of course; but what do your own archives say?"
> Woodworm as narrator in Julian Barnes's *The History of the World in 10 ½ chapters*

Susan Stewart suggests that the "display" of the collection signifies that, over time, the collector has "triumph[ed] over the particularity of contexts in which the individual objects were first collected" ("Death and Life" 204). However, few apprehenders of the archetype of Noah have accepted the "contexts" for his "triumph" without question, as far back as medieval times. During the fifteenth century, members of a city's "mystery" ("a guild [that] combined the functions of modern trade union, club, religious society, and political action group" [Greenblatt 406]) performed cycles of plays based on biblical stories. Stephen Greenblatt states that the medieval mystery plays "were public spectacles watched by every layer of society, and they paved the way for the professional theater in the age of Elizabeth I" (407). While the identities of the playwrights are unknown, some of the pageants staged in Wakefield, Yorkshire are thought to have been written by one playwright, who consequently is referred to as the Wakefield Master. According to Greenblatt, Wakefield "had a genius for combining comedy, including broad farce, with religion in ways that make them enhance one another" (407-408). David Bevington explains how in "Noah," one of the most famous medieval pageants written by Wakefield, Noah's circumstances leave him "weak, old,

and henpecked" (290). Noah is a conundrum, existing as a "type of Christ," but the same time doubting his own abilities (290). He is "imperfect," "at once comic and virtuous," and as a result believable to the audience (290). "Noah's Flood," another pageant by another (unidentified) medieval playwright, dramatizes how this "weak, old, and henpecked" six-hundred-year-old man may have managed to accomplish so much gathering on God's behalf. The dialogue concerning the act of collection is divided amongst Noah's sons and their wives, who are presented to the audience as Noah's agents. Their personal conflicts with Noah's orders create considerably more tension in the pageant than they do in the Bible. Noah's wife, for one, insists (after all the authorized collecting is completed) that Noah allow more articles onto the ark, namely her acquaintances. "But thou wilte let them into thy chiste" (591; line 206) she demands. Noah's wife, rebelliously insisting upon space for other beings, raises her voice, and thus adds a layer of possibility to the original Biblical story.

However, while plays like these may have added to the story of *who* was responsible for choosing and gathering samples of all living species, the medieval audience would likely have shared in Noah's conviction that he could not ignore the prescribed order of the collection for fear of betraying the authority of God. In medieval life, a collection was considered to bear the signature of a higher power. As Anthony Alan Shelton explains, during medieval times "the beauty to be found in the material world was only a reflection of a transcendent ideal beauty whose source was God" (179). Collectors searched for "manifestations of God in things" (179), while "[s]ymbol and allegory permitted [this] miniature representation of the universe" (Shelton 180). Subsequently, between the years 1500-1750, a wide variety of people dedicated

themselves to this practice of collecting-as-worship, including such significant citizens as "the Pope, cardinals, emperors, kings, princes, theologians, lawyers, doctors, scholars, poets, priests, monks, officers and artists" (Shelton 181). These various collectors believed there to be a higher power in everything (or, that there were religious *ideas* in things) from idols and icons to plants, flowers, and animals both domestic and exotic.

Around the end of this era the understanding of collections began to shift. The authority assumed to be driving the impulse to collect gradually began to be understood as a more enlightened and rational human desire than an entirely divine directive; accordingly, rather than accepting the preordained value of *all* things, collectors began to consider their *own* agencies in considering what was worthy of being collected. At the same time, new manmade objects were rapidly gaining popularity as both children's toys and collectibles: models of Noah's ark. Replicas of the ark date as far back as medieval times, but ark collector Jeanmarie Andrews states that Elizabeth I owned the first "recorded" model ark, in silver, in the sixteenth century (40). Then, the real ark boom was ushered in at the beginning of the 18th century when several citizens of the Erzgebirge section of old Saxony (what is now southeastern Germany) turned from farming and mining to the craft trade (and more specifically, the ark-model trade) as a means to survive a significant and inexplicable blight on their crops (Andrews 40). The miniature arks produced in Erzgebirge were sold around the world, and soon made their way into the catalogues and department stores of North America. Mary Audrey Apple suggests that "[i]n the Victorian household, the Noah's ark became the most important of the traditional Sunday toys" (969). As "Sunday toys" they were exempt from

Sabbath restrictions against play because any engagement with the ark was seen as interaction with a biblical story which reinforced "two essential religious tenets: God promises to save the just and the good, and every creature, large and small, is a valued member of our world" (Andrews 43). Therefore, the artifact as a child's Sunday toy was intended to accompany the biblical story and archetypal collection, emphasize the collecting of specific numbers of specific species, and thus gloss over the exclusion of all those animals not chosen, not wanted on the voyage.

The ark-as-collectible was initially popular because of its elaborate potential to exemplify the biblical story, and the more affluent the customer, the more "animals and even insects, sliding partitions, built-in steps, stalls, or iron wheels" (Andrews 44) an ark-craftsman could fashion. But, in more recent years, arks have been desired precisely *because* their assemblies of animals are rarely complete. As model arks from the medieval era could contain any possible composition of various "domestic animals" as well as "exotic beasts" (Andrews 40), the contemporary collector is left with the mystery of what his or her ark *could* be missing, and what it once contained. The *Antiques Roadshow Primer* notes beside a picture of a carved and painted ark from the Erzgebirge era that "[n]ot surprisingly, some of the animals are no longer two-by-two" (264). As a result, it is not the promise of totality but rather the mystique of incompletion that today increases the value of antique arks; these collectibles can garner up to tens of thousands of dollars in auctions. Collectors scouring eBay are not only interested in what an ark may contain but also what form it may take. In one sitting, I came across plush, ceramic, and plastic models of Noah's barge, arks as cookie jars, necklaces, candlesticks, photo frames, and tea sets. All these different

incarnations suggest that Noah's ark *as a collectible* has come to signify something about the ark *as a collection.* Any set of artifacts being passed down and inherited by different owners over the years is subject to modification, erasure, and consequent (necessary) reinterpretation. The ark, as antique, rarely recurs in exactly the same form twice.

Baudrillard's system of antiques shares much with the systems of collecting of the medieval era. He observes that "the older the object, the closer it brings us to an earlier age, to 'divinity,' to nature, to primitive knowledge, and so forth" (76). However, this "myth of origins" (Baudrillard 76) is always the antique's fiction. An antique cannot maintain its initial origins in pristine condition. It experiences life, gains stories and meanings, and is subject to fracture and omission. The longer the ark-antique is in circulation, the greater the potential for some of its parts to go missing and to have parts from other similar-looking arks integrated into a single collectible's narrative. This system also seems compatible with the Frygian systems of reading myth archetypally; contemporary readers, even if aware of a myth's origins, are most often interested in what the myth has *become* in a particular text. For, as the beginning lines of both Findley's and King's novels suggest, the myth is subject to change depending on the storyteller.

Genesis, chapter seven: did the collection grow beyond God's definitive order? In the chaos of boarding the ark, once the collection as a great, thriving, monstrous being had really picked up energy and momentum, was the collection unstoppable? Were the prescribed limits trampled through? Is this not the beauty and the cause of our fascination with any collection?

Several contemporary authors have more recently added their own layers to the ark myth, and have draw attention to some of the ark's activities that may have gone unnoticed or un-itemized during Noah's mass acquisition. The first chapter of Julian Barnes's *The History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, for example, is narrated by one "specifically not chosen" for the voyage (4): a woodworm. The woodworm identifies Noah-the-collector as "a man who had his little theories" and who "didn't want anyone else's" (8), and suggests that collecting made him out to be "a monster, a puffed-up patriarch who spent half his day groveling to his God and the other half taking it out on us" (12). The woodworm proceeds to narrate the lives (and deaths) of all sorts of curious and fantastic creatures who for one reason or another (often improper traveling or storage conditions) perished on the ark. The woodworm even questions "the logic behind it all," and asks "[w]hy should a division be introduced between fish that had scales and fish that did not?" (11), thus challenging the hierarchy established by Noah's collecting methodology.

As for potential stowaways who could not conceal themselves within the very material of the ark (the woodworm admits that "[o]ne of the ship's carpenters carried us to safety, little knowing what he did" [9]), Timothy Findley imagines their placement *within* and their subversions of the planned collection. I will look at three of these subjects that as non-human, non-male, and non-singular, respectively, defy Noah's taxonomical authority. Foucault posits that those inside the archive cannot comprehend its construction. But each living thing on the ark can offer an individual, interior point of view (even if that vision is selective). What, then, is to be lost if an extravagant system is only read from one angle? In *Not Wanted on the Voyage,* Findley demands

that the collection make room for the absurd, the strange, the excessive, and insists the less-traditionally dominant voices in its chorus be heard.

Not Wanted on the Voyage: *The Collector as Captor, The Collected as Captive*

> Don't throw the past away/ You might need it some rainy day/
> Dreams can come true again/ When everything old is new again.
> Peter Allen, "Everything Old is New Again."

In *Inside Memory,* Timothy Findley documents the sometimes exhilarating but more often exhausting process of writing *Not Wanted on the Voyage*. He recounts sleepless nights when, with a glass of wine in one hand and the telephone receiver in the other, he called up his friend Phyllis Webb (whose poem "Leaning" provides the epigraph for the novel) to lessen his "panic" about his retelling of the ark myth (221). In January 1984, he gave himself a frank pep talk:

> You are telling the story of Noah's Ark. This is a story that everyone knows. Certainly, everyone knows the basic facts: the flood—God's displeasure—Noah and his wife and sons and the sons' wives—the animals "two-by-two"—the dove—the olive branch and the rainbow.
>
> There is absolutely no justification to retell this story unless you can tell us something new about its people and about the event. *This you can certainly do.* (222, his emphasis)

With Mottle the cat at his side or curled in his lap (the real life inspiration for *Not Wanted*'s Mottyl, one of the novel's central characters—notably absent from the original biblical story, of course), Findley pressed on, resigned not to *repeat*, but rather to wholly *reinvent* the story of Noah and the ark.

Kroetsch argues that the very title that Findley was to settle upon echoes Jean-François Lyotard's "observation that in postmodern writing there appears a skepticism or hesitation about the meta-narrative's great voyages, its great goal" (*Lovely* 23), while Diana Brydon deems the novel to be an "extended reply and rebuttal to the biblical book of Genesis" (76). But when the book was finally published and being promoted, unlike Kroetsch and Brydon readers did not commonly respond to the novel as a reply or rebuttal. On the novel's promotional tour, it surprised Findley that audience members did not recognize or acknowledge the specifically new dimensions he had given to Noah and his ark, and that they did not accordingly respond with laughter, surprise, or shock as he had hoped they might. Findley came to understand that many readers were seeing *through* the excess and additional material he had used to augment the archetype so as to recognize, comfortably, the biblical story. Baudrillard reminds us that a mythological object may be assumed to be already "fully realized" (75) because it is valued for its rendering of a past. His example of the antique is not unlike the archetypal myth, in that it being *of* the past connotes its "authenticity" (75) and perpetuates an apprehender's "obsession with certainty—specifically, certainty as to the origin, date, author, and signature of a work" (76). But it seems that what Findley had hoped that his readers might realize was that even antiques, symbols of the past, "play a part in modernity, and that is what gives them a double meaning" (Baudrillard 73). Readers who failed to acknowledge the re-sorting of the story and its spectacular and supernatural supplementation were not acknowledging *Not Wanted on the Voyage's* remarkable rewriting of archetype as something old new, again.

First of all, Findley amends the archetype entire by repositioning it in order to shed light on its previously unperceived properties. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin contend in *The Empire Writes Back,* "in Findley's account ... the story of the Ark [becomes] a story not of redemption, but of marginalization and destruction" (97). As Brydon surmises, "[t]he novel begins by asking potentially sacrilegious questions: What was left behind to be swallowed by the flood? What is the cost of survival and on what terms has it been negotiated? Is the present order of things worth the price?" (77-78). The resulting trajectory of Noah's collection—acquisition followed by oppression and exploitation—is effectively epitomized by Unicorn's story in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*:

> As to size, the Unicorn stood not more than fifteen inches at the highest point of its horn—and from tail to horn-tip it was seventeen, maybe eighteen inches long. The horn made up a good six inches of this—and very often the only visible part of the beast was its amber-coloured ornament, cutting a swath through the undergrowth. (52)

Unicorn's definition likens him to an artifact that is hard to find or come across, all the more valuable for this very rarity. By living deep in the woods, Unicorn's perpetual absence makes him difficult to identify. His reclusiveness results in multiple opinions of who he is, and leads to assumptions that he is fantastical or unreal. Misinterpretation leads to his objectification as decorative object. As a result, "legends had grown up around the Unicorn and The Lady," his female mate, "claiming, for instance, that he was silver and she was gold—or that both of them were made of glass and could be seen through" (54). As a result, once Unicorn is on the ark, Noah *treats* Unicorn as an

object. While an artifact within a collection is conventionally cherished and accepted as accessory or art—as opposed to a thing that is utilitarian—Noah, lacking awareness of the distinct value of a collected object, appropriates Unicorn. Unicorn's amber-coloured, ornamental horn is used to rape Emma, Noah's young daughter-in-law whom his son Japeth has deemed impenetrable. Noah's appalling joint-violation of two living subjects on his ark illustrates how he, as collector, also operates as tyrannical captor.

An exemplary literary example of collector-as-captor, one who represses rather than allows for objects to enjoy rebirth through collection, is provided by John Fowles's *The Collector.* In this British novel, entomologist Frederick Clegg obsesses over and objectifies art student Miranda Grey. After Clegg abducts her (only to keep her in a cellar room in his country house), Miranda compares her position to that of his collected butterflies. She tells him, "Now you've collected me ... not in a manner of speaking. Literally. You've pinned me in this little room and you can come and gloat over me" (33). Miranda finds herself identifying with her "fellow-victims" who are trapped within the recesses of a cabinet. Referring to the butterflies, she wonders aloud to Clegg, "Who sees these? You're like a miser, you hoard up all the beauty in these drawers" (43). It does not end well for Miranda, who grows fatally ill from the damp condition of the room in which she is kept. In this room, she feels as though she is "at the earth's heart," and writes in her diary, "I've got the whole weight of the whole earth pressing in on this little box" (204). Just as Fowles gives voice to both collector and collected (the novel's first part is narrated by Clegg, the second by Miranda), Findley too empowers his narrative's objectified subjects. In *Not Wanted,* those who reside in the bowels of the ark (humans and animals alike) despairingly lament the inhumanity of

their collector as they perish from lack of food and fresh air or are killed for consumption. For Fowles's Miranda, Frederick's compulsion to collect is "the great dead thing in him" (137). The relationship between collector as captor and his or her possessions is not one of mutual respect.

Noah powering over rather than cherishing the ark's creatures is not the advice that a despondent Yaweh (God) has given Noah in Findley's novel (nor does it abide by God's directions in Genesis, where, in reference to the living things, God stresses that Noah "keep *them* alive with thee" [6.19]). At the beginning of Findley's novel, Yaweh pays a visit to Noah and, speaking in the royal sense, informs him, "We have been assassinated. ... My old friend, you know as well as We, the desperate methods One must employ to revive Oneself" (70). Speaking of revivification, with his death imminent, a lozenge-sucking, incredibly human-like Yaweh tries to pass on some helpful advice to Noah for coping with the enormous task that he faces. Yaweh tells Noah that "*love* is the one true bond ... Between God and His angels ... God and man ... King and subject ... Master and Slave" (87). But Noah's relationship with those on the ark falls devastatingly short of 'loving.' He reads and classifies things according to a hierarchy, consequently insisting that for a non-human subject to be worth saving Noah must be able to *use* it, in some way. He experiments on poor Mottyl, his wife's ancient cat, causing her to go blind. The faeries, demons, and dragons are, of course, not spared from the deluge. When the happy, chirping dolphins in the surrounding waters are drawn to the ark, Noah categorizes them as pirates. Driven by the certainty that there is no "place for them in the order of things" (238) he legitimizes their deaths at the hand of his warrior-like son Japeth.

Findley embellishes the limitations and violations of Noah's collecting practices while also ensuring that other, previously silenced voices are able to flood his text. The narrative voice, in third person but focalizing intimately on the subjects in Noah's possession, ends up demonstrating the greater potential of a text that is polyphonous, heterogeneous, and that offers several versions of a story in favour of just one. *Not Wanted on the Voyage* begins, "[e]veryone knows it wasn't like that" (3), and proceeds to satirize the notion that any collection could ever be assembled without interference, interruption, or infiltration:

> Presumably, everyone else (the rest of the human race, so to speak) stood off waving gaily, behind a distant barricade: SPECTATORS WILL NOT CROSS THE YELLOW LINE and: THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION. With all the baggage neatly labeled: *WANTED* or *NOT WANTED ON THE VOYAGE.*
>
> They also make it sound as if there wasn't any dread. (3)

Just before moving his collection into its floating cabinet, Noah ensures he has "consulted the Edict—part of it a timetable, part of it a book of rules," and then he "commence[s] the loading of the animals" which incites "instant chaos" (121). Noah resents this chaos, believing in the greater power of the container over the contained (or, rather, the uncontained). The ark is Noah's temple, and he treasures that agency *over* the artifacts in his assembly. He eventually resents *every* thing on the ark, even the religious Icons in his chapel. The "Icons—the altar—the Boxes were silent. Only the incense made any effort to answer, gently collapsing and ceasing to smoke" (350). As he loses power throughout the novel, Noah revolts by objectifying and reasserting his domination over (even living) things. In turn, however, the living beings in which he

expects to see life become eerily object-like. For example, when Hannah, his son Shem's wife in name (although Noah's in practice), gives birth, the infant is stillborn. Furthermore, the child is disfigured as other children have been in the past (Emma's sister, Japeth's twin), and is described as ape-like. An animal, a thing that he collects, is thus considered not an autonomous living being but a utility. Can he *use* the child? Does it belong in some way? To Noah, it appears that Hannah cradles "nothing more than a package—an object only—nothing that might have lived or been, in any sense, a vessel for life" (344). Blurring readers' conceptions of living and non-living things, animals and artifacts, also allows Findley to manipulate the Noah story by challenging *whose* point of view might be accepted and trusted.

Donna Palmateer Pennee refers to Findley's novel as one which defamiliarizes the biblical story "in the interests of alerting us how to we may be implicated in the continuance of texts, traditions, or world views that violate, oppress, and devalue, as the Bible does, women, children, animals, and the environment" (14), and adds that Findley offers us "alternative texts to live by" (15). Pennee encourages readers to look past Noah as the story's supposed protagonist and acknowledge the female trinity that exists at the novel's core: Mottyl, Mrs. Noyes, and Lucy, pet, wife, and in-law, respectively. Throughout the text, everyone *other* than Noah is expected to be subservient to him. This ethos culminates violently in the rape of Emma that precedes her forced residence in the ark's upper quarters with Noah, his sons Shem and Japeth, and Hannah. Emma is bathed, oiled, and prepared to be used by Japeth, and in the process of becoming a utility, she loses her own collection, feathers she "so patiently collected during her bird feeding duties" on the ark (260). This collection represents to

Emma not just what it is but what it could become, as "feathers with which, in daydreams, Emma manufactured wings" (260). Unlike Emma, however, Mottyl, Noah's wife, and Lucy each achieve an autonomy that unsettles Noah's established rule over his collection of things.

Mottyl defies Noah's dominance through her very presence on the ark. Old and visually impaired, she is most definitely not the chosen specimen of her race to make the voyage. Not only do Mottyl's age and blindness mark her as different, but her calico coat represents a hybridity which threatens Noah's desired uniformity and separateness on the ark. It is suggested, additionally, that she cannot be one of an identical pair, and, consequently, she will not be able to reproduce her kind because male calicos do not exist. Still, the elderly and ailing Mottyl is pregnant when Noah's wife smuggles her onto the ark. Mottyl is preoccupied with the unexpected change in her old body, and "thoughts of giving birth and not giving birth [are] all too pertinent" (19) for her. Mottyl defies all presumptions about her. After forcing herself into the annals of Noah's collection, she brings forth new life aboard the ark.

Mottyl's closest friend and protector is Noah's wife, Mrs. Noyes. Her first name is never offered, thus placing the emphasis on her defiantly ambiguous surname: she is the "no" to Noah's "yes." As part of Noah's collection, Mrs. Noyes is seen as useful, but she is not loved (despite Yaweh's advice) *as part of the collection.* Noah is frantic when she disappears, "not, it must be admitted, because he feared for the loss of someone he loved—but because he feared for the loss of someone he needed" (130). But while Noah yearns for Mrs. Noyes for practical reasons, for her cooking, cleaning, and all-round caretaking, she longs for decadence. She indulges in aesthetic pleasure,

playing piano and teaching sheep how to sing. Along the same lines, she wants to live life with some degree of extravagance, even if she has to hide it from her husband.

Before the flood, she sips her beloved gin out of jars sequestered all over the house she shares with Noah (and thankfully a few samples manage to make it onto the ark). Her trousseau is stuffed with "brocade and silks, buttons, buckles, envelopes of ribbon, packets of needles" (178), always in *sets*. After Noah insists Mrs. Noyes board the ark, but insists equally on killing the child she brings on board (Lotte, Emma's sister and one of the ape-children), Mrs. Noyes abandons ship and returns to her household to salvage frantically until she becomes "a kind of walking flea-market: all her strips of petticoat and ribbon, rag and rope and sashes hanging down in front and behind; and all her pockets, plackets and dangling purses bulging with bits of string and jars of buttons, lace caps and clothes pins" (181-182). Mrs. Noyes breaks definition, "*ANY OLD ANYTHING!* might have been her sign" (182), and flouts excess in the face of Noah's regimented adherence to his register. When she returns to the ark, Noah exclaims, "What do you intend to bring on board? Souvenirs? Heirlooms? There isn't room for all that kind of junk. . . ." (187). Yet, because Noah needs her he is forced to comply with her costume. Despite Noah's prejudice, and his supposed role as collector, it is *his wife's* collecting that allows items from the past to continue to exist on the ark and voyage into the future. Before the trip commences, during Yaweh's visit, Mrs. Noyes does not realize that when she locked her fingers together in the sign that the faeries have been making, she presents the symbol for infinity (99). Mrs. Noyes, wife and partner to Noah, the supposed ur-collector, is the character in the novel who knows

and shows that tolerance is integral to the preservation and not decimation of any collection.

The last member of this trifecta is Lucy who is not a man but not solely a woman either. Lucy is in fact the angel Lucifer, who, as David Jefferess describes, "is stifled by the monotony of heaven" and "desires difference where difference is not tolerated" (144). Lucifer binds his wings back and paints his skin white, mimicking the *onagata*, the male actor within Kabuki theatre assigned to play the women's roles. Thus, Lucifer transforms into Lucy, seven feet tall and glamourous. Lucifer's transformation is not necessarily convincingly *seamless*, but in fact his/her blatant costume and obvious duplicity—leviathan in a kimono—is exotic and attractive. Noah's son Ham falls in love with Lucy.

Lucifer has gone to another world to look for inspiration, a world that will not *resolve* curiosity but one that will keep it alive. Noah, of course, does not recognize Lucy's blatant sexual ambiguity because of his determination to categorize. Even though the dandyish Lucy, who dresses in kimonos, twirls parasols, and towers over everyone, threatens difference, s/he is invited on the voyage because s/he is Ham's wife. As Cecilia Martell notes, every reference to her physical appearance focuses very clearly "on artifice, on excess, on flamboyance, as well as on her makeup, her silks, the trappings of decadence and excess" (104). As Brydon argues, Lucy's hybridity signals the novel's opposition to Noah's binary thinking (83). But because Noah can classify Lucy as 'son's wife' and 'on the list,' this technical and 'official' qualification is enough, for Noah, to obfuscate or ignore Lucy's subversiveness.

One rare object within the ark's collection communes with another when Lucy temporarily brings Unicorn back to life. In addition to illuminating that Lucy, not Noah, is the true magician on board, the act of resurrection also demonstrates that Lucy understands and respects life in a way that Noah does not. Noah is focused on preservation, the construction of the ark itself, and his own position within the hierarchy of the collection, whereas Lucy is able to see the multiplicity of things, to shatter binaries, to respect and honour the integrity of a creature's life even in its death. As a result, it is Lucy, not Noah, who understands how the past can be apprehended in the present, and who understands the essence of collection as an act of *jouissance*.

Green Grass, Running Water*: Let Us Compare Mythologies*

> O break from your branches a green branch of love /
> after the raven has died for the dove
> Leonard Cohen, "Prayer for Messiah"

In addition to Pennee's alternative holy trinity, another female character in *Not Wanted on the Voyage* defies boundaries and refuses to be dominated. On the ark, Crowe has the ability, unlike many of the non-winged animals, to interlope between the separate quarters. She attempts to facilitate communication, knowledge, and awareness, but does not survive the voyage. Crowe seems not unlike the raven (in the original biblical story as well as in Findley's novel) who risks flight out into the unknown, new world only to be usurped by the dove, a creature symbolically closer to God. Yet Crowe manages to transcend the barriers segregating the ark's—and the novel's—various communities. Noah rigidly believes in order on his ark; he feels that without a system, without division, chaos will take over. But of course, as Benjamin posits when blissfully surrounded by his piles of books, chaos is the natural state of collection. For

Noah, "chaos" has negative connotations. For Benjamin, Bakhtin, Kroetsch, and Findley, chaos can result in positive excess. The crowd of the ark, of the collection, provides multiple vantage points so that the collection can be seen from within, from more than one angle, and in more than one light.

In *Inside Memory,* Findley recollects a surreal afternoon he once spent in Toronto. It was the same week that he found, and kept, a blind and starving cat ("this was Mottle, who became Mottyl in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*" [216]). After a lunchtime meeting, Findley exited an office building and, following the direction of the sound of music, joined a street crowd that was watching a parade of sorts—a procession of elephants. Understandably, the presence of elephants on Yonge Street concerned some of the onlookers. Findley recalls how "one man said to another: *My god—if one of those creatures ever broke loose!* ..." (219). Findley chose to include this anecdote in the section of *Inside Memory* about the writing of *Not Wanted on the Voyage,* so we can assume that to some degree this unnecessary anxiety about animals (not to mention an us-versus-them mentality) was foundational to Findley's exploration of cruelty and oppression in the novel. But it also seems that the very structure of the scene inspired Findley. A succession of elephants, marching in between the skyscrapers, followed "a flat truck carrying several bears in cages. The bears' fur had been dyed yellow and pink and blue. And trotting beside them, there were cowboys in black hats with tin .44s and string lariats and rubber noses" (217). The song "What the World Needs Now is Love" played on loudspeakers. Findley had walked out of an office building and into a carnival.

Bahktin considers literary incarnations of the carnival, or, rather, carnivalesque literature, to be truly revolutionary. The carnivalesque, as opposed to genres that more strictly confine, limit, or censor, abounds with contradiction and conflict and demands vociferous plural expression. Findley witnessed exemplary carnival, a mutual performance of human and non-human subjects that flaunted artifice, hybridity, and the threatening potential for breaking away from whatever tenuous order governs it. The bears, made up to be clowns, roam beside clowns who are made up to be cowboys. The carnival's absurdity allows it to exhibit different behaviours and identities all at once. A spectator doubts what he or she sees, or at least is aware that the presentation is an uncanny one; he or she interprets the carnival's narrative, from his or her own perspective, and the abundant carnival enables an infinite number of interpretations.

Frye, a Romantic, revered the archetype as an authentic artifact. But once a myth is recollected and cloaked in a different costume, one can imagine that it might change in meaning. In *Mythologies,* Roland Barthes states that "[e]very object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state, open to appropriation by society, for there is no law, whether natural or not, which forbids talking about things" (109). Barthes argues that "we can say that the fundamental character of the mythical concept is to be *appropriated*" (119, his emphasis), but what new myth is born in the act of appropriation? What mythologies are we left with to compare? Does comparison itself become the new narrative? If so, that comparison requires mythologies to be gathered together, but within a collection that still showcases differences and constantly allows for those mythologies to be seen from new angles as the collection continually grows (as new mythologies are added). The 'mosaic' is now considered an ineffective

symbol for Canada's multicultural society because it does not account for the diversity of, and the differences amongst, its constituent pieces. Herb Wyile suggests that "a tossed salad" might be a more appropriate metaphor for Canadian society as a "heterogeneous complex in which different cultural elements are neither absolutely discrete nor absolutely blended" ("Trust Tonto" 105). This complex is complementary to Bakhtin's conception of the novel as one that promotes heteroglossia and polyphony. Whether we call the complex a novel, a collection, a carnival, or a comparison of mythologies, Wyile argues that Thomas King's fiction epitomizes how contemporary Canadian narratives come to demonstrate this complex by experimenting with how "cultural interactions, negotiations, appropriations and subversions at a textual level" can provide "a reflection of larger dynamics within Canadian society" (122). Additionally, he posits that while the "manifestation of syncretism and subversive cultural negotiation through formal innovations is characteristic of King's work as a whole" this complex reaches an "almost carnivalesque culmination" (117) in *Green Grass, Running Water*.

King suggests in an interview with Peter Gzowski that his allusions to the ark story in *Green Grass, Running Water* are in fact allusions to "Timothy Findley's version of the Ark" (71), itself, as I have argued, a *re*writing of the biblical story. Thus, King's novel presents a subsequent layering-upon of the myth itself, a reply to a reply. According to Blanca Chester, (like Findley's novel) "*Green Grass, Running Water* plays with chaos. It resists externally imposed structures from Western cultural and literary traditions" (47). Unlike *Not Wanted on the Voyage,* however, the concept of a great deluge recurs metaphorically and literally throughout *Green Grass, Running*

Water, but Noah and his ark are afforded only a minor, fragmentary role in King's larger narrative. This is understandable when one comes to realize just how many literary fragments are shuffling about and rocking the boat. The novel is about Alberta Frank, a Native professor of history who wants to have a child, caught in a love triangle involving a lawyer, Charlie Looking Bear, and a television salesman, Lionel Red Dog. All three characters question and reflect upon their respective origins as the Sun Dance on their Blackfoot reserve near Blossom, Alberta looms just around the (temporal and geographical) corner. Then there are four old Native runaways (described variously in the novel as men and women, living and dead) who have escaped from an asylum and out from under the watch of Dr. Joe Hovaugh. Meanwhile, Eli Stands Alone refuses to leave his home after the government constructs a dam on Blackfoot land. Altogether, the novel retells the Christian creation story, the plot of *Moby Dick,* the discovery of North America, and the formulaic Hollywood Western, all while recovering a few significant canonical Canadian authors from their historical deaths to enjoy a little Black Labrador stew at the Dead Dog Café. *Green Grass, Running Water* is quite the carnival indeed.

What is most significant about the novel's composition is that, not unlike Kroetsch's *Alibi* and *The Puppeteer* or Robert Majzels's *City of Forgetting,* the narrative's motley crew of players is King's own collection of real-life, biblical, and literary figures. These characters never appear exactly as they have been presented in the past, however. Rather, the novel is haunted by several spectres. King's imaginings of people and events are unapologetically embellished by his own sense of humour and refracted through his specific political lens. As the subjective author's collection, *Green*

Grass might also appeal to the reader because, as Margery Fee and Jane Flick suggest, it has the "ability to arouse readers' desire to 'get' the in-jokes, to track the allusions, and to find answers to a whole series of posed but unanswered questions" (131). Rather than just a single ideology or story, the novel proposes a parodic composite narrative that fuses a phantom of the Noah story with other myths, histories, and fictions. King's novel dares the reader to dream beyond convention, and to consider not only *what happened* but also *what happened next* and *what else happened?* In doing so, *Green Grass* proffers a response to Kroetsch's plea: "Do not feed the apocalypse. Metamorphoses please" (*Lovely* 8). Although Marlene Goldman has viewed its narrative as apocalyptic, or, more specifically as "an entirely comic approach to examin[ing] the traumatic impact of apocalyptic eschatology on Native North Americans" (101), I would argue that *Green Grass* inverts such endings as beginnings and thus embodies not a day of explosive, final reckoning and annihilation, but one of hope that the deluge might not drown out all options for re-telling. King's book detonates a singular ideology into a confetti of multiple stories and opinions about how it might have been "in the beginning" after there was "just the water" (King 1). This is not fiction-as-apocalypse, or humour or parody in spite of apocalypse, but a rewriting of apocalypse as transformation instead of ending. Kroetsch suggests that "it is possible that the old obsessive notion of identity, of ego," (of single authority, of Noah, autocratic collector,) "is itself a spent fiction, that these new writers are discovering something essentially new, something essential not only to Canadians but to the world they would uncreate" (*Lovely* 63). Whereas Findley communicates through the framework of the biblical story (even if his reply is a rebuttal), King proposes

intertextuality, raising several voices at once in an attempt to drown out the drone of the single myth.

Findley's and King's novels reorder collections so that characters that appear *throughout* a particular narrative (of creation, of collection, of national literature) can suddenly be considered side by side. These reclaimings can allow those subjects to contextualize one another in new ways—contradictory or complementary—and to create new meaning and narrative. Susanna Moodie, as an example, has a re-contextualizing cameo in King's novel. Florence Stratton notes that throughout *Green Grass, Running Water* there is a recurrence of "the values of imperial culture, values which are very similar to the ones Moodie's narrative endorses: a belief in hierarchy, technology, exploitation, mastery over nature, progress, private property" (92). King's literary allusion and playful intertextuality creates humour through absurd and surprising juxtaposition and scenario; Moodie mingles with Pauline Johnson, Archibald Belaney, and John Richardson as they peruse the Dead Dog Café menu with delight. But the bringing together of these significant CanLit figures is not all for mere folly. There is a polemical punch to the satire in its resurrection of subjects who bring with them to King's collection traces of their own origins in order to confront, and contest, but specifically *not* efface the past. As Bianca Chester explains,

> [a]s one reads the different stories within *Green Grass, Running Water,* it becomes more and more clear how interconnected they are, and how difficult it is to separate one from another. Their web-like interconnectedness, and their ability to absorb new elements, implies a system of thought that is inclusive

> rather than exclusive. This is an open work of literature, rather than a closed one. (49)

Unlike the different narrative communities of Noah's ark, the histories of King's novel are not in opposition to one another. They share a textual surface and enter into dialogue with one another as equal shareholders of a connected collection.

A dialogue amongst the aforementioned four Indian escapees disguised as literary archetypes and Coyote, the trickster storyteller, also weaves its way through *Green Grass, Running Water.* Coyote, like Lucy, dreams of another world. This dream itself then "gets loose and runs around. Makes a lot of noise" (1). Coyote, led on by his dream, assigns himself the duty of fixing stories, a task that seems to involve mimicking King himself by putting those stories on display, rearranging their parts, adding articles here and there, and then gloating about his collection. Gzowski even refers to the storytelling act that keeps "all those plates spinning in the air all at the same time," as King's own "Coyote trick" (65), while shortly thereafter in the interview, King notes, "that's the way conversations go a lot of times: you have two people who are talking about the same thing, but you'd never know it to listen to them, but in the end it all comes out all right" (66-67). As I have suggested, there are many conversations and chronicles rooted in the oral tradition in King's polyphonous, heteroglossic novel; for the remainder of this chapter and for the purposes of my larger argument I will discuss three. All involve Coyote and events integral to the story of Noah and *Not Wanted on the Voyage*: that of the ark itself, that of a confrontation between a dominant force and a minority group, and that of a flood.

First, there is King's retelling of the ark—or of Findley's ark, at least. Laura E. Donaldson observes that "the biblical story of Noah … itself rewrites several ancient Mediterranean flood myths. This intervention ironically enacts a kind of poetic justice, since early Euramerican accounts positioned Native Americans as descendants of Noah's disgraced and exiled son, Ham" (28-29). Donaldson goes on to draw even further attention to the instability of the biblical story as a singular, original, or authoritative representation of 'what happened.' She cites Hebrew Bible scholar Gerhard von Rad's argument that the biblical story of the flood is actually the combination of two separate texts (J [Yahwist] and P [Priestly]) that the redactor (the editor) combined. Donaldson explains, "the later P source transposes the earlier J material, thereby creating a richly intertextual, but not ideologically innocent, document" (30). In some ways then, King and Findley are merely adding their interpretive layers onto an already collected collection. It would be misleading, however, not to acknowledge that King uses his stories to playfully puncture the larger story even further, but—like Findley—he is also willing to reimagine *who* might have actually been in that collection to begin with.

In his long interview with Shirley Neuman and Robert Wilson in *Labyrinths of Voice,* Kroetsch posits that "[f]or the Postmodernist there is only a glance of another person falling out of the sky" (112). Suitably, King's re-invention of the Noah story literally begins with Changing Woman dropping from the sky like a paratrooper and landing on the deck of the ark. Noah only follows one set of stories, and so immediately asks Changing Woman if she is "Any relation to Eve?" (145). Noah assumes that *she* is a parcel delivered to him. Changing Woman then runs away from Noah, who, of

course, begins trying to capture her. All the while, Noah's other victims narrate their own tales of oppression: "He tried to leave us behind, says Old Coyote. Then he tried to throw us into the water. But his wife and children said no, no, no. Don't throw all our friends into the water" (147). Changing Woman is disappointed to say the least. She had a very different perspective of what looked like a carnivalesque canoe from way up above, and said, as she fell through the sky, "It must be a party!" (144). But once she is on the boat, not only is she chased by a "little man with a filthy beard" (145) who mistakes her for another woman in another story, but in order to get away from Noah she has to wade through excrement as King literalizes the ark's poop deck.

This feces does not discriminate. As Bakhtin expounds, in depictions of the grotesque, "life and death, birth, excrement, and food are all drawn together and tied in one … knot; this is the center of bodily topography in which the upper and lower stratum penetrate each other" (*Rabelais* 163). The poop is excess material that will continue to exist and be generated despite Noah's attempt to authorize who and what is needed on the voyage, and who and what is not. He argues with Changing Woman, "This is a Christian Ship. Animals don't talk. We got rules" (145). Later, he offers her an ultimatum, "I am a Christian man. This is a Christian journey. And if you can't follow our Christian rules, they you're not wanted on the voyage" (148). But Changing Woman outruns him and his ultimatum. Noah, exhausted by his failures, sheepishly gives up, exclaiming, "Well, this is certainly a mystery … I better pray" (146). However, it is not his "Christian rules" that prevent him from collecting Changing Woman, but her own craftiness and agency. King uses intertextuality to un-create hierarchy and place everything on a more even keel; different biblical stories, men and

women, animals and humans, are all stuck in the same shit. Noah adheres to the rules and stays deep in the poop, whereas Changing Woman exits for a nearby beach. Although this may appear to be "the end," in fact, it "is just beginning" (148) for Changing Woman. She ends up continuing her quest and discovering new stories.

In addition to the story of this (presumably stinky) canoe, the ark also appears in the novel as a relic. The antique desk of Dr. Joe Hovaugh (a play on the name Jehovah) is a bit of an ark:

> The desk was large, one of his wife's auction discoveries, a rare example of colonial woodcraft. She had had it stripped, repaired, stained blond, and moved into his office as a surprise. He was delighted, he said, and he praised her eye for having found so massive a piece of wood. It reminded him of a tree cut down to the stump. (16)

"A tree cut down to the stump" denotes the appropriation and modification of a living thing for another agent's purposes. The desk, therefore, is a suitable utility in the office of an authoritative doctor in charge of an asylum. In addition to the biblical allusion, Chester argues that the doctor whose patients have escaped his guard is meant to ironize Northrop Frye, whose "structuralist theory reveals a closed system" (50). King's allusions are quite playful. Dr. Joe Hovaugh has a penchant for gardening, believing that carefully manicuring his own bush garden will ensure that what he sows will grow where and as expected. Frye as Romantic critic had a similar faith that, if given due admiration and attention, common mythologies emerge in anticipated places. Frye's archetypes, though, like the Indian men-or-women-in-disguise as literary characters in Dr. Joe Hovaugh's care, do not often appear where they are supposed to be. Moreover,

when they do appear, out of bounds, the archetypes previously considered classic or familiar are often in disguise. Masquerading as the Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe, and Hawkeye, the Indian men-who-may-be-women of *Green Grass, Running Water* challenge readers' expectations of how archetypes might recur in literature—not to mention how they might behave. The quartet does get up to quite a lot of mischief; significantly, they interfere with the generic and archetypal standoff in the novel between cowboys and Indians as staged on the silver screen at Bill Bursum's electronics store.

Bursum is yet another real-life figure that King has collected and whose meaning has changed upon his collection; by standing for an *idea* of King's (as his author-collector), while also alluding unmistakably to two real-life figures, he exists as a self-conscious hybrid. As Jane Flick notes in her annotations in "Reading Notes for Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*," Bursum "combines the names of two men famous for their hostility to Indians" (148): William F. Cody, "exploiter of Indians for entertainment in *Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show*" (148), and Holm O. Bursum, responsible for the Bursum Bill in 1921 that attempted to give Pueblo land and water rights to non-Indians. King's Bursum, then, is understandably exposed as an authority figure who, like Noah, is unwilling to accept any change to his perceived order of things. On one wall of his store, Bursum has erected a map of televisions that he refers to as just,

> The Map. Bursum loved the sound of it. There was a majesty to the name. He stepped back from the screens and looked at his creation. It was stupendous. It

> was more powerful than he had thought. It was like having the universe there on the wall, being able to see everything, being in control. (128)

Bursum considers The Map to be "beyond value" (128), and emblematic of the very "concept that [lies] at the heart of business and Western civilization" (298). What he does not acknowledge is that it is also a collection. It is made up of several entities of the same type that vary in size and shape, but which, once together, make a very different statement as a spectacle that lacks all "subtlety" (129). In addition, after the inquisitive Lone Ranger questions "what else" (300) Bursum's map can do, the map of televisions collectively changes the ending of the very narrative it projects. When Coyote and his company of literary *doppelgängers*, Charlie Looking Bear, Lionel Red Dog, and his Uncle Eli Stands Alone are in the store, they watch The Map with surprise as John Wayne's gun suddenly, against the script, shoots blanks. The Indians on screen (as well as King's Indians) celebrate winning the conflict. Meanwhile Bursum, who loves the predictability of Westerns, laments, almost unbelievingly, "You put your faith in good equipment and look what happens" (322). He is disappointed by the outcome of the battle between Cowboys and Indians because, as an archetypal confrontation, he thought he knew how it would end.

Eli Stands Alone, on the other hand, refuses to have any authoritative structure tell him what his own ending should be. His cabin, built log by log by his mother, is the only object standing in the way of the Grand Baleen Dam project. Built on Blackfoot territory, the project is headed up by Clifford Sifton (real-life Sifton promoted the settlement of the West that displaced the Native population [Flick 150]). Sifton tries to get Eli to see the beauty of the dam for something new in place of something old.

However, this attempt at forcing residents to adapt to living on a governmentally sanctioned and controlled lake 'or else' echoes God's non-negotiable control over land and water in the story of Noah. Eli chooses to see the dam not as an act of beauty, but as an object that "[r]eminds [him] of a toilet" (136). His standoff and injunction holds up the construction of condominiums (in which Bill Bursum has an invested interest). So, although Sifton tells Eli that dams "don't have politics" (111), this control of water indeed creates a bureaucratic geography that certainly does. That is until King (or Coyote, depending on how much you believe in the power of myth) floods the text itself.

To the west of the dam is the manmade Parliament Lake. In the last stretches of the novel, Bill Bursum, trying to enjoy a bit of sun on what he considers 'his' lakefront property, suddenly notices a set of objects bobbing in the water. The four Indians with Coyote have been stealing cars throughout the novel, and these three cars are now floating down the lake towards the dam. At first, it seems to be a joke, a prank that uses a harmless few props: "It was comical at first … the cars smashing into the dam, the lake curling over the top. But beneath the power and the motion there was a more ominous sound of things giving way, of things falling apart" (414). But even the addition of just a few artifacts to the lake changes the constitution of the body of water; the cars smash into the dam, which breaks. Order thus instantly turns into disorder with a grand earthquake and an intense intertextual moment. Not only does the consequent flood represent the archetypal great deluge but it is *caused* by Coyote and King's four Indians masquerading as archetypes. In addition, the entire scene resembles the myth of the discovery of North America: a Nissan, a Pinto, and a Karmann-Ghia fall over the

edge of the dam, just as it was feared that Columbus's ships, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*, would fall over the edge of the world (Flick 146) should they venture too far from home. This apocalyptic moment, though, results in a larger metamorphosis. The rupture of the manmade dam restores the land to how it existed in the past, much to the delight of the original Blackfoot residents, even though Eli disappears during the deluge. Thus, the land may *seem* to exist just as it did originally, but there are new layers of narrative underneath the waters; this ensures that the environment—and the narrative—will continue to change as buried objects begin to float to the surface.

King's text concludes with the waters flowing once more, and Findley's with its characters still at sea. Both novels seem more focused on their voyages than their destinations. After all, a final resting spot, a home, has always been an elusive concept for Findley's Lucy. She leaves heaven only to find that earth is not the utopia that she expected to find, so she continues her quest to find a home that tolerates difference and fosters curiosity. Meanwhile, following his latest trick of 'parting' the obstacle that had blocked the waters, Coyote finds himself right back at the beginning, when there was nothing except water. He is ready to figure out the earth's creation story, and "how it happened" (King 431), all over again. Lucy and Coyote may be, in one sense, captive to their own archetypal cycles. But what characterizes them—what disrupts any Great Codes of their containment—is their continual breaking of archetypes even if it is only to begin again.

While such 'containment' may still seem immediately restrictive, this cyclic structure is the story of collection in its natural state. The objects that exist in the

collection's present will always have a past, a former identity, and a placement in a previous narrative. But as artifacts, as well as antiques, and archetypes, go through another round or subsequent reading session, that very rotation keeps the stories fresh, alive, and unstable. Findley, like the inheritor of the ark-as-antique, focuses on the more marginal subjects who may not always be presumed part of the collection. King allows for rough revolution, one that fractures how the story *first* existed, and picks up the debris of other collections and narratives. These are, indeed, spectral readings, that consider *what else* can be brought to the front of the arcade and read as part of the collected. But without the spectator participating in the dream of the collection, the collection's various and alternative interpretations could be mistakenly brushed aside as "rumour" (Findley 283). And so, Findley and King imprint their texts with impressions of myth, of archetype, of Noah the collector's scout, and of the ark as collection. But traces of the original biblical story are trampled-through with the authors' transgressions, their respective rebuttals and revolutions. As writers, Findley and King have caught the collecting bug. They question, insistently, what *else* can be considered part of the collection? Accordingly, Findley places in prominent view the non-human and non-male subjects so often unseen, unheard, and relegated to the bowels of the ark, and King crowds the shelf with figures from other literatures and histories and mythologies. The result is not tidy. But the carnivalesque narratives that they self-consciously fail to contain call to characters like Lucy, Coyote, and to all readers willing to play, to come aboard.

Chapter Three:

Trophies:
The Taxidermies of "Vandals" and *Effigy*

> We may no longer feel it is acceptable to kill and mount vast quantities of animals, and it is this that holds us back from showing these in museums, though some curators have unofficially said to me that things like this make for wonderful educational aids. Our survival instincts will probably keep the human race going long after we have killed off most species of butterfly; consequently we will have an apparently endless supply of human remains while the supply of butterflies will be more restricted. Thus the butterflies' remains become more precious as objects than are human remains. They are precious because we are killing them off, but we have to kill them because that is how we have taught ourselves to display them. The subtext shows us to be caught in a trap of our own making, though like the ensnared animal we do not see the complexity until we are held fast.
>
> Julian Walker, "Afterword: acquisition, envy and the museum visitor," *Experiencing Material Culture in the Western World*

Alice Munro's "Vandals," the last story in *Open Secrets*, begins with a letter written by Bea Doud. The letter, never completed nor posted, is addressed to Liza, who lived across the street from Bea and her lover Ladner when Liza was a child. In her letter, Bea exclaims, "the other night I had a dream!" (262). In the dream Bea finds herself in a Canadian Tire parking lot where a big tent is set up. A woman says to her, "Seven years sure goes by in a hurry!" (262), and it suddenly occurs to Bea "what [she is] doing there and what the other people [are] doing there" (263). Seven years after Ladner's death, people have come to collect his bones. But why would Canadian Tire sell off her partner's remains? Bea asks her fellow shoppers, "Are the graveyards getting overcrowded? What have we taken up this custom for?" (263). She admonishes any guilty feelings by convincing herself that collecting his bones has nothing to do with her personal history with Ladner, and begins to shop. She gathers several specimens, but her shopping bag remains light. To her horror, Bea realizes that instead of Ladner's remains, she has selected the bones of a child. This

recollection of a haunting reverie symbolically foreshadows what the reader will come to learn about the triangle of Bea, Ladner, and Liza. However, bones are not the collection at the core of "Vandals." Instead, dead animals, stuffed, mounted, and restored to 'life' through the practice of taxidermy, are the primary collection of this short story.

Ladner is a taxidermist. He sells his work to various museums, but keeps a fair number of his creations. He poses these creatures in the woods and at the edges of the streams on his property in the Ontario countryside near Carstairs. Young Liza and her brother Kenny are the only spectators allowed; Ladner insists on sequestering his collection from visitors in order to maintain its privacy. He defiantly quashes the enthusiastic curiosity of Bea and her soon-to-be ex-boyfriend who have invited themselves to peruse his collection by expounding: "I don't know where you got the impression that what I've done here I've done as a public service" (267-268). Private as Ladner may wish it to be within his own narrative, the figurative reanimation of formerly-living objects as collectibles has been, strangely, prevalent in several recent Canadian fictions. Most notably, much of Alissa York's novel *Effigy* threads itself around a similarly personal private taxidermic collection. Set in Utah territory circa 1867, *Effigy* offers us the unusual Dorrie as taxidermist, the fourth (and teenaged) wife in a polygamous Mormon family. Her husband, Erastus Hammer, delivers to her every kill from his regular hunting expeditions. Then Dorrie, at the expense of her own skin, works painstakingly with the chemicals necessary to refurbish his prey into resilient trophies that he insists, curiously, on keeping hidden away in the workshop upon completion. Eerily, she spends almost all of her time surrounded by the taxidermic specimens, even sleeping (when she does, which is rare) on a cot beneath her

many mounted creations that remain in the workshop and—unlike Ladner's—never see the light of day.

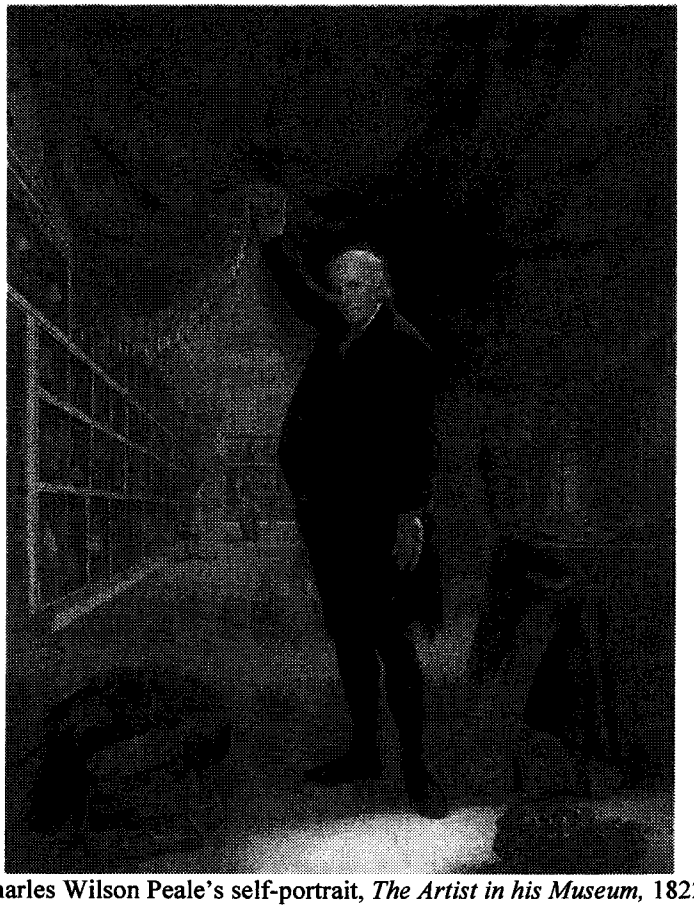
The taxidermic collection is a gothic site with an uncanny ability to render the familiar unfamiliar. Its objects are animals that have been killed, collected, and their bodies dismantled. But then they have been refurbished to *look* alive, caught in a moment, their bodies denying the very artifice that now sustains them. Carrie Dawson reads Ladner's collection as "icons of the natural" that are, thus, "self-evident and not in need of explanation" (69). But this self-evidence is a fiction. The objects in a taxidermic collection do *not* speak for themselves. Their body language has been written for them. In my first chapter, I discussed the inherently collective authorship of any collection, and a taxidermic display is certainly no exception. In "Vandals," the collector is also its hunter and taxidermist, but in *Effigy,* the hunter has a scout who helps search for his targets and a specialist who preserves his prizes. Yet, the taxidermic collection always strives to hide its human imprint; its stitches are secreted away. Susan Stewart argues, "[o]nce the object is completely severed from its origin, it is possible to generate a new series, to start again within a context that is framed by the selectivity of the collector" (*On Longing* 152). Within a museum, a preserved and mounted animal body might genuinely be counted as an artifact belonging to the study of natural history, even though it performs such blatant artifice. But a private collection of taxidermic specimens, particularly those lacking accompanying taxonomical, contextual, or explanatory panels or labels (that is, an unequivocally 'neutral' informational narrative), exists instead as wall or room of trophies. A "trophy" *arrests* a moment in time but exalts human acquisition or achievement *over* the actual past of the object. A collection of trophies mutes a layer, a meaning, a history, and an alternative

narrative of the collection; moreover, the taxidermic collection as a series of trophies serves as a haunting and explicit testimonial to human tyranny over non-human subjects.

The word "taxidermy" is etymologically derived from the Greek words for "skin" (*derma*) and "arrangement" or "preparation" (*taxis*) (Wakeham 9). The taxidermist replaces some (and sometimes all) of the animal's parts with artificial substitutes for flesh, hide, bone, and marrow. A manmade core and frame replace the organs and skeleton while the skin, often the only original part of the animal's corpus that is restored to the taxidermied body, is removed, tanned, and treated with various preservative chemicals. Significantly, the taxidermist influences how the specimen will appear in a collection by manipulating its body. More often than not, a taxidermist also determines a relationship between fellow objects by arranging creatures so that they 'interact' in clusters. A bird in flight, wolves in combat, or even just a bear cub stretching are common taxidermic scenes that communicate a narrative about life in-the-moment, a moment eternally suspended in time, *post-mortem.* As a community of bodies that appear to be living and interacting with one another, the taxidermic collection performs corporeal *façade*.

Nevertheless, a collection of still-life still has a life of its own. This collection provokes a spectator to imagine the spectral collector *and* the origins of the collected. Findley and King re-envision a Noah's ark wherein the collected can talk back. But unlike the ark, which gathers together living creatures, the taxidermic collection is comprised of refashioned, silenced corpses. Munro and York put that very silence on display. In both short story and novel, spectators come to realize that the collections have deceived them. In "Vandals," Liza is let down by Bea, who has herself been silenced by the spectacle of the collection. Bea fails to speak up against Ladner's ongoing sexual assaults of Liza and

Kenny that take place within his taxidermic maze. In *Effigy,* Dorrie cannot decide how to position a particular group of silent specimens—a family of wolves—and eventually employs a living model, Bendy, to mimic their movements. But before I proceed with my discussion of "Vandals" and *Effigy*, I will return to the objects depicted in Bea Doud's dream because the ethos behind collecting bones, acquired by unearthing graves, provides the beginnings of a narrative theory for reading the taxidermic collection.



Charles Wilson Peale's self-portrait, *The Artist in his Museum,* 1822
Wikimedia Commons.
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C_W_Peale_-_The_Artist_in_His_Museum.jpg

The bones exist – the animals do not!

> Rembrandt Peale, pamphlet documenting Charles Wilson Peale's excavation of mastodon bones, 1803
> Cited by Susan Stewart, "Death and Life, in that Order, in the Works of Charles Wilson Peale," *The Cultures of Collecting*

SKY Lee's novel *Disappearing Moon Cafe* begins in 1892, when Wong Gwei Chang is hired to travel from China to Canada to retrieve the bones of those who died during the construction of the railroad. Decades later, Gwei Chang recalls the harrowing and exhausting process of "looking for the bones of dead chinamen strewn along the Canadian Pacific Railway, their ghosts sitting on the ties, some standing with one foot on the gleaming metal ribbon, waiting, grumbling" (5-6). Gwei Chang, as scout, gathers all the requisite parts in order to return the collection to its rightful country and bring peace to the relatives of the deceased. However, he has set out on an impossible mission, searching for bones believing that they can stand for the bodies *as* they existed in the past. A collection brings buried histories into the context of the collector's present. Gwei Chang inevitably appropriates those bodies by unearthing them.

Others have collected bones in order to claim a right to the remains; for example, I referred in my first chapter to Norman "Kenny" Luxton, Banff's celebrated, grave-robbing turn-of-the-twentieth-century taxidermist. However, the practice of collecting bones, without regard to potentially unlawful or exploitative appropriation, started long before Luxton's invasion of Haida Gwaii. Samuel George Morton, a Philadelphia collector and physician, died in 1851 leaving behind his collection of 867 skulls on which he had based several racist conclusions over the course of his career. As Ann Fabian contends, Morton felt that the skulls presented to him "a solution to the puzzle of human variation. The differences he observed in his specimens led him to conclude that human races had separate origins" (113). For the purposes of eugenics and phrenology, the skull was problematically considered synecdoche, an item that a collector such as Morton could interpret as

representing not just an individual but an entire race. Here it seems relevant to recall that when Hamlet talks to Yorick's cranium (although Hamlet is more loquacious conversationalist than collector) the bare skull epitomizes for him *not* the knowledge of an individual, or even of a race, but the promise of death's inevitability—for everyone. Conceivably, the certainty not just of death but of the death of empire and colonial mastery is confronted, head on, by those who collect and possess skulls. Once preserved in a despotic collection, the skull stands for at least one body that has been categorized, subjugated, and owned.

Charles Wilson Peale, another collector of bones, was an exemplary collector similar to Eric Harvie. Like Harvie, Peale was a collector of careers, and practiced

> various professions throughout his long life: repairer of bells, watches and saddles, sculptor, painter of miniatures and portraits, Revolutionary soldier, propagandist and civic official, mezzotint engraver, museum keeper, zoologist and botanist, and the inventor of various mechanisms, including a portable steam-bath, a fan chair, a velocipede, a physiognotrace for making silhouettes, a polygraph for making multiple copies of documents, a windmill, a stove, a bridge and false teeth. (Stewart 205)

Peale established the first American museum in late eighteenth-century Philadelphia, whereas Harvie founded the Glenbow in twentieth-century Alberta. Like Harvie, Peale was dedicated to the preservation of national history. Finally, both Harvie and Peale were extraordinarily ambitious collectors.

Peale's very pose and position in his self-portrait, *The Artist in his Museum* (1822), makes him seem larger than life. He stands in the centre of the picture, dressed in black.

With a wide arc of his right arm, he lifts a great curtain so that the long hall of his gallery, his extravagant arcade, can be seen. A massive mastodon skeleton looms behind him, and a seemingly endless series of shelves fades into the distance. Yet, this painting also shows a collector sharing his findings and empathetic to the curiosity of others. Peale (again like Harvie) stated that he was, in his life's work, doing his part to contribute to "the rise and progress of the Museum" (qtd. in Stewart 221). I would argue that Peale's body language in his portrait *invites* rather than restricts spectators from entering his great hall. Of course, I am reading into the portrait; the Peale I describe is to a great extent a character, an imagined Peale, a Hamlet-like collector who holds up the bones he has found and is confronted with the inevitability of death for all life. Nevertheless, Peale, pioneer of the public museum, did not champion his own achievements over the former lives of things that his collection sought to display.

Peale dreamt of a museum that would not just salvage but narrate natural history. In addition to skeletons, Peale exhibited taxidermic specimens and in fact was a revolutionary in the field of taxidermy: "Finding that ordinary taxidermy did not produce a lifelike effect, [Peale] stretched skins over wooden cores he had carved in order to indicate musculature, and he provided a painted contextual background for each specimen" (Stewart 207). In "Vandals," Ladner places his specimens in the natural wilderness surrounding his house, but because Peale's display existed in an indoor showroom, the artifice extends to the collection's site, the manmade "thicket, turf, trees and a pond" (Stewart 217). Like Ladner, Peale positioned the specimens in their most suitable environments (waterfowl and turtles by the pond, birds in the boughs of a tree); and like Ladner's garden, Peale's "world" narrates *for* the spectator. As Stewart contends, the implied "animation reverses the stasis

of display and suggests that the collection might speak or come to life" (204). As a result, "[t]his dream of animation has thereby a kind of socio-political claim, for it posits the collection as an intervention or act of significance, and it compels the consciousness of the observer to enter into the consciousness of the collector" (Stewart 204). Someone has posed the animals as though they are paused, but certainly not dead; their stillness is a fiction.

The hierarchical arrangement of Peale's long room, too, is not ideologically innocent; it was "organized according to what Peale knew of the Linnaean system" (Stewart 206), a methodology that, according to Wakeham, was not unrelated to taxidermy:

> Amassing raw material to feed into his classificatory machines that churned the "chaos" of nature into "order," Linnaeus sent his students out across the globe on free passes with trading companies to gather samples and mount specimens to bring back to the master taxonomist. Taxidermy therefore became a vital technology that aided and abetted the collection of "the planet's life forms" and the systematization of nature as part of Western society's project to master the unknown and to impose a colonial order of things upon the world. (10)

Wakeham explains some of the potential consequences of a collection that *seems* silent yet enacts a socio-political claim; she argues that museum "tableaux" that display Aboriginal bodies alongside taxidermically preserved animals "amplify the colonial logic embedded in the structure of dioramic display, dramatizing a white supremacist narrative of evolution that fetishizes the supposed lost objects of primitive wildness" (5). No collection, not even one that contains natural things, forms naturally. There is much about a collection that a spectator is left to imagine—absence, more even than presence, informs all collections. But what is always present is a pretense that mutes the original past and speaks on behalf of the

collection. The spectator who reads the collection closely will always uncover the prerogatives of someone operating in the present.

Munro's "Vandals" embodies Kroetsch's contention that "[t]he ultimate violence that might be done to story is silence" (*Lovely* 109). Dawson argues that "Bea's many references to 'nature'" throughout the story "seem premised on a belief that the nonhuman world is the site or repository of authenticity and truth. This view inhibits Bea from looking more closely at what went on in the garden" (74). As a result, the silence in the story is two-fold: Bea does not (or cannot) speak up against a present and ongoing sexual violence, while the taxidermic collection enacts a charade that mutes the past massacre of the animals' bodies. The most pressing and haunting question that resonates even after the story's conclusion is whether Bea remained ignorant of what was happening in the present on a site that freezes a moment of the past, or was aware of Ladner's assaults against the children who visited his property and did not articulate her knowledge. The story never fully discloses if Bea simply did not correctly read the signs of the collection, or if she was aware of the truth but willing to play along.

The taxidermic collection's performance is an obvious parody of reality, a hoax. Therefore, it is possible that the deceit is so burlesque that Bea does not think to question or scrutinize the show. Moreover, the stage for the taxidermic specimens is already difficult to navigate. When Bea first tours the terrain, she realizes that she has no sense of direction and depends on Ladner to guide her. Robert McGill observes that the narrative of "Vandals" "is especially rife with excursions and tours, which are by no means innocuous but which appear as tools of an oppressive masculinity that controls and orders space" (106). Ladner controls the perception of his space to potential audiences with language,

tagging the topography with wooden signs quoting Aristotle or Rousseau: "Nature never deceives us; it is always we who deceive ourselves" (qtd. in Munro 271). Ladner has also punctuated his property with more conventional signs such as "No Trespassing" and "Keep Out" and (ironically or not) "No Hunting" (278). Lastly, a sign near the road bears the name of the place, "Lesser Dismal" (277), in reference to a swamp in the States called Great Dismal—Ladner's attempt at a "joke" (278). Bea wonders if the whole collection itself is a joke, and to some extent, as an elaborate caricature, it is. Still, Bea does not attempt to decipher the riddle, and does not contest any signs she notices on the taxidermic property.

There is one notable excursion on which Bea, guided by Ladner, does not offer a crucial reader-response. Liza and Kenny, Bea's fellow sightseers on the tour, approach a beech tree whose body has been defiled by the carving of the letters "P.D.P." When Kenny gleefully announces, "Pull down pants!" Ladner gently reminds him that the letters stand for "Proceed down path," as in, to carry on with his tour (289). Ladner's version of the acronym is yet another branch of artifice in his ever-expanding garden that Bea accepts without question. Dawson argues, "[g]iven that the story is also concerned with Bea's refusal to admit—to others and, perhaps, even to herself—that Ladner was a pedophile, his diorama functions as a symbol of the often complex relationships between ways of knowing and of not knowing, of preserving disbelief in the face of knowledge too horrible to contemplate" (70-71). Certainly, Liza's biggest disappointment is that the collection's sole spectator who could contemplate its diversions from the truth and unbury the collection's hidden narrative did not read like a critic.

As a child, Liza welcomes the addition of warm, inviting, aiming-to-please Bea to the ranch. When Bea and Liza swim in the pond, Liza sees her as "prey to little pouches and sags, dents and ripples in the skin or flesh, sunbursts of tiny purplish veins, faint discolorations in the hollows. And it was in fact this collection of flaws, this shadowy damage, that Liza especially loved" (287). Ladner adds himself to the scene, splashing into the waters, and beginning to mimic the body beside him. He exaggerates Bea's movements in a living caricature of his lover: "He was imitating Bea. He was doing what she was doing but in a sillier, ugly way. … See how vain she is, said Ladner's angular prancing. See what a fake" (288). Although Ladner has made a mockery of a woman Liza loves, she still finds his pantomime "thrilling and shocking" (288). Liza at once knows that Ladner is doing some "damage" and yet part of her "delight[s]" in it (288). A multiplicitous narrative perplexes the spectator into a disparate response. Accordingly, the spectator feels a need to read, and attempt to comprehend, his or her own collection of reactions. However, Ladner's taxidermic spectacle remains so fantastical that the most evident narrative, death masquerading as life, demands a reader's full attention.

The short story alternates between scenes of Liza's childhood and adulthood, and as readers we learn that, years later, Liza's emotions concerning the collection become unbridled. Liza returns to Bea and Ladner's property as an adult, with her husband Warren, when Bea and Ladner are away. To Warren's shock, Liza trashes the house. She invokes the wild within a domestic space. She inflicts damage that will spoil the home of the collector who unrightfully sought to possess her, and the spectator who refused to read the collection as a palimpsest: the taxidermy was subterfuge, while an ongoing series of violations were added to the collection over the years. What Liza does not realize, as she

tears apart the taxidermic creatures mounted indoors, is that Bea has always seen herself as an addition to the collection, within its walls rather than a spectator on the outside, and as a result only privy to a partial perspective. Consequently, quite unlike *The Collector's* Miranda Grey, Bea never acknowledges that she could (and should) question the ideology of her collector. When Bea first meets Ladner she recognizes his cruelty, yet somehow sees his spitefulness as something she can occupy and live inside. What Bea thinks is that, "some women, women like herself, might be always on the lookout for an insanity that could contain them" (268). Bea puts her own agency and literary power on hold, eventually entering a phase of complete convalescence. Silent and immobile, she seamlessly transitions into her own death.

Following Ladner's death, Bea feels literally pinned down by his ghost, by cumbersome memories of his "weight and heat and smell" (264). Bea's internment poses similarities to that of *Effigy's* taxidermist, Dorrie, although Dorrie's collector restrains her in the present. Erastus marries Dorrie when she is still a child, and on her wedding night she finds herself literally trapped by the weight of his body. However, unlike Bea, Dorrie enters into a relationship with Erastus because he needs her skilled hand in the shaping of his collection. Dorrie is not only an accomplished taxidermist, but she has a visceral connection to the work. Even though her own skin becomes chapped and blistered, she longs for each new acquisition as "fur provides a temporary refuge for her afflicted hands" (4). From her wedding bed, she fantasizes "[w]hat if, by some miracle of doubling, she were able to stuff and mount herself? The notion was calming, almost soporific. She felt her limbs give up all resistance, felt her heart check itself and begin to slow" (176). She feels a kinship with Erastus's specimens and believes that, as they enter the collection, she

is responding to the bodies in a loving way by restoring each of their lives. The novel opens with Dorrie feeling immediately connected to the freshly collected. When Erastus and his hunting companion, a Paiute guide who goes by the name of Tracker, approach the ranch with the bodies of several wolves slung over the backs of their horses, "[a] jolt of pleasure shoots down through the base of [Dorrie's] spine and beyond—as though, like the milk-white body that commands her gaze, she too is possessed of a magnificent tail" (3). Dorrie believes, somehow, that her relationship with these animals is one of mutual adoration and respect. But when the job begins to take over her every waking hour, Dorrie's initial conception of her relationship with the collection unravels.

In both Munro's story and York's novel, there is a collection that deceives, but also letters that seek to explain, justify, or confess. Bea's letter in "Vandals" recounts a dream wherein she chooses the wrong bones, an allegory for her neglectfulness throughout the story. Structurally, *Effigy* is shot through with a sporadic collection of letters written by Helen Burr, Dorrie's adoptive mother. As in "Vandals," the letters are not read by the intended recipient within the fiction but are shared with the reader. Helen's letters testify to Dorrie's own traumatic history while the marks of violence on Erastus's taxidermic collection are concealed by Dorrie's deft handiwork.

Helen reveals to Dorrie (and the reader discovers gradually, as the collection of letters are scattered throughout *Effigy*) that she was orphaned by the Mountain Meadows Massacre, a real-life tragedy that occurred in Utah on September 11, 1857. While the full truth about the attack is not known, 2,605 bones of the deceased, discovered in 1999, provided the evidence of how people were killed, by what weapons, and indirectly suggested who may have been responsible for the deaths (McMurtry 63). The massacre was

the culmination of a longstanding rivalry between the Mormons and other settlers. The Mormon militia, with Paiute support, allegedly attacked a wagon train of emigrants crossing the Utah territory. York discusses the event in an interview with her publisher:

> One hundred and twenty men, women and children were murdered on that day; only the very youngest children were allowed to survive. Seventeen children lived. Time and again I read that statistic, until one source gave the number of survivors as eighteen. It was that discrepancy—that hole in history—that allowed space for my main character to come to life. Dorrie would be that possible eighteenth child, the one who was unaccounted for. ("Interview")

Dorrie does not read the letters she receives from Helen, as she is often completely preoccupied with her work, but the coupling of Helen's violent descriptions of this history with the chapters about hunting, taxidermy, and polygamy encourages a close reading of Erastus's collections and tyrannical collecting practice.

Whereas Dorrie agonizes over taxidermy (the actual preservation of each creature's corporeal body), Erastus, by contrast, is more interested in the inscription than the trophy itself. Each corpse in his collection becomes represented by a written line—date, species, physical characteristics—in his small private black notebook. Norman "Kenny" Luxton, the aforementioned collector of skulls, kept a similar ledger for the taxidermic creations that he sold in his curio shop in Banff at the turn of the twentieth century. Apparently, these products were considerably cruder than Dorrie's lovingly crafted articles. According to Mark Simpson, Luxton rushed his taxidermic processes because he was more of a capitalist than a collector; he felt that the triumph of his taxidermy would be demonstrated by healthy business records. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, his ledgers (accounts of goods and

transactions) proved to have a longer shelf life than most of his preserved specimens. Luxton's ledgers are of a particular historical interest (as they document, for example, that a chipmunk cost $3) that Simpson comprehensively explains:

> With a mute density such figures encode unrecoverable questions of value, class privilege, and desire negotiated by long-dead people over the stuffed skins of still longer-dead animals. Can these discursive fragments—incoming correspondence or the long, thin, lined paper on which stock records are kept—constitute the material life in things? Fragile, untrustworthy, incomplete, such ephemera come to seem like diaries in the material existence of flayed animals, offering in place of missing bones the skeletal genealogy beneath taxidermic circulation. (96)

The ledger, like a letter, offers telling commentary, while the taxidermic specimen, no matter how monstrous or fantastic, remains silent.

The notebook was a useful tool for collectors like Erastus Hammer and Norman Luxton who believed that in order to know the value of their collections they needed to keep track of their commodities. Erastus values his notebook because it helps him keep account of his stock, and thus he remains aware and in control of what he owns. Additionally, this notebook provides a slim account of each of his trophies, his version of their histories and meanings. However, in Erastus's book, (perhaps) unlike in Luxton's, the statistics have been skewed. Losing his vision, Erastus becomes increasingly dependent on the Tracker not only to guide him through the woods but often to shoot his targets. While Bea Doud gamely depends upon Ladner's guidance in order to navigate his taxidermic maze, Erastus is unwilling to become subordinate. If the Tracker hunts and Dorrie

preserves, what is left for Erastus? If he loses control he will become vulnerable to the kind of domination that *he* exerts over non-human and human subjects as their collector.

Effigy focalizes on a variety of perspectives, including those of Erastus, his son Lal, the Tracker, Dorrie, and the other sister wives Ursula, Ruth, and Thankful. The wives are numerically and literally compartmentalized and thus have little understanding or respect for each other's roles in the collection. First wife and primary housekeeper Ursula, for example, despises Erastus's taxidermic collection and resents Dorrie's part in it. She exclaims to her husband, "You can't imagine they [matter], these—trophies of yours," that they "mean something" (376). Ursula believes, rather, that Erastus's sole chance for eternal life will come as a result of him expanding the ranks of his family. It is second wife Ruth, however, not Ursula, who is most capable of bearing children, but is exhausted by the task. Childbearing interferes with her true passion of raising silkworms. Lastly, third wife Thankful presents an odd and provocative hybrid of Erastus's collected species. She fulfils his sexual needs, and dresses up like the prey that he collects:

> Erastus opens the door to his third wife's bedchamber. He has to squint in the half-light, but as always when Thankful treats him to his favourite of all her creations, there is the smell. A fox is a plush and pungent creature. He begins to make out the line of her, drawn back between wardrobe and dresser. She greets him with a high, inviting bark. (214)

When Erastus refers to her as his "creature" (283), she assumes it is a term of endearment.

In her grotesque fashion, Thankful also literalizes Erastus's fantasy of a master collection that contains *all* of his collected beings. This dream begins with "bright visions of every creature [he's] ever killed," which he then imagines displayed not in Dorrie's

workshop but "arranged about his home—owls like vases, a grizzly like a gleaming desk—pretending for the moment that Ursula would stand for a wilderness dragged indoors" (11). Erastus fails to see that he himself prevents his dream from coming true by asserting a hierarchy; in his collection of human subjects, Erastus always favours one wife over the others and unsettles the balance of his polygamous family. His first, second, third, and fourth wives are numbered, assigned separate roles, and shuttered away from one another in their individual bedchambers, each occupying different compartments of the property. The walls that divide these women both literally and figuratively isolate them from one another even if they are common victims in an oppressive collection. The wives' order has always been subject to the signature of their collector, the *consignation* of Erastus's collection. But once the wives' stories, confessions, and desires are displayed within the narrative of *Effigy,* the text does not favour any one perspective or person, nor does it allow Erastus to speak on behalf on his collection.

Similarly, when Helen's letters are offset by Dorrie's recurring dreams in *Effigy,* the collections (of letters, of dreams) inform one another. The reader of *Effigy* (on the outside of the collection) is aware of both narratives, whereas Dorrie does not read her letters—the panels that narrate her dreams—and so she is left to interpret her dreams on her own. In Dorrie's dreams (the only sections of the novel written in the first person), she witnesses the Mountain Meadows Massacre from the perspective of a crow. When Dorrie is first invited to join the Hammer family, and is offered her very own private workshop (a prospect which delights her because her experimentations with taxidermy have not exactly amused her adoptive parents), Erastus's one condition is that "every specimen on his ranch would be one that met its end by his hand. The collection they would build together would

stand as a testament to his skill" (47). Despite his orders, however, Dorrie sneaks a crow named Cruikshank into her workshop. Named after the man from whom she learned taxidermy, the crow is her first taxidermic creation. Unlike the rest of Erastus' taxidermic collection, Cruikshank's body bears the traces of Dorrie's rudimentary beginnings as a taxidermist. He has ill-fitted glass eyes and his mottled feathers have not been properly treated and preserved. Nevertheless, his presence in the workshop breaks Erastus's rules because he is a creature that Erastus did not track, kill, and claim himself.

In her dreams, Dorrie witnesses a scene unfold below her from the perspective of a creature whose body she has restored in real life. The physical description of the girl who is spared in the slaughter is uncannily similar to Dorrie, and it becomes clear that she is looking down on her own younger, past self, a mimetic dramatization of an event which she does not recollect. Even though it is her own past resurrected below her, Dorrie interprets the scene as a "story" and not as a history that actually took place (41). Dorrie does not remember the tragedy of which she dreams and has not read her adoptive mother's letters confirming this "story" as her own truth; her dream remains a nightmare. She is forced to try on the body of the crow, a body that is not her own, and the discomfiting appropriation resonates strongly with the young taxidermist.

Taxidermy used to be straightforward for Dorrie. But with the wolves, the project consuming her throughout *Effigy*, she is blocked. The wolves, "[c]rowded together on the floor … stand coated in plaster, ready to receive their skins. Ready as they'll ever be. Not ready at all. To a one, the mannequins are lifeless" (386). Dorrie decides to solicit the help of Bendy Drown, a farmhand who earned his name long before coming to the farm, practicing and perfecting the physical manipulation of his own body as a trade. As a child

he lived in a rooming house with his father in San Francisco where there was a shortage of beds. Bendy contorted himself nightly in order to fit into the small cupboard where he slept. He later joined a traveling carnival where he learned how to apply his contortionist skills and transform his body into a lifelike parody of an animal.

As Bakhtin notes, a body that combines "human and animal traits is, as we know, one of the most ancient grotesque forms" (*Rabelais* 316). In the privacy of Dorrie's workshop, when Dorrie has difficulty imagining how the wolves might look in action, Bendy demonstrates his talent for her: "It's as though he's melting, dropping to the ground in a boneless, unknowable mass. In the time it takes her to inhale sharply, the mass reconstitutes itself in the shape of a … lion—rump settled between haunches, belly long, chin resting on paws" (260). Bendy "play[s] the first scene that [comes] to mind, evoking the rangy male he'd watched emerge from a river running wide and slow. Climbing inside memory, he assume[s] the dripping animal's form, planting his four paws, pausing for a moment before shaking himself shoulders to tail" (263). Dorrie knows that what she is witnessing is magical, while at the same time she recognizes that Bendy's show mimics and unwittingly objectifies another living being. As Stewart explains in her analysis of "the bodily grotesque of carnival," "[t]hrough the transcendent viewpoint offered by this variety of spectacle, the body is made an object and, correlatively, is something which offers itself to possession" (*On Longing* 132). At the same time, a body that reorders itself is "the antithesis of the body as a functional tool and of the body as still life" (Stewart, *On Longing* 105). Dorrie is both thrilled and unsettled by Bendy's performance, a reaction not unlike Liza's in "Vandals" upon her witnessing Ladner's mimicry of Bea, and not unlike Maggie's in *The Puppeteer* after she witnesses Dorf's absurd and slightly perverse puppet

show re-presenting yet distorting the past. Dorrie, so involved in her work, has become too proximate to the collection to be a genuine spectator. Dorrie sees, for the first time, the dissonance between what she thinks she is creating and what she actually has the ability to restore. Suitably, as "the etymology of the term *monster* is related to *moneo,* 'to warn,' and *monstro,* 'to show forth'" (Stewart, *On Longing* 108, her emphasis), Bendy's monstrous impersonation exposes to Dorrie the artifice that she herself has authored as taxidermist.

Interestingly, Bendy insists that she does not have to counterfeit movement in the bodies of her creatures. He suggests that simply gathering the specimens together creates a collective presence in the workshop that should not be underestimated. As "[t]he collection breathes down Bendy's neck" (355), he teaches Dorrie to feel the gaze of objects in the same way that she might feel a hand on her skin. She senses the figures that surround her in her workshop, and "[i]t's as though she could reach out a hand and make contact with every creature in the place" (356). Her focus is not commandeered by one project, and her awareness is evenly distributed amongst all the objects around her. Dorrie starts to see that the objects are not just positioned alongside one another; they are communicating with one another just as they are communicating with her. She stares at her wolves, and suddenly realizes where she went wrong. Dorrie decides that she will not determine the wolves' interaction with one another, or replicate or assume the scene they create. Dorrie offers the collection her apology. She leaves the wolves alone.

*

The taxidermic collection is a theatre of struggle that mummifies the victims of a conflict. There is a puppeteer at the helm of these collections who manipulates the corpses, fashions the pretense that they are still alive, and then works to erase his or her signature on

the collection. It is an open secret that the bones *may* be real, but the animals are certainly not; the spectator knows that the "life" being displayed is a dummy, yet consents to the unspoken concealment of its strings. In an interview concerning her Giller Prize nomination for *Effigy,* York herself noted that the history represented in her novel is "kind of like a big open secret" (Donnelly 1). The Mountain Meadows Massacre has been documented, and thousands of bones have been unearthed to speak to the crime, but certain communities still question who was complicit and who was responsible for the tragedy. A taxidermic collection, authored by taxidermist, curator, and collector, without the inherent appropriation put on display can be categorized as *natural* history. This kind of collection manifests, in fact boasts, a contradiction in terms, and exhibits an open secret.

As a result, while the taxidermic scene is obviously a grotesque one, the imprints of inherent violence and manipulation or change to the animal body are hidden. After all, the collector intends accomplishment in preservation and success in capture, not unlawful domination, to be the *idea* that the taxidermic display presents. Kroetsch argues, "violence is prior to, more primitive than, deconstruction. Deconstruction implies, for all its attraction to disorder, a recovery of order, control; not so much the moment as the moment after" (*Lovely* 109). The reader of "Vandals" and *Effigy* witnesses that moment after. Munro and York self-consciously articulate the various layers of artifice that deconstruct, reorder, and rename an act of violence. The reader is outside of the collection, holding the trailing end of a script. This position is demonstrated to be a privileged one, for those within the fictions, close to the collection but without control (or awareness) of its strings, may become tangled within the collection, and dominated by the collector, themselves.

Chapter Four:

The Obsolete:
Detritus of the Canadian City

> Where is here?
>
> Northrop Frye, Conclusion to *Literary History of Canada*

> Did [Benjamin] leave behind anything more than a large-scale plan or prospectus? No, it is argued, *The Arcades Project* is just that: the blueprint for an unimaginably massive and labyrinthine architecture—a dream city, in effect.
>
> Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Translators' Foreword, *The Arcades Project*

In the 1988 film *Big,* a young boy comes across an arcade machine at the edge of a local fair. The machine encases a dummy, the magical Zoltar. Inserting a coin into the machine seems to have no effect, but the boy's very longing for the game to work (shaking it and shouting at it) spins Zoltar into life. The dummy slowly opens and closes its mouth, and flashes its red, glowing eyes at the boy who wishes to become "big." In what is probably the most iconic scene in this carnivalesque bildungsroman, the boy-suddenly-turned-adult dances across a floor piano in F.A.O. Schwarz. This moment attests (as do subsequent scenes in which the protagonist works as a toy tester) that this is a film *about* stuff. Ultimately, it is a film about how stuff alone is not enough to satisfy an individual. But toys, the commodities of a large and successful corporation, do preoccupy this boy's thoughts and lay the foundation for his fantasy of what it means to be big and to live in the big city.

The magical Zoltar could be found at a fair, or even just at a shopping mall, a bowling alley, or an airport. "Arcade" is, today, most commonly associated with the small, enclosed areas set aside for video gaming. When the arcade experienced its renaissance in nineteenth-century Paris, the goods it housed were not interactive machines; they were

predominantly inanimate objects, yet they provoked fantastic reveries of luxury. A consumer wandered within the arcade, and wondered about the magical potential of property, and of the grand associations that could be inferred from objects acquired and then placed within one's domestic interior. The arcade was, literally, a shelter from deluge (it provided temporary relief for passersby from "sudden rainshowers" as "a secure, if restricted, promenade" [Benjamin, "A [Arcades]" 31]), while it also offered its captives some reprieve from the banality of everyday life. In his convolute on "Arcades," Benjamin repeats the catch phrase of the arcade clerk who deals in secondhand goods of all kinds: "We have no specialty" (41). Benjamin argues that within the "antique bric-à-brac" of the arcade "reemerges the old physiognomy of trade" (41). Before it was succeeded by "specialty," the "superior scrap-yard" (41) of the arcade still prevailed. In the blockbuster *Big,* the protagonist's female co-worker is surprised to discover that the boy-turned-adult has furnished his apartment with an abundance of toys, including a trampoline. The homesick boy having a prolonged out of body experience does not surround himself with static relics, simple yet solid handcrafted items, but rather what is new and brightly branded—even a Pepsi vending machine, right in the foyer of his domestic space. The delight for the boy, in the *Big* city, comes from what things can do; significantly, if an object is desired for what it means, that meaning is branded and mass-produced, rather than imagined by its possessor.

Benjamin states that with the establishment of department stores, which followed the reign of the arcade, "the circus-like and theatrical element of commerce" was "quite extraordinarily heightened" ("A [Arcades]" 43). Benjamin ominously states in this convolute, "[the arcade's] relation to the concept of originality remains to be explored"

(43). Today, it has become evident that the rapid pulse of technological innovation and expansion, and the increasing prominence of the production of goods outside the city (released for purchase simultaneously, in cities worldwide), has irrevocably destabilized the importance of an object's "originality," not to mention a consumer's *individual* needs. The advent of advertising necessitated that longings be merged into one general and common pile, and that consumers be read through test *groups* lacking in individual personalities or proclivities. Now, with arcades that have evolved from department stores to online retailers, with products that have become not only mass-produced but mass-marketed, where a brand or a code is valued over the object to which it is affixed, the city is commonly accepted as not an autonomous *place*, but a *part* of a larger collection—a global network.

Almost four decades after Northrop Frye posed his famous riddle "Where is here?" the compass seems to favour concrete. Contemporary Canada is now "one of the most urban countries on earth," with eighty percent of Canadians living in cities (Ivison and Edwards 3). Douglas Ivison and Justin D. Edwards's anthology *Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities*, the works of W. H. New (such as *Land Sliding* and *Borderlands*) and Graham Huggan (*Territorial Disputes: Maps & Mapping Strategies in Contemporary Canadian and Australian Fiction*) affirm the importance of criticism concerned with the representation of the city in Canadian literature. Yet, such scholarly work is inevitably undertaken in the shadow of the continual processes of globalization. The Canadian city is no longer *just* a Canadian city, it is a global city. As Kit Dobson argues, whether global cities "are taken as rhizomatic sites within Empire, or whether they are seen simply as shifting sites of political and commercial congress, it is clear that the actions of city-dwellers change under continual and increasing migrations" (183). The citizen of the global

city is in a permanent state of diaspora, migration, and displacement. Populations shift and, structurally, the city is a site under constant development. These processes of development are inextricable from a city's communication, and indeed competition, with other urban sites in the grand worldwide collection of cities. "Where is Here?" is not a riddle that can be answered singly.

The bright, shiny utensils have sung to us of their self-importance through glass countertops, from kiosks, and on television screens. They boast that *they* work for us, but that working relationship is not a close or personal one. What we purchase (products), what we consume (provisions), and what we own (possessions) in the city are almost always mass-produced, mass-marketed, and are thus widely available and accessible. A collection, however, is not a series of objects that recurs on everyone's desk or in everyone's briefcase simply because they have become 'indispensable'; it is a specific narrative, subject to an individual collector's taste and passion, representing a particular past, an idea, or a dream for his or her future. Still, the Betamax videocassette of *Big*, in the fast-paced, contemporary, Canadian global city, is likely to be pawned or scrapped. Is there any value to collecting and keeping such an item when the object required to *use* it is itself absent, having been long ago discarded? What we might begin to question is what important souvenirs from our individual pasts might be overlooked as we continue to dispose of large, clunky, plastic hardware in favour of newer models? Will any mementoes remain, or will they become clumped together with the floppy disks, the Commodores, the obsolete? Perhaps our last chance to preserve the vestiges of the urban past lies with those who still instinctively retrieve and rescue what gets thrown out in the global city where it is common

habit to chuck useless things away. This is the collector, whom Benjamin likens to the nineteenth-century ragpicker. This is the collector as city scavenger.

The Concrete Jungle's Junkyard

By definition, "scavenger" refers to a kind of carnivorous habit or appetite, a predatory act of consuming actual corpses and carrion. Just as the scavenger plays a necessary and beneficial role in their natural ecosystems, a city scavenger can be hired by public health to clean the streets, rid cities of decomposition and, during pandemic or plague, actual corpses; these were the responsibilities associated with the profession in England up until the Victorian era. Now the occupation is usually splintered (depending on the city); certain city workers are responsible for cleaning debris from thoroughfares, while other waste collectors empty the receptacles that have been filled and left in the driveways of residential and business sites. However, the Victorian occupation, as it existed at the turn of the twentieth century, is alive and well in Margaret Laurence's pronouncedly un-citylike town of Manawaka in *The Diviners.*

Several of Morag Gunn's memories (or "memorybank movie[s]," as they are called in *The Diviners* [29]) pertain to a particular symbolic location that also lends its name to the subtitle of Part II of the novel: The Nuisance Grounds. This is the common name for the local dump, and the worksite of Morag's guardian, Christie Logan. The language associated with his vocation is at first unfamiliar to young Morag. She asks herself, "what, really, means *Scavenger*? ... And why *Nuisance Grounds*? Because all that awful old stuff and rotten stuff is a nuisance and nice people don't want to have anything to do with it?" (36, Laurence's emphasis). Morag soon learns that this "stuff" is not a nuisance to Christie, but rather it is his religious text, his doctrine. "By their garbage shall ye know them" (39), he

preaches. Morag makes continual reference to the commodities sold in town including "storeboughten bread" (35), Prin Logan's beloved jelly doughnuts, as well as the expensive fabrics and linens sold at the town store. These items, while desired by the majority of the townsfolk, do not interest Christie Logan. Alternatively, Christie's passion is specifically for what his fellow citizens are willing to part with.

He brings Morag on an excursion to the Grounds, and, digging through the filth, shows her exactly how the debris presents a narrative. It divulges secrets of private lives in the litter of used condoms and empty pill bottles. Additionally, bones tell Christie a story about what someone has had to eat and, thus, what they can *afford* to eat. These remnants, as an excavation of an entire community, sit atop the hill in Manawaka. Suitably, the dump is located beside the cemetery, so that "[a]ll the dead stuff [is gathered] together" (70). But although Christie has "the gift of the garbage-telling" (75), he is more than a tenacious voyeur with a knack for sifting stories out of scrap. Through his bleary gaze Christie sees spectres or ghosts lingering on the bones he collects in his palm. His passion for his finds at the Nuisance Grounds is matched only by his investment in the legends of his Scottish ancestors. Often inebriated, he regularly repeats these tales to Morag, and they vary a little each time. Christie clutches at the chronicles of his ancestral past, while he develops a yearning for touchstones in his present. Whereas he conjures stories out of the unsightly (rotting bones in the Nuisance Grounds), he begins to fill his home with objects formerly cherished by others.

The Logan sitting room is the mausoleum that displays the items that Christie has foraged from the folds of the Nuisance Grounds or has found beside or within the trashcans in the town's alleys. Everything from an inert potbelly stove to a torn and withered photo

album reside in the Logans' domestic space. The passion that drives Christie's collection is primarily that its articles formerly belonged to someone else, and as a result they stand, speak for, other lives, presumably lives that are more comfortable, more affluent, than Christie's own. There is also a polemical strategy or a political imperative behind Christie's collecting, for he tells Morag that garbage resides at shared sites and is therefore not individually owned, assigned, or possessed. Once it reaches the dump, Christie says, "Garbage belongs to all. Communal property, as you might say. One man's muck is everyman's muck. The socialism of the junk heap" (46). The fineries sold in town are manufactured and sold according to popular taste; they comprise a narrative that lacks complexity and that speaks of corporate choice and capitalism. Garbage, on the other hand—what people have given away, relegated to trash, and been willing to part with—speaks to individual habits and the passing of private lives. Christie's furnishings of found objects, like his stories based on the remains in the dump, imagine a retrieval of the irretrievable; Christie manifests desire for what has already been consumed, or has happened, and for objects *once* cherished.

Manawaka may be more of a small Manitoban town than a burgeoning city (even though the young Morag Gunn refers to it as a "concrete jungle" and specifies that it is the first "city" that took "hold of her consciousness" [Laurence 57]). Nevertheless, Christie epitomizes the two characteristic traits of the scavenger that I will explore in this chapter. First, he *specifically* looks for what has been discarded, dropped, or what others have deemed not valuable, insisting that there are insightful stories to these scraps. Secondly, he appreciates items for a value beyond their economic worth, beyond how they operate or what they can do in the present. The collector, as scavenger, challenges the vast availability

of products for purchase by salvaging the refuse that more authentically represents the processes that take place in a city and the proclivities of its inhabitants.

Where the nineteenth-century arcade had its particular "phantasmagorias of the interior" (Benjamin, "Paris" 9), Mark Kingwell suggests that the architectures of the contemporary city can fuel our own reveries today. In *Concrete Reveries: Consciousness and the City,* Kingwell observes that "[c]oncrete is the basic material of the urban moment, and not just on the outside of big institutional edifices or office towers, [but there is also] the concrete jungle of the alienated metropolis imagination" (4). He argues that concrete is only inert in one state. Concrete—as a mixture—is not inactive or immobile, yet we often associate it with the state of immobility in which we regularly encounter it. Kingwell encourages his readers: "The next time it rains, go out and touch some. Find a wall or a bench or just a stanchion, and run your hands along the spongy, almost-smooth surface" (3). Perhaps our inclination to misread or ignore the actual consistency of things both large and small in a city (a crane, hovering above the construction of a skyscraper in progress, or a discarded plastic souvenir from a sporting event) is because our relationship to cities in general, according to Kingwell, is becoming "increasingly spectral" (149). We are not as conscious about what a city produces *in* that actual city or even on its industrial periphery as we are of what is available for us, pre-packaged, to purchase and eat *within* it; if the object is readily available, where it comes from seems less significant. Kingwell elaborates:

> Anchored only by portable laptops and email connections, we are at once there and not there, traveling and immobile, suspended not over the open road of romance but the interchangeable gates and carousels of life, waiting, always waiting, for a row to

> be called, a bag to appear: the tiny miracles, alone apparently magical, of postmodern experience.
>
> Or perhaps we still drive into the city, our fossil-fueled sports utility vehicles, ever expanding in size, sizzling along on concrete expressways whose very signage signals the uniformity of our automotive urban experience, unchanged from Vancouver to Brisbane, from Miami to Hong Kong. (149)

And yet, even the pedestrian who is close enough to palm a damp concrete wall tends not to. The resident who walks the same street day in and day out can remain oblivious to the gradual, minute changes that, over time, can culminate in an identity crisis of space. But everyone in the city is, in fact, leaving some shred of evidence, a residue, or a paper trail.

I will not be focusing here on mass-produced entities, nor will I expand on Kingwell's considerations of the *concrete* jungle. Rather, I will focus on the objects often overlooked, deemed obsolete, the *residue* of a city's processes: its waste. The very names of the most important mechanisms in contemporary society, hard*ware* and soft*ware,* suggest that they, like dishware or silverware, could perhaps have some sentimental meaning, and be, thus, suitable for a hope chest or wedding gift. Instead, they are wiry, tiny, insect-like objects in both form and lifespan. These wares are not collected or passed down from one generation to another because they become so quickly outdated and succeeded. Moreover, when documents and records can be displayed on a screen and preserved on a drive, the act of preservation becomes a paperless one. As a collection or archive, paper documents have the ability to represent the passage of time in a city, a passage quickly forgotten in a society of rapid change and evolution. We do not print; we

compost, we recycle, we reuse. Rubbish is a problem in our environmentally conscious era. The paper archive is an endangered species.

Rubbish, even before the advent of recycling, was susceptible to immediate erasure as the remainder, the deposit, the *scum* of another product. Leftovers are unsanitary and definitely unseemly. According to Michael Thompson, the "normal adult response in Western culture" to rubbish is to "disregard it" (1). He opens his 1979 book *Rubbish Theory* with a scatological riddle:

> Riddle: What is it the rich man puts in his pocket that the poor man throws away?
>
> Answer: Snot. (1)

It is this riddle that elucidates Thompson's area of critical concern, just as Northrop Frye's riddle elucidates mine. For Thompson, the riddle "sets out a relationship between status, the possession of objects, and the ability to discard objects" (1). Furthermore, "[t]he riddle succeeds by playing upon that which is residual to our system of cultural categories. When, in the context of wealth and poverty, we talk of possessable objects we unquestioningly assume that we are talking about valuable objects" (2). Snot, the object in Thompson's riddle, is one that falls into what Thompson identifies as the "transient" category of objects that "decrease in value over time and have finite life-spans" (7). Alternatively, "[o]bjects in the durable category increase in value over time and have (ideally) infinite life-spans" (7). Thompson argues, "we all tend to think that objects are the way they are as a result of their intrinsic physical properties" (8). In spite of this, we remain sensitive to the ideas in things, and rely on them to narrate our history and to testify to our culture's evolutions.

Thompson's durable, marketable category of things is the one featured on screens, in print, and on billboards in the city. Yet, I would argue that if we recall that Northrop

Frye's question is a riddle—a puzzle and not a proclamation—we might begin to see that the "here" on those screens, in print, and on billboards is *not* durable. These fads and trends are always shifting and sliding off the surface of the city. "Here," the global city and its constituents can only be represented *as* a progress, as "transient." "Here" is not solely the literal city in its current concrete form. "Here" is what the city *has* been. A scavenger who seeks out objects from the past, rendered obsolete or not operational, refurbishes a dream or memory of the city that has faded, been written over, or erased.

Two Canadian novels set in two major Canadian cities, one western, one eastern, attempt in their own ways to respond to the riddle "Where is here?" Both fictions feature collectors who nostalgically try to salvage a connection to place in the global Canadian city. In Timothy Taylor's Vancouver-set *Stanley Park,* chef Jeremy Papier takes the concept of serving local cuisine to a very literal level in an attempt to subvert the corporate, capitalist ambitions of the man who has taken the financial ownership of his restaurant from him. In Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*, when the character Tuyen collects the detritus of the local, it is with the aim of answering another riddle entirely: "what do we all long for?" in her "here," the city of Toronto. The collections in these novels are of produce, of wood, paper, and steel products, and of language. They posit counternarratives to capitalism. They answer the Frygian riddle with riddles of their own. For each scavenger I profile, I will argue that, inherent in their strategies of collecting-as-resistance in (and against) the global city, their resulting collections signify an inevitable ambiguity. The collectable objects in these narratives, be they ingredients, maps, broken architectures, photographs, journal entries, or letters, stand for something else, something spectral, once collected. They represent pasts that are temporally irretrievable and versions of the city that

can never exist again, in the shadow of globalization, as they once did. Still, the *process* of collecting is the true accomplishment of these scavengers; it is a process that narrates and maps possibilities for what these characters can remember about their cities' pasts, what they long to imagine into their cities' futures, and what they imagine or dream their cities can become.

***Longing for the Local in* Stanley Park**

In his 2001 novel *Stanley Park,* Vancouver novelist Timothy Taylor narrates a struggle to retrieve a sense of the local within an alarmingly globalizing urban space. In the downtown eastside of Vancouver, protagonist Jeremy Papier attempts to make a go of a self-owned and operated restaurant designed to revive so-called simpler times. This is based on a philosophy Jeremy developed at cooking school in Dijon, where a colleague cleverly divided students into two schools, the Bloods and the Crips. The Crips cook for the globalized market. An example of a Crip dish is "mahi mahi and grilled eggplant in wobbly towers glued together with wasabi mayonnaise" (32). While such a dish seems aptly representative of much fusion cuisine currently popular in Vancouver and elsewhere, Jeremy adopts the Blood ethos, and, instead of trying to dazzle with a performed cosmopolitanism, longs "to remind people of something. Of what the soil under their feet has to offer" (23). His stance shares much with the ethics behind Alisa Smith and J. B. MacKinnon's *100-Mile Diet.* Jeremy, a connoisseur of local markets and, accordingly, a collector of local ingredients fosters a corporeal and prolific *exposé* of an edible Vancouver.

While there are undeniable similarities between chefs and collectors (a desire for order, to be in charge and control, to reorder ingredients according to one's taste) I should clarify that I am being slightly facetious in my suggestion that Jeremy as a cook is a

collector. Ultimately, cooking goes against the very concept of collecting by transforming the things that are collected. Foodstuffs lose their original forms and blend with one another, and dishes are prepared *in order* to be consumed. However, the act of collecting local ingredients is significant to my overall discussion for several reasons. First of all, Jeremy cooks as a kind of guerilla chef. He incorporates the local into an urban restaurant at a time when fusion of exotic and imported foods is all the rage. Furthermore, Jeremy (as a collector would) fetishizes objects as representative of his past (his training as Blood cook, his mother's cooking, a less-globalized Vancouver). He values food not just for how it tastes, but for the ideas it stands for.

As Jeremy's restaurant begins to take root, he has to compete with a cohabiting species. And this species, in the contemporary global city, is currently winning the survival of the fittest. Taylor does not shy away from symbolism; in the novel, the Inferno Coffee shops of corporate mogul Dante Beale refer unmistakably to the Starbucks sprawl—they crop up across Vancouver with more gusto than wild mushrooms. Jeremy, although a praiseworthy cook, is a financial disaster. His poor monetary management is compounded by the fact that organic, regional, free-range meat and produce is the most expensive fare in the city. Ironically, Dante has been loaning Jeremy money to support his restaurant, but with a habit of kiting his expenses Jeremy soon tumbles into a pit of Dante-debt. Jeremy's restaurant, cheekily named The Monkey's Paw, fulfills its eponymous mythology. Once under Dante's control, the Paw is redesigned as a larger, more commercial, definitively Crip facility called Gerriamo's (not exactly Jeremy's name but a fusion thereof). Jeremy now has to cook in a restaurant that dismisses Jeremy's entire ethos of serving food that tells an innovative and socially responsible story.

In retaliation, Jeremy plans the ultimate Blood cook sticking-it-to-the-man gesture as roguish scavenger. He prepares and serves one significant supper as a satirical demonstration of anti-capitalist struggle. Jeremy replaces the imported meat in the dishes served on opening night at Gerriamo's with local provisions. Some of his choices are not too outrageous, such as salmon, Queen Charlotte prawns, and Saltspring Island lamb. But Canada geese also make their way onto a list that grows increasingly absurd, ultimately including cats, dogs, black rats, squirrels, and raccoons—not usually regarded as fit for human ingestion. Rabbits are added, a testament that Jeremy is scavenging from Stanley Park what would not usually be desirable; Stanley Park is a common dumping ground for "unwanted pets" (354), and rabbits constitute the bulk of that category. Jeremy does not plan this act of collecting to be ongoing, but rather a "one-time thing" (347). As someone who is appalled by a culture where everything can taste or look the same, Jeremy's scavenged cuisine articulates an unmistakable political statement. He serves delicious, nutritious local food that the restaurant's clients would never eat of their own volition.

Beyond a clever trick, Jeremy's guerilla grill is his tribute to the local: "Complete with the echoes of sorrow for what has been lost in the process, left behind or forgotten. A revolution with memory" (364). But the restaurant critic picks apart and analyzes the individual units of Jeremy's "[c]ulinary haiku" (382); she reasons, "Maybe all is not as it seems" (391). At the same time, when the "grizzly carnivorous frenzy" (405) is over, Jeremy leaves no paper trail. Not a scrap is left behind to narrate what he prepared that evening. Jeremy is fired, and the restaurant is closed, but not because of collected evidence. Rather, it goes under as result of an unfortunate "[u]rban [m]yth" (406) that exotic, endangered animals were served as opening night fare.

Eventually, out from underneath Dante's thumb, Jeremy opens a new restaurant called Food Caboose. The building in which Jeremy chooses to situate the restaurant is neglected. It is a "ramshackle, barn-red house at the dead southern edge of Chinatown. The house itself was missing shakes, and some of the thin-slat cedar siding had fallen off" (418). However, Jeremy cherishes, rather than gives up on, a place that has been abandoned—and which happens to be quite close to the original location of The Monkey's Paw. Jeremy once again plays the rebel chef, considering himself part of "the punk economy. No business or liquor licenses, no insurance, no regulation, no inspection" (421). He also plays the part of scavenger again, and builds the kitchen by acquiring "racks of shelving and an aluminum cold-storage unit, both salvaged off a minesweeper scrapped by the Canadian navy. He track[s] down the tables and chairs at flea markets, a case of homemade candles at a craft fair" (420). This restaurant serves the same local cuisine that Jeremy made at The Paw, including salmon, lamb, unpasteurized cheeses, and walnuts. He even reunites with and starts a romantic relationship with his former Monkey Paw sous-chef, Jules. It seems like a very happy ending for this collector and scavenger of the local.

But, the linens and cutlery for the restaurant are from IKEA. The cost for a meal at Food Caboose is set as a "prix fixe" (420), and dessert is referred to as the "dénouement" (423). Moreover, it is an inherently elitist operation; in order to eat at Jeremy's dream restaurant, you need a reference from someone who has already been invited, and the chef chooses the first round of clients (421). In his article "National Literatures in the Shadow of Neoliberalism," Jeff Derksen draws attention to how Jeremy's dream restaurant actually demonstrates a gentrification common to the global city. As a successful, dominant, relatively affluent business owner in a run-down part of town, Jeremy is not unlike Dante.

Gentrification connotes a hierarchy, and one further substantiated by the way Jeremy runs the restaurant as a private and exclusive one not open to the general public. Derksen argues, "*Stanley Park* itself is remarkable in the manner in which it flattens the antagonisms and contradictions of global-urban space" (14). Jeremy does not seem aware, even in his operations as scavenger, that the way the local can succeed in the global city has changed and is inevitably affected by the conditions of the global city. Derksen contends, "culture is a flash point in the long neoliberal moment, a moment that arrives and develops with varied temporalities. *Stanley Park* is therefore an important book, not a mere symptom, for it makes a compelling and affective argument for a neoliberal city, a global dream city" (16). The local is a valuable set for Jeremy to collect. It makes him feel that he has a connection to his place. But, as a commodity, the local enables his success in the global Canadian city because it is valuable to his consumers. He can sell local fare to an abundant number of hungry customers who are not necessarily socially conscious or seeking any connection to the land under their feet, but rather seeking a connection to those around them, to a scene, and to the local as brand.

The setting of *Stanley Park's* corresponding narrative is the land nearby, the park itself. This site provides Jeremy with the ingredients for his restaurant stunt, and is perhaps the most pertinent example of the local reclassified as commodity in the global city of Vancouver. Jeremy's father, an anthropology professor, analyzes the park *as a part* of Vancouver's mythology; he has chosen to live in the park to study its homeless inhabitants. The Professor refers to this project as "Documenting settlement" (4) or "*Participatory* anthropology" (22, Taylor's emphasis), and his research definitely transgresses a site meant only as scenery. Stanley Park is one of the city's features as a seemingly rural tourist

attraction despite the fact that hidden within the woods exists a veritable population of resident squatters and scavengers.

In an interview with Noah Richler, Taylor has posited that "Vancouver is all shining towers and polish and postmodern gleam, and Stanley Park is this little piece of wilderness that we use as an alibi to prove to ourselves that we haven't killed it all" (156). The park keeps animals on its grounds and once, in fact, housed a zoo. Its "world renowned" aquarium is still present, and although "only one killer whale is left now, there's still loads to marvel at" (Coupland, *City* 130). In *City of Glass,* Douglas Coupland notes of the park that "what we want there is *nothing*—just the trees and animals. As it should be" (130, his emphasis). But "nothing" is definitely not what the space represents, nor does it reflect what Coupland, elsewhere, seems to value:

> Once, after having watched the belugas romp and the otters play, I came into the tropical section and saw millions of electric blue little fish; I had a good little cry because I was just swamped with the idea of how beautiful the world is. The place can do that to you. (130)

By sentimentalizing the aquarium's species, Coupland insinuates that the true wonder of the park is in fact imported, and thus inextricable from its identity as commercial tourist attraction.

The park, however, has a double meaning in Taylor's novel. From the vantage point of the 8.5 kilometre seawall that encircles, but does not enter, the woods, or from within the walls of the aquarium, it is a handsome commodity. But inside rather than outside, the park is another entity altogether, not controlled by humans, and not fully known, packaged, or identified. In *Stanley Park*, Jeremy, journeying towards the centre of the park in search of

his father, becomes afraid that, after Frye, it might "[c]onsume him" (242). Jeremy overcomes his fear and begins to frequent the park. He eventually learns to experiment with cooking produce or the carcasses of animals that he hunts and then takes from his immediate surroundings. Siwash, one of the homeless residents of the park, invites Jeremy to join his father and live inside the park. But Jeremy declines the invitation, prompting Siwash to exclaim, "You *are* a riddle" (340, Taylor's emphasis). Jeremy is a riddle because he cherishes the local, but only when it is severed from its original surroundings and transported to his restaurant in the global city. Significantly, when Siwash tells Jeremy that he is a "riddle," he is "re-lighting [a] candle under his bipolar oblique conic conformal map of North America" (340). Siwash, who has adapted a name of a site on the periphery of the park, Siwash Rock, desires an extensive purview of space; he wants to not just desire, collect, or sell, but to *understand* the idea and the meaning behind what is, and what has been, "here." Siwash's relics, his collection of maps, may be obsolete in terms of their current use and application, but they preserve portraits of places that have become extinct or altered.

Jeremy first meets the elusive Siwash because he lost a collectible item, his Sabbatier, in the woods when visiting his father. The Sabbatier is a rare, valuable, collectable knife, but Jeremy uses his for its original intended purpose rather than displaying it as collectible. One day Siwash emerges from his enclosure holding the very knife that Jeremy has lost. According to the Professor, Siwash is unpredictable and not always rational, which Jeremy's father fears might mean violent. But Jeremy decides to take the risk in order to trade Siwash a new knife, of a different brand, for his Sabbatier.

After clearing up a misunderstanding (in which Jeremy finds his throat at the edge of his very own Sabbatier), Jeremy follows Siwash into his residence in order to exchange apologies over a cup of tea. Siwash lives in a structure made of concrete and steel, an original bunker in the park. Inside, his dwelling is "neatly organized" and his collection of maps covers the walls (332). Jeremy, focused on retrieving his knife, does not notice or ponder the significance of the maps, but Siwash proceeds to inform him about the relevance of his collection. He collects maps that represent multiple perspectives, often obscure to those who have not designed them or do not know how to read their patterns, such as a "sinusoidal pseudocylindrical projection" or a "lambert conformal" (332). Jeremy describes the "[b]ipolar oblique conic conformal" as looking as though someone had "painted a map of the continent [of North America] onto a basketball and (while the paint was still wet) fired this basketball out of a cannon against a canvas. … Compressed and exploded at the same time. It strained to stay on the page" (332). Siwash contends that it is impossible to depict the surface of the world, which is three-dimensional, onto a "flat piece of paper" (333). No single piece of paper can provide a complete representation of a space. However, "[t]he smaller the map, the less distortion," Siwash argues; "[a] map of the city is pretty reliable. … But a map of just this room would be better. A map of one square foot of this room better still! … With a map of just one square foot of this room, you'd *really* know were you were" (333). Siwash is not unlike Jeremy, "wanting definition, wanting assurance, certainly on the matter of where he stood" (335). But Siwash knows that answering the question of "where is here?" is not so simple. His collection can display several versions of a location, but there is always the possibility for more conceptions, more blueprints, more ways of envisioning and consequently depicting a certain space.

Siwash tells the Professor that even regular visitors to the park, "the ones on the seawall and in the paths … They come, they go, but they are never truly here" (329). He feels the same way about Jeremy, who visits the park and gets one perspective of it, remains satisfied, and leaves. But Siwash does not know that (earlier in the novel) Chladek, former Czech journalist and another homeless resident of Stanley Park, has already given Jeremy the opportunity to see the park from another angle. On one of Jeremy's nightly adventures in the park, Chladek leads Jeremy out onto the Lion's Gate Bridge and surprises him by unlocking a grate leading to a maintenance ladder. They climb onto the catwalk that hangs beneath the bridge. Jeremy, looking down into the "howling blackness" (237), finds himself in a liminal and terrifying position, between the roar of overhead traffic and the rush of water below:

> [Jeremy] had always thought that the park turned away from the city. Presented the tumult of downtown with a turned shoulder. From here, hanging in this sympathetic darkness, displaced entirely from any roadway or city vantage point, transgressing to see this sight. Here the park faced you, its expression one of knowing and familiarity. (238)

The global city could be considered, in some ways, a busy bridge; it is a thoroughfare along which commuters speed, consuming imported products, as local surroundings are increasingly disregarded. Jeremy, chef in the Canadian global city, and those who live in, study, and roam through Stanley Park (the Professor, Siwash, and Chladek) have acute peripheral visions. They struggle to salvage objects and perspectives that others have lost or abandoned.

Scraps of the City and Shreds of Conversation in What We All Long For

I grew up in a suburb just north of Toronto, but there are few monuments in the city that stand out to me. There is, of course, the world's formerly tallest freestanding structure. As Erik Rutherford wonders, "how would you pick Toronto out of a crowd without the CN Tower?" (18). Another monument that comes to mind is the Bloor Street Viaduct, a bridge that connects the urban hub to the ever-increasing sprawl on its eastern outskirts. Growing up in Markham, I drove under this bridge along the Don Valley Parkway to go downtown. This is a bridge that appears famously in the pages of Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion.* This is a bridge that, beyond its fictionality, recently received a multi-million dollar and award-winning Luminous Veil, a barricade preventing potential suicides. Neither tower nor bridge fully represents Toronto, of course. In fact, it is more likely that a Torontonian would inform you that the city is not known for one monument or structure. Alternatively, Toronto is known as a hybrid, a community *of* communities.

A Toronto tourism website asks,

> What do Torontonians love about Toronto? That's a long list but topping it would be our diversity. Two transit tokens can take you from one country to another, passing along the way through the quaint neighbourhoods that make up our intimate metropolis. Toronto is a place of energy exchange. Leave your mark, find yourself changed. Sound too much like your yoga instructor? Pay us a visit and you'll see things differently too—maybe from the perspective of a hundred cultures. (http://www.drumcafe.ca/toronto.html)

In addition, the website boasts Toronto as a "creative city" (http://www.drumcafe.ca/toronto.html), although the creativity it highlights cannot be said

to be exclusive to Toronto. Its creativity (its diversity) is surely traceable in any contemporary city that is "Crip" (to use Taylor's sense of the word), and, as a result, joyously incoherent. The Toronto website boasts further: "You know the feeling you get when you come across an amazing menu and want to order every dish? That's what it's like to be here. Literally, Toronto's cultures offer an unparalleled variety of spice but we take fusion to a level far beyond cuisine. Find beautiful architecture of the city's settlers alongside modern, sleek, gold-tined [sic] skyscrapers" (http://www.drumcafe.ca/toronto.html). While this blend of cultures and structures may gesture towards the prevalence of global import over local heritage, Toronto claims that the international *is* their local, and furthermore that Toronto *as* hybrid global city represents tolerance, acceptance, and creativity as a matter of course. Where Vancouver is considered "livable" because of its seemingly harmonious coexistence of urban and rural spaces, Rahder and Wood contend that Toronto's slogan "Diversity is our strength'" suits their city that has "demonstrated to the world that it is the most livable city, with the most diverse and most equitable social networks yet devised" (242). Both originally from outside of Toronto, Alana Wilcox and Jason McBride refer to the city as feeling like 'theirs' in their introduction to *uTOpia: Towards a New Toronto,* although they clarify that when they "speak of ownership, we are speaking in an ideological or rhetorical sense, not an economic one. A city, by its very nature, is not owned; it is shared. Public space is public property" (11). This is the global city as a place of refuge, a place up for grabs, and a place that four young adults, all children of immigrant parents, inhabit in Dionne Brand's novel *What We All Long For.* These friends are Carla, a bicycle courier, Oku, a poet, Jackie, who sells vintage clothing, and Tuyen, artist, scavenger, and collector.

Brand's novel begins with garbage identified as an iconic object of a city that remains buried, hibernating, over the winter. Rising to the city's surface in the springtime, "[g]arbage, buried under snowbanks for months, gradually reappears like old habits—plastic bags, pop cans—the alleyways are cluttered in a mess of bottles and old shoes and thrown-away beds" (1). Tuyen is a scavenger of the city's "general debris" (11), but Tuyen seeks and collects this refuse not as a paid, public profession like Christie in *The Diviners* but for her personal art projects. Therefore, her apartment on College Street has a view that she treasures: it overlooks an alleyway, and Tuyen's beloved, neighbouring arcade is full of "[o]verflowing garbage cans" (11) and renounced, broken furniture.

Of course, I should clarify that as an artist (like a chef), Tuyen does not keep the objects that she collects separate, nor does she treat them as ultimately autonomous. Although the individual parts remain distinct, in keeping with the 'theme' of her global city she makes fusion art. Tuyen finds scraps, primarily of wood, in various locations of the city and binds them together into a *lubaio,* a signpost. She is building the *lubaio's* tree-like body in her apartment, and its arms stretch so wide they threaten to puncture right through the walls into her friend Carla's adjacent apartment. Whereas in *The Diviners* Christie's acquisitions first clutter but then begin to fully occupy what had begun as his sitting room, Tuyen's *aspiration* is to have the *lubaio* "fill [her] entire studio apartment from ceiling to floor" (14). Christie 'reads' the bones he finds in the Nuisance Grounds; Tuyen pilfers railway ties from one the city's railway yards "on one of her searches" (15) and then, with the help of Carla, Oku, and Jackie, erects the ties as the skeleton of her *lubaio*. However, unlike the discarded objects that fill Christie's domestic space, the *lubaio* is not significant to Tuyen for representing pieces from elsewhere that formerly belonged to someone else.

Only once the individual pieces are collected together to form the *lubaio* does it take on symbolic meaning for Tuyen, representing a form of ancestral art.

Tuyen is inspired to make the *lubaio* after seeing similar monuments in Chinatown on Spadina Avenue, although, according to Tuyen, these carved posts are fakes, crude facsimiles, or "kitsch" (16). Tuyen tells her friends, defensively, "there's some ancient Chinese-Vietnamese shit and that's my shit and I'm taking it. Okay?" (16). Her *lubaio* will be an *authentic* signpost, not just a novelty import, because it represents *her* culture and the heritage that she has neglected in her integration into and adaptation to the city. Even so, Tuyen intends the signpost to be something not solely hers, but rather communal property, created from artifacts found in and around the public spaces of the city. Tuyen's collecting does not gather together objects, products, or commodities of conventional value, but *things* that exist autonomously as waste, scrap, free to all and yet belonging to none. Additionally, Tuyen feels that the *lubaio* will be "her most ambitious" project yet as an artist because her plan is to have others leave their own "[m]essages to the city" on the *lubaio's* body (17). When she starts to consider how to evolve the collection from a private to a publicly shared one, however, she becomes blocked. She knows the political significance is that it will stand for collecting, claiming, and then *sharing* ideologies. But what ideologies and whose desires? Would the scraps, the debris, collectively bear *one* statement for everyone? When Tuyen begins to tell her friends "my installation is to reclaim ..." (17), she trails off into uncertainty. And so, she turns her attention from her wood cadaver to a new project. She abandons the project where the debris is the signifier, and attempts to collect signifieds themselves.

This inspiration strikes her the day that she begins to work for her brother Binh in his electronics store. Tuyen needs to make some cash, but is not really interested in the expensive, mass-produced gadgets that her brother sells. Their uniformity bores her. Despite their internal capabilities (to communicate with someone across the world) their similar plastic bodies suggest inertness, and, as a result, silence. Surrounded by products for sale, Tuyen finds herself preoccupied by something she saw on the ground that she could have had for free. Earlier that day, she noticed a photograph lying by the ATM machine. But Tuyen did not feel right taking someone else's "token" of his or her "*memory*" (142, Brand's emphasis), and left the object on the ground. The memory of the photograph alone haunts Tuyen—not *exactly* the photograph itself, but rather the spectre, its "afterimage in her hand" (143), her memory of coming into contact with someone else's memory. Tuyen feels "the beauty of [her] city" is that it is "polyphonic, murmuring. This is what always filled Tuyen with hope, this is what she thought her art was about—the representation of that gathering of voices and longings that summed themselves up into a kind of language, yet indescribable" (149). She decides to embark on a hunt not for lost *things* in the city streets, but for the desires that lead to their acquisition, or the grief that grows when objects are lost, stolen, broken, or forgotten. Tuyen's objective, as a collector, becomes to collect the desires of others.

When customers come into Binh's store, Tuyen does not ask them, *Can I help you?* but rather demands, "What do you long for?" (150). This greatly annoys Binh's girlfriend Hue (who goes by the more conventional Caucasian name Ashley). Hue/Ashley, who clearly does not like to stand out, scolds Tuyen: "You're chatting too much about irrelevant things" (150). But these "things" are only "irrelevant" to Hue/Ashley because she cannot

sell them on behalf of Binh. In defiance, Tuyen continues to interview customers, recording their replies into her "book of longings" (151). Her book includes the responses "a whole year to read" and "feel[ing] safer" (150). While Tuyen's brother, and by association his girlfriend, are interested in objects that make a profit (his back room, for example, is stuffed with clothes and office supplies that he buys and then sells cheaply, to further justify his investment in the store property), Tuyen gathers the often unattainable longings that, could they be achieved, would likely mollify a need for expensive commodities.

As with the *lubaio*, Tuyen's ultimate objective is to display her collection of the public's longings in public, perhaps even in Jackie's store or in one of the galleries on Queen Street West where she has previously had installations. Tuyen is welcomed in such spaces, not for contributing financially to the area, but for the cultural capital she brings as an artist. When one considers the galleries that actually exist on the real-life Queen Street West, the public, not-for-profit, and socialist political imperatives of Tuyen's collection would surely be appropriately placed. Fly Gallery, for example, has been operational on the street for almost a decade, but is not designed to sell art or make a profit. Co-owner and artist Scott Carruthers explains, "There's no capitalist concept at play here—it's just about displaying art" (qtd. in McKay 119). Carruthers's partner Tanya Read is known for her everyman character Mr. Nobody. Once, when showing a short film about Mr. Nobody in the gallery, the film itself caught fire. Read responded by simply drawing the character on the wall in the light of the projector in order to continue the film's narrative. She recalls, "all these people kept saying the piece was genius, but I was just trying to salvage something" (qtd. in McKay 123). While Read's salvaging came as a last minute resource, Tuyen is salvaging for fear that if she does not, a very important collection that represents

and belongs to the city may be lost before it has ever been read; after recording the replies to *what do you long for?* in her journal, she transcribes the responses onto a "huge diaphanous" "cloth" (155) in her apartment. The longings, like objects in a collection, have distinct, individual origins. With the diverse desires of Torontonians marking but also clustering and intersecting on Tuyen's flat tapestry, Tuyen has arrested the transient and has inscribed the invisible as visible on her map of Toronto.

uTOpia has two unusual maps of a *desired* Toronto in its back pocket. These supplementary materials reflect how two cartographers, respectively, wish the city would evolve. One, by Andrew Alfred-Duggan, includes plans, notes, and a legend for "some possibilities for Toronto," and is entitled *uTOpia: Building Toronto the Could.* The other, a playful, rectangular cartoon by Marlena Zuber, includes objects that represent places such as a sketch of a dress for a boutique, a disco ball for a roller rink (and another for the "Festival Bubble"), and a video camera for the National Film Board of Canada. Although both maps are extremely detailed, they are drawn according to the preferences and choices of the cartographer and, inevitably, as one-dimensional representations, they are not complete. However, by containing two maps, as well as numerous essays that look at the city in terms of its "TOuchstones," "TOpography," "TOil," "TOols & TOys," and "TOmorrow," *uTOpia* suggests that it takes many perspectives to even begin to re-present a cityspace. Moreover, the book has inspired a whole series from Coach House on the cultures and futures of Toronto, including *Concrete Toronto, GreenTOpia, HTO,* and *The Edible City.* McBride and Wilcox state that the city of Toronto seems to be one "of extraordinary possibility" (10). David Miller's election as mayor filled them with hope that the "city can grow and prosper in a way that includes every Torontonian," and that "the

enormous potential the city possesses will be exploited and not wasted" (10). Like Zuber's and Alfred-Duggan's maps that depict spaces and structures that imagine (and complement a book that considers) a Toronto of tomorrow, Tuyen's tapestry presents a blueprint of what her fellow Torontonians desire for their futures.

Thus, Tuyen's cloth of longing as narrative-map provides a textured view of Toronto. Noah Richler states in *This is My Country, What's Yours?* that

> [a]ny place is only a landscape until it is animated by the stories that provide its identity—or, to use a term that is more popular today, its "psycho-geography."[1] The sum of stories that are told about or in a particular landscape create an impression of a place that is imaginary, but functions as any map would, for places are as real as persons, but they have no voice and so they speak to us through art. (6)

For Taylor's Siwash, maps on paper are not authentic or complete representations of space. Alternatively, Tuyen's albeit flat piece of art has extraordinary dimension as a representation of what people are thinking, longing for, and dreaming of. Kingwell identifies the potential of representing this consciousness in his article "Reading Toronto: architecture and utopia" with the following anecdote:

> One day, walking by, I saw a construction worker standing there [by the construction site of the addition to the Royal Ontario Museum, now complete]. … In his hand, a sheet of paper. He was looking hard at the paper, and frowning in thought.

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[1] The term is also used by the British novelist Will Self in his book *Psychogeography* which describes his epic walks. He chooses to begin to know a city by walking through it, arriving, for example, at JFK Airport and walking to his hotel in Manhattan. For Self, psychogeography renders the personality of a city. He refers (as Richler does) to the famous biographer of London, Peter Ackroyd who, in Self's words, "practices a 'phrenology' of London. He feels up the bumps of the city and so defines its character and proclivities" (11).

> His thought made mine clear: he was looking at the plan, the diagram … a priori and ideal, of what he was standing there trying to build, to make physical. … A man lost in concentration, lost in thought, working to make the next move, the right move, to make a building happen.
>
> *That,* I thought—that right there—is how dreams become reality. (66)

Tuyen's dream is for her map to become a reality *as* a public installation; however, Tuyen fails to acknowledge the beauty *in* the planning, of a work in progress, that Kingwell identifies. Tuyen assumes she is stuck at a crossroads, and that she cannot display her map until it is complete.

In order to facilitate this, she attempts the impossible. Instead of leaving the tokens she finds in the city streets in place, she starts to collect discarded objects (such as a broken bracelet) and imagine the longings of their former owners; damaged jewelry, for example, suggests a *violent* longing to Tuyen, "a rapist's treasure" (158). But Binh discerns the pretense of her current installation and complains, "You're always pretending. People are real, eh? They're not just something in your head. You always play around as if everything is a joke" (156). Tuyen comes closest to realizing that ultimately her collection is a performance and that it mimics rather than captures and preserves longings when she realizes where her inspiration for salvaging longings comes from in the first place.

Tuyen's mother Cam, who fled Asia during the Vietnam War, runs a Vietnamese restaurant with her husband (Tuyen's father) Tuan. Both of Tuyen's parents live double lives, working towards the future but dreaming about what was lost, or left behind, in their past. Tuyen grows up feeling as though there is always, in her house, a "double life," an "engine behind the manufacture of still more fantasies" (115). Her father for example, an

architect whose credentials are not recognized in Canada, spends his free time drawing "all the buildings in the city [of Toronto] as if he had built them" (113). Meanwhile, Cam hoards. She possesses "a businesslike readiness to have all the world had to offer by way of things. A voracious getting. They had everything and nothing. They didn't even like or savour having everything, they simply had it as a matter of course" (62). Cam keeps everything from the electronic commodities (cell phones and computers) to leisure items and appliances that go unused (bicycles, toys, and kitchen appliances). She does not throw anything away, particularly paper. There is a vast variety to the kinds of paper products that Cam keeps: pay stubs, receipts, and bank statements, but also their papers for being in the country. Cam makes multiple copies and laminates these legal documents, because of "a mad fear of being caught without proof, without papers of some kind attesting to identity or place" (63). But all the drawings and objects that *can* be safely kept, that fill Tuan and Cam's home, comprise a collective attempt to make up for an unforgettable loss.

Tuan and Cam's son Quy was lost when the family was in a refugee camp in Hong Kong en route to North America. Cam has made copies of every single letter she has written in search of Quy, first those addressed to the refugee camp, and subsequently, over the years, to every Southeastern Asian country. Cam keeps copies of her letters as physical proof, paper touchstones to remind her she is doing everything possible to remedy Quy's absence. Meanwhile, Tuyen has been purloining these duplicates. When she first seeks them out in her mother's room on a visit home, she holds the letters "like ornate and curious figures of a time past" (25). Then it occurs to Tuyen that, like loose materials she finds on the streets and fashions into a *lubaio,* or like the longings of others that she affixes to cloth, the letters can also be *materials* for her art. Significantly, once she juxtaposes a

letter beside her translations of what her fellow citizens long for, Tuyen notices that it seems to fit within her collection. The resemblance of these different transcriptions of desire initially puzzles Tuyen; the letters stand for something lost, something that Cam cannot retrieve. They become the signifiers for a signified that exists elsewhere, and possibly only in Cam's imagination. The lines of the letters, like the lines of longing in Tuyen's journal that become the lines of her map, are literal traces that Cam and Tuyen, respectively, have made to stand in place of people and objects that are absent, transient, or irretrievable. Tuyen's collection of longings has great significance, but only as a narrative-map, a psychogeography, or her fiction of her city. Once translated by Tuyen as artist, private desires that she longs to make public are actually made personal once again. The *lubaio* and cloth of longing remain Tuyen's dreams, contained within Tuyen's personal domestic interior, an apartment that looks out onto an outdoor arcade of remnants of the city, discarded, and still waiting to be salvaged.

*

The city, pre-globalization, is a thing of the past. Now the global city, as it exists in the moment, is always approaching its own death, ending one performance and beginning another. Jeremy and Tuyen, who both try to communicate a sense of their local spaces, form collections that are performances. Jeremy's objects are perishable. Tuyen's likely have a longer shelf life but their meanings and representations are fleeting. The cities that the novels represent are rapidly changing too. Therefore the relevance of their collections are not as *products* but as *processes* or activisms that try to foster a connection to one's surroundings and answer the riddle "Where is here?" in the global city preoccupied with what is elsewhere.

In his article on Toronto in a special cities issue of *The Walrus,* Mark Kingwell states that in our anxiousness to decide, based on brand, trend, or product, what we *should* long for, we rarely stop to ask ourselves

> *what is a city for*? The oldest answer we know is also the best: a city is an opportunity for justice, for realizing something greater than the sum of individual desires, where we judge ourselves by how we treat the least well off. Because justice is not a static condition, but instead an ongoing achievement, it concerns not just the present and proximate but also the distant and future. Cities, like persons, are neither entirely material nor entirely spectral; they are reducible neither to their built forms nor their inhabitants at any given time. They are self-replicating entities, layered systems of movement and intercourse that never settle, even for a moment. ("Toronto" 64)

This, in essence, is reflected and perpetrated by the displays and diagrams that are salvaged from the city's detritus in these Canadian fictions. These are never-complete representations of where "here" is, but they are still representations of what a city is, at a certain site, at a given moment. Both the commodities and the processes that make up a global economy have their residue, leave their paper trail. These seemingly obsolete, outdated, or worthless remnants are scattered locally and publicly, and are thus made available for scavenging. Once reordered and re-presented by the hands of the collector, the materials bear spectral, imagined answers to where "here" might be. As the city is always changing, the collector creates a representation of the past, in the context of the present, that delivers a message intended for the future. And when it comes to mapping the future, what else can be followed but dreams?

Chapter Five:

Souvenirs of
Dreams, the Dead, and the Disappeared

> I knew how to write and how to read. I upset her system. In order to restore her scheme of things to the world, I pretended not to know how to read or write; and thus I learned all over again how to do both.
>
> Robert Kroetsch, *A Likely Story*

For all of his adult life my father was haunted by a recurring dream. In this dream he drives along the street of a suburb in Scarborough, Ontario, early on a Saturday in the spring or the fall. The weather is mild. It is a comfortable morning for a scavenging. My father pulls up to the curb and parks. He ambles up a driveway lined with card tables. He looks at puzzles, at crystal glassware, and at used clothing that has been pressed and folded. At the entrance to the garage, an old woman sits reading. It seems as though she has been there for years. Is there anything my father is looking for specifically? Books. Sports cards.

The woman rises from her chair and signals to my father to follow her to the back of the garage where there are crates upon crates of sports cards individually sleeved in plastic envelopes. The colours on the cards are a bit faded and they have an orange tint to them. These statistical tarots of hockey players were printed during my father's childhood. They are very valuable. My father looks at the woman, poker-faced. How much? With a hand on his shoulder, the woman tells my father that if he will just get them out of her way, he can have them for free. For a song, she says with a laugh. She just does not know what to do with them all, and is tired of them collecting dust in her basement.

This dream clung to the backs of my father's eyes when he awoke every Saturday morning, urging him to get in the car and drive. He believed the dream to be a sign, some

sort of clue, and could not let go of the feeling that the dream itself was an object somewhere out there to be found. Like any dedicated collector, he felt obliged to go and find it.

Several years after my father's death, I visited his cousin just outside of Dublin in the suburb of Clontarf. N. possesses many of my father's attributes, including his reticence in social situations, his sense of humour, and his passion for collecting. On this particular visit, N. showed me his office filled with drawers of toy soldiers, and his backyard workshop full of bowls, platters, and various art projects. Then he told me about his own recurring dream, wherein he arrives on a particular street and finds a whole bunch of desired objects. N., however, a professor of ceramic art, dreams of different artifacts. On his sabbaticals, he travels to China to collect the fragments of fallen buildings. Shards of glass, splinters of porcelain, and rubble exist as touchstones, memories of a past architecture. This collecting dream follows N., and he walks the streets anticipating that his dream will one day materialize before him. He has a faint hope that in addition to the bits and pieces he finds here and there, he will one day just happen upon a glorious preponderance of ruins.

As collectors collecting years and miles apart, I am interested in the commonalities, and especially the corresponding conclusions, of my father's and N.'s dreams. These dreams recurred to them, each time with slight variance, therefore reinventing as well as merely reiterating themselves. As my father and N. looked for the stockpile at the centre of their dreams, their dreams themselves, and the consequent trips they made in their waking lives to sites where they expected the dreamed-of collection *might* be found, continued to

accumulate; their dreams, respectively, comprised a collection, a collection that *encloses* absence, remains open-ended, or patrols a space in its centre that is never to be filled.

This is the structure of the collection exhibited in *The Whirlpool* by Jane Urquhart and *The Letter Opener* by Kyo Maclear. These novels present the gathering of objects owned by another, when the owner is not present, has died, or has disappeared. The collectors in these fictions grow attached to props for the lives of absent persons, parts that stand for missing bodies—an act of exaggeration not unlike that of the grotesque model. Whereas Bendy Drown creates an extension of an animal through mimicry, the bodies in *The Whirlpool* and *The Letter Opener* are exaggerated by the collection of objects that stand in place of them, and the hyperbole grows more fantastic and surreal as more and more objects are added to the collection representing the absent human body. As Susan Stewart argues, such objects "aris[e] out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia" (*On Longing* 135). The void at the centre of these collections, the hub of the missing or unknown, cannot be avoided; its very vacuity sustains the collector's yearning to collect in order to cover, camouflage, or perhaps even (futilely) try and fill this vacancy. The pursuit weakens the bond between signifier and signified, changing the classification of an object from *possession* to *souvenir*. As Stewart explains, in order for objects to function as souvenirs, "[t]he place of origin must remain unavailable in order for desire to be generated" (151). As objects that are conditioned by and collected *because* of nostalgia for the past, they perpetuate the absence enclosed by the collection, affirming the influence of a body or memory that is indeed only spectral.

Not Waving but Drowning: Jane Urquhart's *The Whirlpool*

> For everyone / The swimmer's moment at the whirlpool comes.
> Margaret Avison, "The Swimmer's Moment," *Winter Sun*

The above epigraph to Jane Urquhart's novel *The Whirlpool* surfaces in my mind every now and then. Like a line from a song that swirls around and round in one's head, it recurs at unexpected moments. I am brushing my teeth, and "The swimmer's moment at the whirlpool comes"; I am walking to my neighbourhood coffee shop and "For everyone ... it comes." This fragment of verse is like an object I have unconsciously pocketed, a stone or a shell, and I associate it with an image that haunts me. "The swimmer's moment" involves teetering on the rim of a massive churning body of water, skin coated by mist, vision clouded by fog. Facing the whirlpool, we might choose to turn around in a vain attempt to back into the water slowly. We might dive in headfirst with our eyes open. But no matter what, I cannot shake my conception of "The swimmer's moment" as the moment when we are forced to face the inevitability of death.

What does it mean if we enter that pool slowly enough that we can tread water and get our bearings, even if only momentarily? What do we gain if, upon entering the whirlpool of certain death, we are given enough time to reflect on life? In Julian Barnes's family memoir/meditation on death *Nothing To Be Frightened Of,* he suggests that "if, as we approach death and look back on our lives and 'we understand our narrative' and stamp a final meaning upon it, I suspect we are doing little more than confabulating: processing strange, incomprehensible, contradictory input into some kind, any kind, of believable story—but believable mainly to ourselves" (189). It seems unlikely that a life can be

peacefully perceived as whole; it seems more likely that the attempt to recollect life, in the face of death, engenders a surreal, splintered portrait.

The Whirlpool begins with Robert Browning's premonition of his own death. According to the fiction, he was "not a man to ignore symbols, especially when they carried personal messages" (Urquhart 7). He senses that his death is imminent, and Browning finds he has trouble collecting his thoughts. As he walks the streets of Venice and tries to record his impressions of his surroundings in his notebook, the "[e]mpty Gothic and Renaissance palaces [that float] on either side of him like soiled pink dreams" (8), his writing hand is hampered by the cold in the air. Browning cannot operate his own pen. Meanwhile, even as the frigid weather hinders his concentration and circulation, memories of the late Percy Bysshe Shelley flutter with ease in and out of Browning's consciousness. Fragments of Shelley's poetry echo in Browning's mind. Shelley's face appears, ethereal and ephemeral, on the wall of the building before Browning. This inability to *choose* what he recollects, demonstrated here by Browning's preoccupation with Shelley's ghost, is an affliction that has long haunted Browning. It has taken the form of a recurring dream:

> Asolo [was] the little hill town he had first seen (and only then at a distance) when he was twenty-six years old. Since that time, and for no rational reason, it had appeared over and over again in the poet's dreams as a destination on the horizon, one that, due to a variety of circumstances, he was never able to reach. (9)

Rather than dream that he has found the *object* of his desire, Browning dreams about the *obstacle* between himself and what he wishes to attain. Nevertheless, in other circumstances, Browning has acknowledged the positive potential of just such impassable

distance to maintain dreams of purity. The cemetery island of San Michele, with its "neat, white mausoleums" (16), is, like Asolo, a place Browning has never been. From a distance, he evaluates how its materiality and its apparent cleanliness distinguish it from Venice: "Like a disease that cannot cross the water, the rot and mould of the city had never reached the cemetery's shore" (16). In both his dreaming and his waking life, a place on the horizon is glorified by distance. The chasm between Browning and Asolo and San Michele, respectively, enhances his desire for places he has never been, but that he has imagined intimately and extensively.

Browning's final days and dreams bookend the main narrative of *The Whirlpool*, which takes place in the same year, 1889, but far from the cobblestone streets and canals of Venice. Set in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Urquhart's novel travels between two peculiar domesticated spaces, one Gothic, one Sublime (a funeral home with a mausoleum attached, and a campsite by a cliff). The inhabitants of both sites are influenced, in one way or another, by a whirlpool. Whereas in *Alibi,* Deemer commands Dorf to find him a spa as a restorative reservoir to be put to use, Urquhart's whirlpool symbolizes a wildness that cannot be seized. It is temptress rather than healer, as the forces of nature prevent any and all trespassers from reaching its core. The whirlpool roils with waters that have surged over a cliff in a grand and awe-inspiring spectacle only to collect and cycle ferociously in a basin underneath—"a cumbersome, magnificent merry-go-round on which a few large logs were seemingly permanent passengers" (Urquhart 32). Justin D. Edwards observes that "[f]or Urquhart, as with Avison ... the whirlpool is beyond representation. It is symmetrical and yet chaotic; attractive and yet repulsive; beautiful and yet frightful; fixed and yet

perpetually in motion; tranquil and yet overpowering. It is indeed sublime" (36). Some critics have ventured to further categorize what *kind* of sublime the whirlpool represents. Marlene Goldman, for example, suggests that the whirlpool conjures Kant's conception of the mathematical sublime, in which "the imagination is faced with the impossible task of synthesizing a seemingly infinite amount of data" (qtd. in 37). Additionally, Goldman contends that the whirlpool necessitates the novel's polyphonic structure, that while "for everyone / The swimmer's moment at the whirlpool comes" (Avison 36), every swimmer chooses to act upon that moment in a different fashion. The novel's structure "works in the service of deterritorialization because the multiple meanings which proliferate as a result of this type of associative structure frustrate any impulse toward containment" (40). The whirlpool indeed confounds *mathematical* system as a natural manifestation of chance, responsible for accidental death. According to Edwards, the whirlpool is "a fluid maze (which recalls the labyrinthian gothic passages of its architectural counterpart) that has the power to consume the self, to overcome the individual within its waters" (37). Not only is it all-consuming, but in the novel the whirlpool is described as being "[i]n one sense ... like memory; like obsession connected to memory, like history that stayed in one spot, moving nowhere and endlessly repeating itself" (Urquhart 49). But, as Edwards also states, one's "experience [with] a sublime object ... takes control of the subject's mind so that he loses touch with logic and reason" (30). The whirlpool, its chancy, cyclonic constitution, seduces its spectators.

We might think again of the etymology of the word *monster*, which means both "to warn" and "to show forth" (Stewart, *On Longing* 108). The structure of the whirlpool, like

that of the collection, sustains the curiosity of spectators because, as much as its waters churn in a violent, extraordinary fashion, the cyclic spell it can impose continuously gestures to an unattainable centre that exists but cannot be reached, and consequently cannot fully be known. Clearly there is a distinction between the composition of the whirlpool and the structure of a collection or a system of collecting. Although there are supernatural elements inherent to the collection, collecting is rarely life threatening. Rather, a collector, consciously or not, collects to outwit death, to achieve a second life by resurrecting objects in the present. The whirlpool, on the other hand, threatens death to those who wish to enter its waters, either eventually (after a leap into the falls), or immediately (venturing directly into the whirlpool itself). In *The Whirlpool,* Maud Grady becomes responsible for the cadavers of those who have been tempted to enter the waters, and have done so at their own design and peril. Following a sudden and fatal fever that claimed the life of her husband Charles, Maud Grady takes over his duties as an undertaker. Charles walks "through her dreams in a shroud of thick webs" (23), although she realizes that the heavy cloak of mourning is truly hers to bear. By following the Victorian custom of wearing heavy black crape following the death of a loved one, Maud herself is collected, contained by her very clothes, "struggling" through her narrative "in her cocoon of crape" (76). Whereas in *Effigy,* Ursula Hammer encloses the hair of her beloved Mormon martyr Joseph Smith inside a ring for safekeeping, in *The Whirlpool,* Maud fashions "an elaborate brooch" out of a lock of Charles' hair (23) in order to keep him with her. Such a loaded accessory, in addition to her heavy mourning clothing, accentuates the ways in which Maud is physically and emotionally weighed down by her preoccupation with the passing of her

husband. Her grief begins to manifest itself in overwhelming ways; she feels that she is not only taking over his job, but finds herself thinking Charles' thoughts and fending off his worries. There are "times" when Maud considers herself "the keeper of his memories rather than the keeper of his memory" (93). The thoughts of her husband, who had a passion for collecting, form an unwanted, preoccupying collection of his desires inside Maud's mind.

Like Erastus in *Effigy* or Ladner in "Vandals," Charles collected natural things. Throughout "his short adulthood he had studied [spiders] obsessively, collecting members of the species, recording their activities in a growing series of notebooks" (23). But although this description insinuates that Charles kept things contained but alive, "[t]he spiders in his collection had been silenced and stilled in the most humane way possible and not, even then, without a generous amount of guilt on the young undertaker's part" (89). Unlike Erastus or Ladner, Charles laments his implicit role in the appropriation and transformation of living things into collected objects. He ensures that he maintains his admiration for the past lives of what he has collected:

> He had recounted in detail how the spider had made no effort to escape when he had trapped it in a little box and how, later, it had accepted the chloroform as if it had always known its fate. (Like an Irish patriot going to the gallows, his mother had sighed, sentimentally.) A particularly brave and dignified spider for whom Charles had felt nothing but affection and respect. (90-91)

Maud has always been determined not to collect, and resents having his memories about collecting foisted upon her; she does not appreciate their trappings. In the past, while gardening, all the Mrs. Gradys before her and including Maud

> gave little thought to the fact that the land they worked was rich with recent history, the Battle of Lundy's Lane having been fought where the garden was now and in the orchard and cemetery adjacent to it. Occasionally, they would unearth a bullet or a button, which they would place in an apron pocket where it would lie forgotten until it was thrown in the trash by the housekeeper at wash time. (45-46)

But since her husband's death, in her inherited role as undertaker, Maud "feels an urgent need to impose order onto the chaos wrought by the whirlpool, the force that erases the identity of each body" (Goldman 37) carried by the current. Like Charles, she wishes to preserve, not lord over, the things that she collects. As a result of adopting his collecting philosophy, she starts to "enclose and protect the fragmented evidence of these smothered lives" (Urquhart 96), and rather than *Charles's* memories, begins to hold onto the memories of the corpses found in the whirlpool. Maud builds a private museum.

Maud's methodology as curator of her collection is a fictionalization inspired by an heirloom from Jane Urquhart's own family history. In an interview with Herb Wyile, Urquhart relates that she comes from a multi-generational family, in which "[l]ong stories are told concerning people who have been dead for years, [and the] mementos [that have been] kept. There's a story associated with many of the things in my mother's house. My mother now is ninety-one years old, and you can point to an object and she can tell you who it belonged to and she can tell you a story about it" (80). Urquhart's husband's grandmother, who herself ran a funeral business, kept a book "in which the various bodies that were taken out of the Niagara River were described, and the book itself, a little notebook, was such a powerful object, I knew I had to write something about it" (80).

Maud Grady is consumed by "her dead husband's memories" (95), but when assembling the lives of strangers, studying a great unknown, she consciously puts herself in the role of investigator and analyst. The desire to acquire the memories of these bodies is hers alone.

Maud writes in her notebook, "*Body of a Man Found at Maid of the Mist Landing July 3rd, 1889*" (95). She itemizes "*Dark grey hair ... Good teeth,*" but these physical attributes are almost hidden in her list by a subterfuge of paraphernalia: "*Fleece-lined undershirt with marker (D.N.),*" "*Shoe about number 9, plain without toe caps*" (95). Already, this journaling is more detailed than the blunt statistics in Erastus' ledger in *Effigy.* But readers of *The Whirlpool* are provided with an additional layer of narrative: Maud's thoughts, her internalized (but narrated) observations. For example, Maud asks herself, "[w]ho was this man, this D.N.?" (95), and then observes, "[t]here was something tragic, not about [the dead man's] battered body, necessarily, but about his blue polka dot handkerchief, his Fashion smoking tobacco, his Peterson pipe" (95). It is not the body itself, its height, weight, or physical description that Maud pays closest attention to, but rather "the objects and bits of apparel that this flesh had attached to itself on the last day of its existence" because they "both disturbed and fascinated her. And it was these things that she recorded and kept ... Then the questions would enter her mind and a relationship would form between her and the drowned flesh. A personality would develop behind the words, a life would take shape" (164). Maud's curiosity has been aroused, and she authors a complementary commentary for her collection that articulates her *own* anxieties and concerns about the possessions of others that are left behind following untimely deaths.

Patrick, *The Whirlpool*'s young poet, also wishes to assume agency not only as collector but also the *author* of a collection. Initially, he has conventional aspirations for collecting when on a hunt for wildflowers, but this objective evaporates when he sees Fleda in the woods. Fleda and her husband, Major David McDougal, own a campsite on a cliff looking out onto the whirlpool below the Falls. This piece of land is reserved for their future home, but in the meantime, without the interference of walls, nothing segregates Fleda from the sublime sight of the whirlpool. It captivates and enhances her afternoon reading sessions of Browning. Patrick concludes that there is "[s]omething in [Fleda's] posture" as she reads and daydreams throughout the afternoons that "suggested permanence" (55). They befriend one another, and there is implied romantic tension. To Fleda's great disappointment, she soon realizes that Patrick does not regard her as a companion but rather as "a legend in a forest" (182). Patrick does not want Fleda "to be aware of the focus of the lens he had fixed on her. She was never meant to answer his attentions. She had now pulled his fantasy into the mundane architecture of fact" (182). He would rather she exist as still life, an ornament on a platform offering a superb view. She is most alluring to him when he can *imagine* her personality, and Patrick realizes that the mystery of who she is can only be maintained if she remains separate from him. With distance between them, Patrick is free to reinvent Fleda. He "could hardly wait to return to the woods where, hiding once again, he could watch her in the pure and uncorrupted state he had carefully constructed for her" (128). Just as, in *Effigy,* Dorrie becomes uncomfortable when Bendy takes on the postures of the bodies she is preserving, Patrick "began to feel guilty about his presence" around Fleda because he realizes his eroticism is

that of "a privileged spectator with a ringside seat" (Urquhart 133). As a result, his gaze shifts from Fleda, the original object of his affection, to a body that promises eternal ambiguity: the whirlpool itself.

The natural site of the whirlpool intrigues Patrick. He wonders if "the whirlpool ... [is] architecture or flesh? Would he be able to tour it like a museum or caress it as he would a woman?" (102). It is not a person, nor even a product, but rather an ongoing performance; and as performance, it is not an act of mimicry but a theatrical symphony of ceaseless crescendo. One is never present for the curtain call. Patrick finds himself "standing right at the edge of the magnificent theatre that was the whirlpool, trying to steady himself to enter the current" (220). He contemplates a swim of great consequence:

> This swim would be a journey into another country, a journey he would choose to make in full knowledge that he had no maps, that he hardly spoke the language. Then he realized that the river belonged to no country and that fact made the whole space alien to him. Still, he wanted to swim. (221)

Patrick knows that when he enters the waters, death is likely. But until that potentially fatal moment, his body will be carried by a constant ebb and flow of reinvention and kept at bay from absolute recognition. He will occupy a space relative to the whirlpool's core, but distance will be maintained. He will be kept from ever fully knowing, or reaching, the pool's centre.

Maud, remaining on the whirlpool's periphery, attempts to claim the detritus that surfaces in the whirlpool's waters and reassemble stories out of the pieces she gathers together. She takes all her "sad relics into the long hall cupboard where she kept the

possessions of the nameless floaters" (95). She stores everything she finds on these "floaters" (her name for the drowned bodies) away in canvas sacks. In this storage unit, the sacks "crouched on the shelves like a herd of small docile animals, each shaped slightly differently from the next, but all undeniably of the same species" (96). Maud has yet to recognize the significance of her reassessment. Her questions and speculations will not uncover a secret, past identity, but rather craft new narrative. Maud sees the "luminous corpses" as "pale messages ... They spoke of being at home in water, content with the voyages it took them on" (183). But she fails to recognize that it is she who is interpreting those messages. For example, she takes the signifier of a "*Bone pipe stem with silver funnel,*" and imbues it with a special, spectral meaning, believing that it can stand for a memory, or an entire life, rather than exist as just a utility. It takes Maud's young son, a "nameless boy, whose identity is never fixed in language" (Edwards 37), to demonstrate for her how a collector authors the collection and *uses* language to substantiate a story as a trace of the past—as a souvenir.

In her interview with Wyile, Urquhart recalls Alice Munro once telling her that "we write about the past because we can see it whole. We may not see it accurately, but we know what transpired, how events unfolded" (qtd. in "Confessions" 81). As Anne Compton explains, Maud too believes that "from the objects found on the bodies of those whom the whirlpool has claimed, she [is construing] whole lives" (16). But Maud's son demonstrates that, in its fluctuation between past and present, the collection embodies an incongruity between signifier and signified. When Maud's son, formerly speechless, becomes "a perfect mimic, repeating not only every word spoken but reproducing the tone, the pitch of

the voice as well" (Urquhart 162) his words come out in random sequence, "disconnected from their sources" (111), as if he were "consciously building his own vocabulary" (146). Maud, who is first consumed by the memory of her husband, then completely occupied with compiling the lives of others, is, according to Edwards, "only released from her obsessive compulsion to read these fragments when the boy shows her that the signs found on the unidentified bodies are just as random as the words applied to various objects" (40). When her son repeats fragments of her sentences, or gleefully announces words aloud without their referents in sight, and "Maud witnesses a breakdown in the relationship between signifier and signified, she also glimpses a destabilization of identity" (Edwards 40). Maud's epiphany culminates in the discovery that her son has reordered her collection.

Maud's lists in her notebook are the initial character sketches for the floaters found in the whirlpool. She only realizes the extent to which their stories rely upon her as their collector and narrator when all the objects are moved around within her house. It is "difficult for Maud to determine the criteria for these new configurations. Her domestic geography had been tampered with, her home had become a puzzle" (Urquhart 204). But she finds that she cannot "become angry. Every time she tried, her curiosity got in the way. These strange little assemblings might be the key to the child's mind" (205-206). In fact, in this new arrangement, it takes Maud quite a while to recognize the origins of the objects. She gradually realizes that they are not from around her house, but are the possessions of the floaters, formerly enclosed within a cupboard: "the child, she suddenly knew, had invaded her cupboard, her museum" (206). Only when she is outside of the process, as a

spectator rather than involved in the sorting, can she gain the perspective of the collection's meaning as the individual pieces united in a system. Her son proves that the code of the collection is contingent upon the collector's signature, her *consignation.* The collector reorders signifiers and signifieds and, in doing so, places objects in a new context, creates language, and writes a narrative.

The recovered Mighty Moose costume provides a particularly uncanny example of an object recontextualized: the former parts of a non-human subject conjoin, in a grotesque imitation of themselves, to become the costume of a human daredevil. However, this young man, once carried by the currents of the whirlpool, becomes literally inextricable from the "contraption of horns and hides" (132) that he wore upon entering the waters. The familiar animal and human parts become unfamiliar once collected together; they undergo a transmogrification once the force of the falls brutally and permanently marries man to costume. Major David McDougal, for one, affirms his dislike for any spectacle of collected natural, or seemingly natural, parts; for example, during a visit to the history room above the city courthouse, he thinks "[h]ow stupid it was … all those dried-up sea horses and starfish, dusty and crumbling, deader than the Roman battle axe" (173). He longs to have a museum of his own in which "there would be no natural history; no stuffed birds, dried lizards, dead fish, pinned butterflies, pickled fetuses, animals worked over by the taxidermist. None of the death that pretends to imitate life" (173). David sees life not in things that were formerly living, but in objects that facilitate the battles between human beings. As opposed to formerly living bodies manipulated into performance within the natural (or taxidermic) collection, he proclaims that "Brock's coat" and a series of "scarlet

uniforms, empty [with] no dummies propping them up" (173) constitutes an army that can speak for itself.

David studies the Fort Erie Siege of 1812, and undertakes an exhaustive amount of research to support his theories that Canadians, not Americans, were victorious in the battle. David perceives that this outcome has been silenced, and he intends to recover evidence to articulate the truth. This expedition for missing clues is instigated, of course, by a dream he had about Laura Secord. David has invested a great amount of faith in this dream, to the extent that it embellishes the meaning of an object on his desk. His bronze cow-shaped paperweight is no longer just a paperweight; it becomes "Laura Secord's cow!" (85). David does not *use* the bronze cow as a paperweight; rather than paper, it keeps the reminder of his dream in place and in plain sight. "Remind them, remind them" (85): David recites from memory the message of his reverie—he is quite caught up in his dream. Alternatively, as Edwards explains, when it comes to discussing his very surroundings, "the 'wildness' of the whirlpool, David is silent" because "its movement, its disorder, resists the language of ownership. It cannot be contained or domesticated, and thus he cannot put the whirlpool's turmoil into words" (Edwards, *Gothic* 44). David admires documented history, and desires a museum collection that can be capable of *displaying* the message of his dream. It would have to be "a special section given over entirely to the art of oratory," although David cannot "decide quite how to manage it" (173). David does not consider that even if such demonstrative records existed, they could possibly be scattered (partly spoken from memory, misread, fissured with ellipsis, unintentionally omitted fragments that ebbed away into the ether, forever irretraceable). David remains driven by his dream. He holds

fast to his conviction that the speeches that prove the meaning and motive, and, most importantly, the conclusion of the battle that he studies must be out there somewhere, waiting to be found.

The textual incarnation of a public speech is an object idealized by David because, he believes, its politics will be articulated as *part* of the object—indeed as the object's very purpose—and therefore they will be self-evident rather than hidden or masked. David is, in a sense, like the boy in the poem that Bill Brown wrote when beginning to consider the line of thought that would become *A Sense of Things*. Thinking he has been given a present, "a thing," that will autonomously contain an idea within it, a boy on Christmas morning is depicted "wildly unwrapping a package, then unwrapping the thing within the package, tearing away layers of plastic, wild-eyed to get to the idea" (6). But, as Brown suggests by citing Heidegger, a thing does not simply and self-explanatorily contain an idea, thought, or meaning; what *does* always accompany an object is what is unknown about that object. Heidegger's useful metaphor is that of a jug, for it is "not the worn, hard surface of the jug, after all, but the void constituted by the jug where Heidegger discovers the thingness of the thing" (7). Even a speech, a narrative object that might seem linear and complete, with beginning and conclusion, is necessarily fallible. There would have been edits, and likely fabrications, bits of fiction or melodrama to increase the excitement of the speech's delivery and ensure positive reception. As with Maud's notebook and Erastus' ledger, not all observations and accounts can be collected onto the page. The gap in the argument, the slip in the story, the white space left on the page, or the breath or pause in the speech are objects in and of themselves that collectors knowingly or unknowingly collect.

Kroetsch, in *A Likely Story,* recalls visiting his Aunt Rose in a retirement home when she "opened her mouth, but she did not make the slightest sound" (63). He considered that silence to be a sign, a language object in and of itself. Kroetsch, who grew up with cousins who were "slightly ashamed" of him, as they "accused [him] of having swallowed a dictionary" (50), meditates throughout the chapter "I Wanted to Write a Manifesto" on the mutability and unpredictability of language. One winter Sunday when Kroetsch dipped his hand into the well of his church's holy water font, he hit, not water, but ice. Kroetsch is suddenly "surprised—into the impossibility of words—by the perfect and beautiful ordinariness of water" (64). The holy water font, an object from his past that he affirms represents a pinnacle moment in the construction of his "writerhood," contains a substance that by its very nature cannot be predicted; its ability to change structure might surprise its witness. As Kroetsch contends, and as Maud's son demonstrates, a collection boldly proclaims its continuous give, and dares *each* collector that approaches its contents to interact with it, to treat it like puzzle. The mementoes that the collector gathers trying to document meaning and memory—for an accident, a disappearance, or a random act, remembering or memorializing the victim or lost one—may physically fill the collection's shelves. But these objects, as souvenirs, remain a testimony to absence—to something or someone is longed for and not present.

Return to Sender: Kyo Maclear's *The Letter Opener*

For everyone / The swimmer's moment … comes.

In Kyo Maclear's *The Letter Opener,* Andrei and Nicolae flee Romania in 1984. Their relationship has come under attack during the reign of Ceausescu, President of

Romania and ostentatious collector. His extraordinary list of possessions includes one hundred and thirteen taxidermic animals, nine thousand suits, one thousand bottles of wine, champagne, and cognac, twenty-five "marble and gold-plated" mansions, but also "a painting of peasants mowing" (Maclear 239). The painting's pertinent juxtaposition with Ceausescu's other lavish possessions elucidates the dictatorial desire at the heart of his collecting.

In accordance with Ceausescu's oppressive rule, the Securiate repeatedly questions Nicolae about his homosexuality and the homosexuality of others. Nicolae complies with the authorities, while, at the same time, he spends weeks slowly giving away his every possession. He tells Andrei that "[t]o begin another life ... the past life [has] to be given away" (91). Andrei, by contrast, holds desperately to keepsakes. He even carries them on his person, tightly wrapped in a plastic bag, when he heads to the port at Cernavoda to stow away on a ship with Nicolae. Hidden away in the depths of a cargo crate, they embrace as the ship crosses the Danube. Then, when the ship is adrift in the Black Sea, they move towards the edge of the deck. They are dressed appropriately for a long swim; both wear swimsuits, Nicolae wears a snorkeling mask, and Andrei dons a pair of goggles. Their moment has come. They do not dive or leap but lower themselves into the dark water with a rope. After an hour and a half of swimming, Andrei finds that his collection is slowing him down. He must abandon his plastic bag, and "[w]ith a firm tug he ripped it from his swimsuit, relieved to no longer be towing its weight. His father's handkerchief, a pendant belonging to his mother grazed the water, then sank" (252). The waters claim the last remnants of his former life in Romania. After three hours, Andrei believes he has died:

"[h]e floated on his back like a corpse" (253). The last crossing that takes him to the shore of a Turkish village is unclear to him. In that absence of time and space, Andrei loses Nicolae.

The Letter Opener begins, in fact, with Andrei missing. He never appears in the present tense of the story. Readers learn about his past, including his (and Nicolae's) "swimmer's moment" through Naiko. Naiko, Andrei's friend and co-worker, is profoundly upset by his absence. Throughout the novel she carefully, lovingly recollects fragments of his past as she knows it from the stories that he shared with her as they became close acquaintances. In doing so, she feels his presence, and she believes that he still exists. She narrates, "[a] feeling of calm resolve spread through me, a quiet hope that in recounting Andrei's story, I was somehow keeping him alive" (183). Motivated by the spectral influence of Andrei, she works to protect and preserve his past. This is instinctual for Naiko; collecting, classifying, and giving order to chaos is what she does for a living.

Naiko works at the Undeliverable Mail Office in Toronto. Her job is to categorize parcels that have gone missing during the course of delivery. The contents that have "sprung from burst envelopes and overloaded boxes" are known as "rubble" (3). She tries to retrieve these objects for their owners with the help of customer claim letters. Eric Harvie's basement comes to mind (or at least his basement as identified by his biographer Fred Diehl) when we read that the warehouse where Naiko works "resembles a giant pawnshop" (7), not to mention that Naiko considers herself to be "one of these people, mulling over old objects and heirlooms, digging for history as others would for oil or gold" (154). Like the Glenbow, the UMO has a considerable national importance and reputation

as the only mail recovery facility in the country. As a result, "over five million pieces of mail pass through [the] doors" into Naiko's workspace "every year" (Maclear 7). In a recent interview, Maclear discloses that the very existence of a "dead letter office" "spoke to [her] on a gut level. Its attempt at order. Its massiveness. Yet also its humanness" ("Interview"). Within the novel, the voluminous and incessant stream of incoming mail means that Naiko and her co-workers have only a few moments to consider and classify each object they come across. But in addition to their bureaucratic notes, Maclear gives voice to her characters' observations and reactions as they sort through the piles.

Naiko, for example, feels "a dash of shame" (19) each time she gains temporary access to someone's private property. Her co-worker Baba is angered by the protocol that he is supposed to follow, and argues for the value of seemingly inexpensive things. He exclaims: "Why put money before sentiment? This pen is the means of poems" (18). Andrei, who in Naiko's opinion is a "consummate letter opener," treats "his access to other people's lives as a privilege not to be mistreated" (20). The UMO workers' responses, and their storage facility for gifts that never reached their destination, echoes both Maud Grady's methodology and her museum in Urquhart's text. Maclear writes:

> The backroom is always crammed with canvas bags, their mouths cinched closed, their sides tattooed with the word *Undeliverable*. A thick cover of dust coats everything. Particles float in the light. Spiders twirl their threads and the husks of dead insects lie in corners.
>
> An archive of misery. Or so I had always thought.

> I can see now that only after Andrei's arrival did the daily dead mail offer new life. (20)

Naiko's job is to try and connect an object with its intended recipient, to put it back on the course of its original narrative. Her clues, the claims letters that she receives, are not unlike the correspondence between Harvie and his many scouts, for they include photographs of the object in question, elaborate sketches, and detailed lists. Some are even written from the perspective or in the voice of the object itself, "proceeding on the assumption that an item was likely to be handled more carefully and/or returned more promptly if it was given a personal identity" (67). But often these letters are never correlated with any of the parcels or rubble in the office's ever-growing stash. Some of the letters are shredded, and Naiko recognizes that "[t]he order [she] had imposed on [her] collection" was only temporary; it was always "coming apart. Chaos was being reinstated" (75). Meanwhile the letters that are not shredded but simply put aside and forgotten become their own objects, another collection accumulating dust on the shelves of the back storage room.

Andrei, in his time at the UMO, encourages Naiko to revel in, not regret, this return to chaos. He sees the objects as points of contact between people and possessions, but that contact that can shift out of grasp or enter into a new exchange. Objects, therefore, do not represent "misery" but may correspond with "misadventures," which Andrei does not interpret as "misfortune" but rather an intrinsic element of everyday life (20). As Guy Beauregard states in his review of the novel, not only accepting but participating in the transformation as collector and sorter is an essential part of Naiko's job. Her "work at the UMO requires her not simply to sort through such objects but also to reconstruct stories

and—crucially—to imagine" (226). Although the facility in which she works is sometimes referred to as "the postal morgue" or "the letter cemetery" (Maclear 70), Naiko begins to believe that the objects are not corpses but lost luggage that has taken a wrong turn and has arrived at an unexpected destination. Naiko takes Andrei's assessment of the collection to heart when he himself goes missing; she convinces herself that he is not irretrievable. He has simply taken a route that she did not anticipate. She has *some* of his possessions—those that she borrowed, or that were left on his desk. But the reminders that Naiko cherishes the most are the stories that Andrei shared with her, that preoccupy her thoughts so fully and consistently that they seem almost as palpable as physical objects. She believes that a thorough assessment of the narrative evidence of his life can lead her to his whereabouts.

After having to forsake his plastic bag of belongings on his swim, Andrei has no mementoes to remind him of home or his family. Naiko recalls a period when Andrei was working at the UMO and was suffering from a severe bout of insomnia. He was struggling to "remember any of the shop names or street signs of [his] childhood," and confessed to Naiko, "For nights I lay awake, fearing sleep, fearing that my dreams would swallow up other things" (112). Andrei begins to lose his grip on the only souvenirs he has—his memories. Material possessions have always been minimal in Andrei's family. When Andrei's mother, Sarah, returned to Romania following the war, she was the sole surviving member of her family. She reentered her family's home to find it had been vandalized severely in her absence, "[t]he remaining contents of drawers were strewn on the floor, items nobody wanted: a single glove, a dried inkpot, a box of clarinet reeds, a tub of skin

lotion, a ball of twine, candle stubs" (35). Yet, because these were the only remaining relics of her family's past that had survived in spite of pillage, "to Sarah this valueless debris seemed as precious as heirlooms" (35). The significance of objects can be enhanced by their rarity, as sole physical and tangible reminders.

In *The Letter Opener,* as Maclear states, "There is a kind of doubling that occurs in the novel between Naiko's mother and Andrei, both of whom feel that they are losing a foothold in worlds they once knew deeply. ... The way Naiko's mother reacts to this sense of flux and uncertainty is to grab hold of the material world" ("Interview"). The objects that Naiko's mother accumulates are not individually significant; rather, it is the size of her accrual, as a whole, in which she seeks comfort. In pertinent contrast to Andrei or his mother, Naiko's mother is a hoarder.

Naiko believes that her mother did, in the past, exhibit the behaviour of a collector rather than a hoarder. She recalls:

> My mother was once a scrupulous organizer. When we were little, she held on to all the photographs we ever took, every letter and birthday card she had ever received. She slipped everything into clear plastic sleeves and made raised print labels with her Avery label gun. My sister and I took my mother's stashes for granted. ... She was showing us that keeping a record of life gave it meaning. (106)

Naiko's mother wrote her own secular object lessons. Unlike religious or overly moral lessons (like Susanna Moodie's) that use objects as props in an allegory, Naiko's mother's lessons were based around the "comfort and constancy" (196) of the object as utility—or, as Baudrillard would consider it, a thing. One of Naiko's mother's bits of passed-along

wisdom is, "[i]f you buy a toaster oven, you know you won't go down to the kitchen the next morning and find it has transformed itself into a blender" (196). Another is: "Collecting objects teaches patience and perseverance. A collection is a step-by-step endeavour" (196). Eventually, rather than containing a few decent appliances, her kitchen becomes a "formidable stash" of "detergent samples, elastic bands, old issues of *TV Guide* and blister packs of pills" (108). This aggravates Naiko's worry about her mother's collecting habits, because her desire to own certain things is no longer connected to *either* their usefulness or sentimental meaning. When the twist-ties and egg cartons begin to spill out from the cupboards, Naiko finds herself faced with a disturbing question:

> What distinguishes collecting as a hobby, from collecting as an illness? The value of the objects themselves? Accumulation techniques? Conscious selection versus absent-minded accrual? Relevance versus irrelevance? Wealth versus poverty?
>
> The boundary suddenly seemed razor-thin. (152)

Naiko worries about what a collection means if it does not provide a platform for interpretation, but is rather *merely* the outpouring of anxiety. In this case, the accrual crowds out any chance for narrative, and junk is, indeed, just junk.

Naiko knows that Andrei, on the other hand, had begun a specific collection with a very direct purpose before his disappearance; he had saved newspaper articles about missing persons. Rather than letting the articles speak for themselves, Andrei tried to impose his own order and language on his collection by highlighting what he felt was relevant, crossing out words, inserting question marks, in a way asking questions of his collection and attempting to communicate with it. Naiko clings to the possibility that

Andrei's collection showed him a path that he had initially not considered Nicolae could have taken; she dreams that his collection led him to his lover, and that Andrei, consumed by, swept up in, the whirlwind of his quest, left without enough time to leave a trace.

Bruno Latour theorizes that collections may carry messages *because* of their collectability. He argues that "[e]ven in our grandmothers' attics, in the flea market, in town dumps, in scrap heaps, in rusted factories, in the Smithsonian Institution, objects still appear quite full of [a *certain*] use" or value in the sense that they are full "of memories, of instructions" (10). As soon as a relic "rejoin[s] the world of people" (Latour 11), it ceases to be inert or static, although it rarely is cherished for its original utilitarian function; it comes to life, rather, as story or as a set of directions. However, rather than interpret an object as a map, Naiko personifies a thing by believing it has a soul. Marcel Mauss contends that things that participate in any kind of economic exchange or trade, "still have a soul. They are still followed around by their former owner, and they follow him also" (66). Naiko gestures towards this notion of essentialism when she wonders, specifically, "[m]ight this leather band recall the wrist it once touched, remember the sweat, the grime, perhaps even the passing of that person?" (150). While we classify objects by our senses, Naiko imagines that an object has senses of its own, and as a result can be not a blueprint but her *partner* as she plays detective in attempting to ascertain Andei's whereabouts. She feels lost and restless, and admits, "[l]eft to my own devices, I remember very little. … I need these memory magnets" (263). Naiko is aided and comforted by the companionship of a collection. Perhaps this is because, ultimately, what is more prominent for Naiko than

Andrei's former possessions, her memories (of them together), and his memories (of his own life) that she recalls, is Andrei *himself* as spectre. "Andrei's absence [is] a presence" (77) that Naiko feels around her all the time. While she assigns great agency to objects that might represent him and relies on former possessions as clues to Andrei's whereabouts, the souvenir, as Stewart states, is correlated to "a nostalgic myth of contact and presence" (133). The souvenir is indeed a myth of reminiscence; it embodies the romance of the *return* of a person to a certain place. The souvenir keeps a person company and can offer comfort. But ultimately what it articulates, or accessorizes, is the lack of that return—absence itself.

After he has been missing for a month, Naiko is allowed entrance into Andrei's apartment. Used to feeling anxious in her own childhood home now virtually buried in the rubble of her mother's hoarding, Naiko discovers that she can be equally appalled by order. She realizes that she "wasn't prepared for the tidiness" of the apartment, and that "[t]here was something mausoleum-like about it" (277). Although consciously she knows that this is not a lived-in environment, she is still somewhat shocked that Andrei's things do not continue to display a life of their own, interrupted by his absence yet ready to resume their course at any moment. Then Naiko comes across disturbing evidence. She finds an incomplete letter from Andrei, addressed to her, never sent, saying that he had found out about Nicolae. The letter states, "Now I know I will never see him again. I feel terrible sadness. … Perhaps I can put it all behind me—it is over" (280-281). The letter is accompanied by a facsimile of a newspaper clipping that identifies a man's body being pulled from the Istanbul harbour in 1984. It is the date on the corner of this fax that alarms

Naiko: July 18, 1989, predating her many conversations with Andrei about Nicolae, and the sessions they spent writing letters together, trying to ascertain his whereabouts. After this date, this moment that Andrei must have first *known*, he continued—and Naiko continued to help—to assemble of his collection of articles about missing persons. Much to her dismay, she also finds the letters they composed still together as a collection, never disseminated nor posted to their appropriate addresses. Naiko wonders "[h]ad it all been pretense?" (282). And, in a sense, it had been: a pretense that Andrei constructed to keep Nicolae alive in the narrative of an ongoing collection of physical, tangible reminders. Stewart explains that the souvenir

> represents not the lived experience of its maker but the "secondhand" experience of its possessor/owner. Like the collection, it always displays the romance of contraband, for its scandal is its removal from its "natural" location. Yet it is only by means of its material relation to that location that it acquires its value. … The souvenir speaks to a context of origin through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia. (135)

As this insatiability drives the collection of objects, the objects themselves change in meaning "[f]rom friendship token to stray artifact to craft souvenir to raggedy castaway to personal effect of the deceased to repatriated relic to cherished heirloom. The transmutation of matter" (Maclear 124). It is this very transmutation *that* matters and that is integral to the collection breathing new life into artifacts of the past. Every newspaper article that Andrei collected helped to revive the fallacy that Nicolae's body was still missing, still a spectral

presence. Andrei's letter to Naiko suggests that he has given up the dream of being a collector. But, if only temporarily, the practice of collecting effectively returned Andrei to his past, to the other side of the threshold that he crossed, and to his swimmer's moment.

*

For everyone / The … moment … comes.

My father's life, as a collector, continues to exist in the present. I am not interested in what his collection could have become. It is unfinished. My brother, mother, and I make collective or individual trips down into the basement in search of a book, a Christmas decoration, maybe an old game that has suddenly come to mind. When we start hunting through the piles, however, we come across other unexpected reminders of our pasts as they are intertwined with my father's, for example a program from a concert, or a once favourite and cherished toy, a homemade card, or a letter. His collection remains stored where it has always been, but new stories continue to rise to the surface. At the same time we are frustrated, continually confounded, by the impossibility of his collection, by its very size and obscurity, and by the daunting task of classifying and disseminating its objects. Each and every object in my father's collection is a souvenir of his journey as a collector. As a result, these souvenirs are parts of a puzzle that exists as one of our only remaining opportunities to assemble a physical, if inevitably incomplete, installation of his desires, experiences, and acquisitions.

The jackpot of sports cards that my father dreamed of likely exists in many incarnations throughout the garages and basements of southern Ontario. But even if my

father had ever come across such a find, he would not have recognized it as the exact object in his dream. The object in his dream, of course, was imagined, dreamed-of, and thus did not exist in real life. But beyond its literal lure (because my father was an avid collector of sports cards), metaphorically and subconsciously the treasure stood for something else that could never be seen or found; it stood for a *reason,* a motive, to keep on collecting. Absence itself (the missed event or opportunity, the disappeared person, the centre of the whirlpool, the dreamed-of collection) kept my father and his cousin N.—and Maud, Patrick, David, Andrei, and Naiko—on their respective collecting excursions.

In my father's recurring dream, he is driving along the street of a suburb in Scarborough, Ontario. My father grew up in a suburb in Scarborough, Ontario—but not this one. He parks at the end of a driveway, and depending on the dream he may be parking the blue Volkswagen Beetle he owned in his early twenties, or the pale yellow Toyota Corolla he bought after he wrecked the Beetle. Perhaps he parks and gets out of his first company car, a Chevrolet Vega. What lay scattered up and down that driveway that led to a cave of sports cards? Is the comic book he picks up and holds in his hands one that he read as a young boy? Amongst the toys, is there a doll with blinking glass eyes that will cry real tears, like the one that his sister had when they were children? The sale itself, the experience of driving along a street on a Saturday morning, arriving at a driveway filled with objects for sale, and surveying the spread, returned my father to his past. It assured him of the eternal cycle of things, and that despite the transience, the brevity of life, a collection would allow him to revisit and relive his past in the present, over and over again.

Or, maybe his recurring dream reminds *me*, or provides for me, a purpose for my father's collecting. After all, my father shared this dream with me a handful, perhaps only a couple, of times in my childhood. This would have been at least ten years ago (more likely it was longer), and I remember the sports cards, the fact that the dream recurred, and my father's sheepish grin and trace of a laugh when he shared his dream with me. But what have *I* added to make the dream whole or complete? The woman? Is she from my father's dream, or is this the woman that Benjamin meets in the arcades and makes note of at the beginning of his convolute on "The Collector"? Do I lengthen the driveway, for effect? Do I choose (do I *add*) the objects that catch my father's eye before he enters the garage? Is my father in his car when the dream begins, or is he already at the bottom of the driveway? Any memory, and certainly someone's memory of someone else's memory of a dream, is by necessity a construction of many parts, with gaps that get teased open in the process of translation. The recurring dream to which I refer, that I have re-presented here, is perhaps just another collection.

So I discard the dream. I face, instead, my father's actual collection. I tread down the burgundy carpeted stairs, and once I am in the big room I breathe in the smell of the dusty, dank basement. Maybe I scan as much as I can to satiate myself with objects: the paper products, including Marvel comics, Pearly's road atlases (decades old), Penguin paperbacks with bright orange spines; the souvenirs, including hockey trophies, miniature camels (felt, soapstone, wooden, a camel-shaped bell), a set of Russian dolls, a Beatles tie pin, my father's bronzed baby shoe—just one. Not a pair. I turn off the buzzing ceiling lights that give off a burning smell, and maybe I close my eyes. I stand with my feet at the

edge of a whirlpool. I am confronted with my father's death. But as the surface of that pool ripples, I realize that the collection represents not just *a* death but the inevitability of all death. All prized possessions eventually disappear. All we will be left with in our presence is absence. But what is that absence if not the site for the beginning of an incredible collection? When faced with death, how can we do anything other than take stock of life? Eventually, "[f]or everyone / The swimmer's moment at the whirlpool comes" (Avison 36). Whether or not we are conscious of our desire to collect—whether we recollect the past, whether we hope to retrieve a specific object, or whether we recall a dream—ultimately, the sense of something familiar, in flux with the promise of something strange, unfamiliar, and new, beckons us all.

Convolute for a Conclusion

"Le réveil mortel": Death-Awareness

> 'What's all this about death, by the way?' [my mother] continued. I explained that I didn't like the idea of it. 'You're just like your father,' she replied. 'Maybe it's your age. When you get to my age you won't mind so much. I've seen the best of life anyway. And think about the Middle Ages—then their life expectancy was really short. Nowadays we live seventy, eighty, ninety years ... People only believe in religion because they're afraid of death.' This was a typical statement from my mother: lucid, opinionated, explicitly impatient of opposing views. Her dominance of the family, and her certainties about the world, made things usefully clear in childhood, restrictive in adolescence, and grindingly repetitive in adulthood.
>
> Julian Barnes, *Nothing to Be Frightened Of*

> The theater of all my struggles and all my ideas.
>
> Walter Benjamin's conception of *The Arcades Project,*
> cited by the project's translators Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin

My mother recently told me that my father was always quite frustrated that she did not share his passion for collecting. Now, years after his death, she has started to collect figurines of birds and rabbits. Still, she refuses ownership of a *much* larger collection of collections that she has inherited and chosen to keep.

The basement of my childhood home that contains these collections is, as I have mentioned, the setting of my recurring dream; my mother's recurring dream shifts from place to place, but always involves my father coming back to life or still being alive (and apparently back from a prolonged trip). Immediately, my father wants to know what my mother has done with all his possessions. Partly haunted by this dream, my mother has decided not to disseminate his collections other than a box of vinyl records or books here and there. The process of taking stock of all of his things inevitably exhausts her, so she has decided that the main bulk of my father's collections will remain in the basement until she *discovers* what to do with them. Or my brother does. Or I do.

As my study draws to a close, I confess that my mother has been hoping, all along, that this project would end with a certifiable conclusion—an answer to the riddle, *what do we do with all that stuff?* After reading about the Parisian arcades, I considered encouraging my mother to invite the neighbourhood down into the basement to select articles from which they could start their own collections; I have thought about photographing the collections and preserving their images in a scrapbook, and then hosting a massive garage sale; or dropping off the objects at nearby charities (does Goodwill take comics? Or buttons?); or renting a U-Haul and gifting my father's collections to fellow collectors across the country. I have been encouraged, many times, to establish an eBay store. But ultimately, any such decisive act would sort, select, order, and classify the collections to a certain extent. How would I begin pricing and marketing these collections? Here are the *Star Trek* trading cards that my father and I purchased together, for which I engaged in my first negotiation with a vendor. Here is a set of small, magnetic dogs that my father told me were magic, miniature, live creatures. As children, my brother and I imagined the dogs creeping around below us at night, settling down to sleep in the crevices of the basement. Here is a box of business cards belonging to people that my father never met—some of the cards are missing, I admit, because he used to hand them out at various gatherings as his own. Through the collection, the collector lives another strange, fantastic, and ongoing life. And so, an inheritor of a collection has been bequeathed a suite haunted by a *doppelgänger* of a loved one, no longer present. If the collection itself is given away, does the spectre of that collector, as well as his or her ideas, memories, and desires, also move on?

I wonder if over the course of this study I have imagined that the solution of *how to inherit a collection* might surface in a work of fiction or criticism, or appear to me in the

form of a theory or story; I question whether I have desired, in some small way, that once I had my thesis, my mother would have hers. However, I do not remain neutral nor in any way outside of my dissertation as its writer. I have sewn in the necessary sutures, and I have decided upon the order of my study. How would it change if I started with the whirlpool and worked my way backwards? How would it change if I looked at souvenirs and trophies, but chose different books to exemplify my argument? There seems to be undoubtedly more to say—the predicament that all writers face, both those who are beginning (the student writing a thesis) and those who are ending (the theorist leaving behind a tomb). Walter Benjamin had his work on the Paris arcades cut short by his death, and his project remains forever in-progress. However, the remarkable result is that the unexpected structure for his manuscript is completely suitable to its contents.

Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, translators of *The Arcades Project,* chose to keep the noun 'convolute' as the name for each section of Benjamin's notes. From the German *Konvolut,* in English the term means "something of a convoluted form," which might seem "strange, at least on first acquaintance, but," the translators reason, "so is Benjamin's project and its principle of sectioning" (xiv). Eiland and McLaughlin argue, "it seems undeniable that despite the informal, epistolary announcements of a 'book' in the works, an *eigentlichen Buch,* the research project had become an end in itself" (xi). Accordingly, I have been inspired by Benjamin's project on *passages* that itself remains a series of literary arcades; below, I have erected asterisks to interrupt and fracture my conclusion, creating fragments, embracing white space, suggesting open-endedness, and, of course, (in)forming a collection. I have divided my conclusion into its own convolutes, named after three phenomena of collecting integral to this study, and one that entitles (if it

cannot entirely represent) this conclusion. The fragments comprising each convolute exist as their own postcard essays. They also converse—in whispers and fits—with the other pieces in their convolute. In addition, several of these narrative-objects mirror issues and theories raised in Benjamin's "H [The Collector]" that I have cited and quoted in my footnotes. According to Eiland and McLaughin, what is also "distinctive about *The Arcades Project* ... is the working of quotations into the framework of montage" (xi); after all, the quotations "extracted from their original context" are "like collectibles" themselves (x). A conclusion *as* collection seems a suitable finale for a project that discusses other projects kept in progress, and one that proffers process over product. And, as with any collection, for one reading, this order of the narrative-objects is significant; for all others, it is arbitrary. A collection's objects can be endlessly reordered.

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On a mild day in December, and a suitable morning for scavenging, A. cruised the truck past identical clusters of houses in the suburb of greater Toronto. It seemed as though we were not passing many different houses, but rather the same house, reprinted over and over again. The repeated impressions of a rubber stamp. As the subdivision gave way to yet-undeveloped prairie, we turned onto a dirt road that ended at a fire-engine-red barn. V. was just outside the barn's entrance, waiting to greet us.

V. works in demolition. He is a collector of collections. When clearing a building, residential or otherwise, before its destruction he makes an offer to buy whatever remains inside. As a result, his collection is constantly expanding and always in flux. Week after week, his collection looks entirely different. We entered V.'s barn.

Here[1] was a refuge of toys that had last seen the light of day on the driveways of garage sales: banana yellow Tonka trucks, die-casts, and the original Barbie motor homes. They were parked on the shelves that lined the walls of the main floor of the barn; these shelves of small things entombed life-size vehicles, including a customized twenty-foot tractor-trailer and a limited edition Chevrolet convertible truck. And near the giant vehicular creatures was the detritus of aborted projects and other broken-down matter (gas pumps, engines, wheels). We followed V. down a narrow corridor—street signs on one wall, and metal advertisements for soft drinks on the other (Hires Root Beer branded with the American name *soda*)—to a spiraling staircase. We ascended the stairs to a floor where hockey sticks, pool cues, upended baby carriages, and muskrat traps cast shadows down from the rafters. Halogen overheads cast their light down through rows of glass oil lamps (a trick). Beside these lamps sat a rather elderly man, a friend of V. and fellow collector, who was sorting through a box of Hotwheels. He told us that he also collected toy cars and containers, "glass pop bottles, beer cans, that kind of junk." He seemed at home, as if he had been there for years. I wondered if he ever left this mausoleum of mobile beings. Furls of used duct tape, Styrofoam beads, and wood shavings littered the floor. The debris of packaging, the residue of acquiring and storing and shipping and shelving the collections, comprised the lowest stratum and coated the floorboards of V.'s private arcade.

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[1] Here was the last refuge of those infant prodigies that saw the light of day at the time of the world exhibitions: the briefcase with interior lighting, the meter-long pocket knife, or the patented umbrella handle with built-in watch and revolver. And near the degenerate giant creatures, aborted and broken-down matter. We followed the narrow dark corridor to where—between a discount bookstore, in which dusty tied-up bundles tell of all sorts of failure, and a shop selling only buttons (mother-of-pearl and the kind that in Paris are called *de fantaisie*)—there stood a sort of salon. On the pale-coloured wallpaper full of figures and busts shone a gas lap. By its light, an old woman sat reading. They say she has been there alone for years, and collects sets of teeth "in gold, in wax, and broken." (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 203)

It reminded me of a dream I sometimes have. I could not put my finger on it until A., ever the realist, pointed out to me what the flaw was in this extravagant accretion. "None of us is immortal," A. said. "You think your basement is a problem. Imagine being left with all of *this.*" I did not see it as a problem. "I would turn it into a museum," I said happily. "Do you think he would let me turn it into a museum?" And then it struck me what dream I was thinking of.

Collection as Literature

> Never trust what writers say about their own writings.
> Walter Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" in *The Arcades Project*

In Robert Majzels's *City of Forgetting,* a homeless crowd[2] scavenges the streets of contemporary Montreal. They root through the city, "a dirty dishrag stretched out" (10) below them, for materials, and then retreat to their "shit-brown" (14) campsite on Mont Royal (a campsite not unlike the Stanley Park of *Stanley Park*). Sherry Simon suggests that this "community is a ragtag collection of squatters who take themselves for mythical heroes" (197). However, I would suggest that these characters are not suffering from delusion or dementia, but that they *are* mythical, historical, and literary "heroes" that Majzels has collected from history. These characters, Clytaemnestra, Lady Macbeth, Ché Guevara, Paul de Chomedey sieur de Maisonneuve, Rudy Valentino, Le Corbusier, and Suzy Creamcheez, are not concerned that they might seem conspicuous or out of place. Lady Macbeth is not self-conscious when orating from a street corner, and her performance occasionally results in spare change being thrown her way. Majzels has foraged through

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[2] "The crowd throngs to the Passage Vivienne, where people never feel conspicuous, and deserts the Passage Colbert, where they feel perhaps too conspicuous" (qtd. in Benjamin, "H [The Collector], 203). Original source: *Le Livre des cent-et-un* 10 (1833): 58.

literature and has collected the characters of other writers, from other histories, and myths. This harvest is one of the many experiments of this complex novel. This crowd of known and recognizable figures taken away from their respective origins is given new life and meaning as a group of garbage-pickers in Montreal.

Majzels, as a meticulous collector, has ensured that when bringing these figures together they come with strings attached. Traces of their original roles and reputations in their respective narratives are dragged into *City,* casting shadows that do not always fit their new contexts but that stick nevertheless. In an interview with Lianne Moyes, Majzels explains that

> Montreal opens up the possibility of reading the exhaustion of grand narratives. … If you listen, you can hear these stories clashing. That makes it easy not to believe in any of them and to think about the contrasts, the differences, without being above them all or washing your hands of them. (129)

The individual passions and polemics of these characters are written according to the systems of other authors or histories. In a Dadaist sense, once collected into Majzels's text, these arguments lose their original meanings. They now have an absurd, entirely new texture for "clashing" with one another. The characters' speeches in *City* are the nonsensical rants of the dispossessed; they are the postmodern poetics of the collection.

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One of Majzels's characters, Suzy Creamcheez, unsettles the homogeneous space of the contemporary global city as an androgynous (or, at least "ambiguously gendered" [Beneventi 114]) renegade who joins Lady Macbeth in her street performances so as to more effectively scam the citizens of Montreal. Objects have no monetary value to her; she

does not participate in the scheme of capitalism. Rather, Suzy's score is written according to her desire to claim the very *ideas* in things and to enact the steal as a statement. Her act of collecting is a struggle for communal city property, and transgresses the very notion of ownership of personal (and purchased) possession.

Creamcheese (the spelling of her name is distorted in her resurrection in Majzels's collection to Creamcheez) was a fictional vocalist[3] on a number of Frank Zappa albums. On the back of the album *Freak Out!* is Suzy Creamcheese's open letter to fans and potential buyers of the album, positioned above a picture of the band. She announces that "[t]hese Mothers is [sic] crazy" and you can tell this "by their clothes. One guy wears beads and they all smell bad" (Zappa). While Cream*cheese* suggests that eclectic clothes signify that the music Zappa's band creates will also be experimental and provocative, in *City,* Cream*cheez*'s conglomerate fashion statement ("[t]orn jungle-green shorts over black tights, standard worn-down black-and-white hightops, and sleeveless greyish T-shirt under a paisley waistcoat straight from the Sally Ann" [Majzels 115]) complements (and gestures towards) her renegade instincts. Just as Zappa and his band did not limit themselves in the forms of music they combined in order to invent new sounds and mixes out of previously known and familiar genres (jazz, rock, electronic, even classical), Creamcheez does not limit her collecting. Her ability to claim, to get hold of an article, and to pull something off substantiates whatever she collects. As *flâneuse* she roams the cityscape, she captures and cooks up a squirrel found on the campsite (in a rather different experiment than Jeremy

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[3] "Music seems to have settled into these spaces only with their decline, only as the orchestras themselves began to seem old-fashioned in comparison to the new mechanical music. ... [they] have taken refuge [here]" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 204).

Papier's in *Stanley Park*), and she pilfers the belongings of others. She even greedily seizes what others consider waste in order to challenge the implied dominant value of things.

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All of Majzels's scavengers are figures from the past re-presented in the present tense of his fiction. However, one character insists that his antiquated trade[4] still holds relevance to the contemporary global city. Le Corbusier was a designer of modernist architecture. He finds the postmodern global heterogeneous city anarchic and dystopic, and collects in order to accumulate concrete proof that modernism still exists and could still shape the city space if someone would just exhibit its value. As a result, "Le Corbusier collects things. But not just any thing; he searches out the geometrical forms of standardized objects: beer cans, wine or pop bottles, pens, pencils, plastic disposables of all kinds" (23). However, Le Corbusier lives in a trench on Mont Royal (bunking with Maisonneuve), and so does not have the space and the luxury to keep, let alone display, his findings. But even though he trades them in for money, he gains enormous "pleasure" from the act of "gathering [objects] up and then, following that initial examination to confirm their flawless condition, patiently rubbing them clean. ... Each item is treasured, lovingly reclaimed from the detritus of the city" (23). Le Corbusier collects containers of products that have already been consumed, but sees value in the containers themselves. He believes his collection, in both quantity and quality, will provide the evidence that modernism continues to inform both large and small architectures of the city.

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[4] "Often these inner spaces harbor antiquated trades, and even those that are thoroughly up to date will acquire in them something obsolete" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector] 204).

In its seeming madness, Majzels's *City* presents the new "historical system" of the collection (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 205). Once "grand narratives" (Majzels, "Interview" 129) are collected, they enter into a relationship with each other and no longer correspond *directly* to their original stories. The characters in *City* befriend one another, share living space, share an occupation (garbage-picking), and collaboratively stockpile rubbish. This process and its resulting products narrate the story of what the city no longer deems valuable. But the characters do not end up collecting the same things, and the distinctions amongst the objects they have scavenged expose the conflicting ideologies of the characters. Suzy's hybrid outfit, for example, clashes with Le Corbusier's geometric and orderly containers. Yet they coexist. In fact, these contradictions generate engaging tension amongst the characters as they produce and perform a polyvocal disorder.

Of course, Majzels's collection, like all collections, is ultimately a *selection.* The collector, at some point, may stop collecting and deem his or her collection *complete.* But Benjamin contends that the collection "falls into [a] peculiar category of completeness" ("H [The Collector]" 204); to suggest a collection can ever be complete is merely a way of rationalizing the reason for saving certain items, but not continuing to save others. This "peculiar" "completeness" could also be called "practical memory" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 205). In *Nothing to Be Frightened Of,* Julian Barnes discusses how memories are helpful and necessary narratives of our personal pasts, because, after we have vacated the original moments and locations of events and can no longer call upon them to remind us *what* took place, it is not plausible to refashion any event or moment *exactly.* Consciously or not, we invent missing moments and dialogues, and call this fiction memory. Barnes states,

> [m]emory in childhood—at least, as I remember it—is rarely a problem. Not just because of the briefer time span between the event and its evocation, but because of the nature of memories then: they appear to the young brain as exact simulacra, rather than processed and coloured-in versions, of what has happened. Adulthood brings approximation, fluidity and doubt; and we keep the doubt at bay by retelling that familiar story, with pauses and periods of a calculated effect, pretending that the solidity of narrative is a proof of truth. (37)

"Collecting is a form of practical memory" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 205) that acknowledges and makes space *for* gaps and absences, and, in the great momentum of gathering together all available recollection, generates a "nearness" (205) to the past. *City* is not a historical novel but it is a novel *of* history; it is a collection of *passed* subjects gathered into the setting of a contemporary Canadian city. The past brought within informs the present without. Grand narratives are not whole or complete, nor are they are impenetrable.

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Le Corbusier, on his way to the library, finds himself in the middle of a riot. He is kidnapped and taken by car to the Jacques Cartier Bridge. He realizes, as his captors lead him to the edge of the span, that at this moment in time he has no material evidence of his achievements, and wonders, "what could they expect to find in a beggar's pockets?" (Majzels 126). He has his beloved Modular on him at all times, a ribbon that he hopes will become the standard degree of measurement as the length of the average man (although his fellow scavengers have hotly contested just what 'average' actually is). But as only *one* thin object the Modular is insubstantial. The crooks jam the Modular into Le Corbusier's mouth,

and when he is thrown over the bridge and screams, the ribbon flies out like "a kite tail behind him" (127). Le Corbusier falls, and then plunges deep into the river below him, the water filling his mouth and throat and lungs and effacing the breath, words, arguments, and defenses that were so recently there. His body, his corpse, is now silent, an empty shell.

"The Heaviness of Concrete," the title of the chapter in which this scene takes place, seems to suggest that Le Corbusier solidifies as he sinks, and that in death he becomes a fixed subject. Nevertheless, the idea that death can offer an absolute abandonment and erasure of the past is a myth or fiction. Like Le Corbusier, characters also plummet into seemingly bottomless bodies of water in Jane Urquhart's *The Whirlpool.* But while Le Corbusier, in his last living moments, panics at the thought that all his accomplishments will be washed away with his death, in *The Whirlpool* someone is present to survive loss and gather what remains. Maud, as undertaker, discovers that "you never really [lose] anything in the whirlpool forever" (Urquhart 225-226). *City of Forgetting* does not specify whether The Modular sinks with Le Corbusier, or whether, caught in the wind, it flies over to the guardrail and wraps itself around a steel post to be later scavenged, rediscovered, and kept by another city dweller. But in both life and literature, death inevitably leaves behind more than a corpse. Although they will be of varying sizes and compositions, death leaves behind a collection.

No matter what survives the whirlpool, the *ideas* within things are never permanent or fixed. They change when a scout or agent becomes involved in a collection's assembly, when a curator ensures its maintenance, when a witness perceives a spectral meaning, and when the collection changes hands. The collector collects with the acute awareness that he or she is not immortal, while the spectator reads the memorial of the collection with the

awareness that the collector is no longer present, sometimes even with the specific knowledge of the collector's death. The collector is remembered, but that memory, based on the objects of the collection, is a spectral fiction. Furthermore, even a lone spectator to the collection allows for the creation and collision of *several* spectral fictions, inevitably disunited even as they are united within the (polyphonous) audience of a single collection.

Collection: Awareness I

In *Nothing to Be Frightened Of*, Julian Barnes gives credit to French critic Charles du Bos, friend and translator of Edith Wharton, for his invention of a useful phrase describing the moment that we become aware of the existence of death. The phrase is "*le réveil mortel*" (23), but Barnes has difficulty translating its essence into English. He raises several options that he dismisses with dissatisfaction, but then does refer to "death-awareness" throughout the memoir. The collection provokes and fosters awareness, an awareness of death, certainly, but also an awareness of the profundity of language. Thus, Benjamin does not necessarily want to call a collector an allegorist (although he states that "in every collector hides an allegorist, and in every allegorist a collector" ["H [The Collector]" 211]) because ultimately the collection *is* not allegory, does not preserve a definition or carry on a single story or explanation written in the language of its original collector. The collection-as-allegory could problematically steer clear of the tangents and contradictions that are integral parts of narrative. The collection that promotes and provokes awareness proliferates *doppelgängers,* rewritings, parodies, and carnival.

Derrida feared that the last interview he gave would be viewed solely (and simply) as an obituary. His friends assured him that it would not stand for, or sum up, his *whole* life's work. Rather, it would be "only a trace, and it's a trace of life" (*Learning* 17). The

title for the interview, *Learning to Live Finally* (published as an independent monograph in 2007), is taken from *Specters of Marx,* which begins, "Someone, you or me, comes forward and says: *I would like to learn to live finally*" (xvi, his emphasis). Derrida perceives this survival not as the continuance of life, but the ability to "live *after* death" (*Learning* 26, his emphasis). Accordingly, this "survival" should pertain to "not simply that which remains but the most intense life possible" (*Learning* 52). What is the collection if not an unending parade of possessions that performs the "most intense life possible"? It might seem that *a* death (the death of the collector) would necessarily mark the end of the collection. And yet, it does not. Quite oppositely, it requests, demands, and requires a new beginning. With the death of the collector, the collection does not cease to exist. Just as one might prefer to think of histories rather than History, the potential ongoing dissemination and resorting of objects to new sites is what leads us to avoid the uppercase Collection in favour of collections.

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A. was right. V. had salvaged and stored in his barn (not to mention in other warehouses and in his house) an astounding quantity of objects over the years. Ultimately, the incredible size of his collection only increased the severity of the predicament in which his survivors and inheritors would find themselves. It was the same predicament in which my mother and brother and I (albeit to a lesser degree) *had* found ourselves: what does one do with all that stuff? The collection is framed according to the *consignation* of the collector, but if the collector is no longer present, the collection can be read only in translation. This results in a complicated reading act for those searching for a sign of what remains valuable following the death of the collector, or some sort of guidance as to how

the collection should be categorized, reordered, moved, or dispersed. Once the collector is no longer present, must the primary readings of the collection be upheld? If the collection is always growing, it seems that any instructions for preservation of its architecture would immediately (or inevitably) become obsolete or serve a one-dimensional purpose, like a writer's skeletal outline for a work. An outline is merely a beginning or a starting point; the collections in and of the contemporary Canadian fictions that I have discussed are intentionally fractured, heterogeneous hybrids that break out of outlines, desiring more.

The only possible way to approach the inherited collection is to make a choice: to collect, or not to collect. For a while (as with my father's collection), the inheritor and survivor can wait and let the collection exist as it is, resting largely unobserved, collecting dust. If the collection is large, without proper maintenance it is likely to deteriorate in part or whole, which is another kind of death that the inheritor may have to grieve. Nevertheless, at some point the survivor may give it all away, walk away, relinquish the burden, and relish that abandonment, or give in and become a collector.[5]

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For Montaigne, the acute awareness of death "renders him prone to fanciful dreaming, to reverie. He hopes that death, his companion, his familiar, will make its final house-call when he is in the middle of doing something ordinary—like planting his cabbages" (Barnes, *Nothing* 41). The act of collecting, in and of itself, can be incredibly ordinary, as it often involves acquiring and keeping objects that are not out of place in a

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[5] "We don't displace our being into [things]; they step into our life" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector] 206).

domestic space, such as cups and saucers,[6] for example, or thimbles, toys, books, various knickknacks that suit the surface of a coffee table or mantle. This is an act as ordinary as gardening. Yet, when one collects, one buoys the existence of a thing *as* representation or idea. Barnes suggests, "[w]hen we imagine our own dying, whether best or worst case, we tend to imagine dying lucidly, dying while aware (all too aware) of what is going on, able to express ourselves and understand others" (101). The collection is an exquisite expression of that awareness begun, underway, by the time the collector faces the reality of death.

Collection as Passage

> Why revise for a notebook? The fact that Benjamin also transferred masses of quotations from actual notebooks to the manuscript of the convolutes, and the elaborate organization of these cited materials in that manuscript (including the use of numerous epigraphs), might likewise bespeak a compositional principle at work in the project, and not just an advanced stage of research. In fact, the montage form—with its philosophic play of distances, transitions, and intersections, its perpetually shifting contexts and ironic juxtapositions—had become a favorite device in Benjamin's later investigations.
>
> Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Translators' Foreword, *The Arcades Project*

Kelly Hill designed C. S. Richardson's *The End of the Alphabet* to look like a small leather journal. The design is continuous from front to back, illustrating an elastic band wrapped around the front cover hooked into two symmetrical holes in the back of the journal. It is similar in appearance to the famous Moleskine, while it also resembles Benjamin's "small black notebook with a leather cover" (Marx, Schwarz, Schwarz, Wizisla 155-157, 251,

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[6] "'The cup is the preferred gift, the most popular kind of knickknack for a room. Just as Friedrich Wilhelm III filled his study with pyramids of porcelain cups, the ordinary citizen collected, in the cups and saucers of his sideboard, the memory of the most important events, the most precious hours, of his life'" (Max von Boehn qtd. in Benjamin, "H [The Collector] 206.") Original source: von Boehn, Max. *Die Mode im XIX. Jahrhundert,* 2 (1907): 136.

256) in which he kept his notes for *The Arcade Project. The End of The Alphabet* appears *as* object, and specifically an object that in the novel is both singular (a journal) and a collection (souvenirs from a remarkable trip are stored within its sleeves).

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At the beginning of *The End of the Alphabet,* Ambrose Zephyr's doctor tells him that he has an "illness of inexplicable origin with neither known nor foreseeable cure" (5). Ambrose, a man of fifty who has the habit of always "dream[ing] of doing something else" (4), has one month to live.

Before being issued his death warrant Ambrose's daily life was one "with few extravagances" (6), but he has allowed himself the tactile[7] indulgence of a few collections. The "narrow Victorian terrace" that he shares with his wife is shelved "full of books" (6). Over the years he has "collected French-cuffed shirts as others might collect souvenir spoons or back issues of *National Geographic*" (6-7). Lastly, he owns an assortment of "antique type blocks" (25), the printing tools from his father's former working life as "a wordsmith for one of the more popular broadsheets of the day" (24). Ambrose's life is orderly, without fuss or wastefulness, and accordingly Ambrose prefers his collections complete, already knowable, and without surprises, in other words, "the complete puzzle [as opposed] to a bit here, a piece there" (8). The type blocks, collectively, signify a memory of Ambrose's childhood and all the precious hours he spent observing his father at work. But, not wanting to complicate or disunite his puzzle, Ambrose sees each and every block as *collectively* representative of the same memory, rather than considering its

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[7] "Collectors are beings with tactile instincts" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 206).

individual origins and contexts and so the journey that each type block took before it landed in his palm. Ambrose's collection stands for a single idea. It is only when faced with death that Ambrose gets the idea for a new, much more marvelous collection.

One night, Ambrose's wife Zappora Ashkenazi, also known as Zipper (she was given the nickname of an object[8] when she worked as a young woman in the fashion trade), discovers that in addition to type blocks, French-cuffed shirts, and books, her husband has been building another collection of paper products that he has stored in the suitcase underneath their bed. He spills, onto the duvet, "[s]cores of brochures, advertisements, maps, booklets, supplements, catalogues and flyers" as well as "hundreds of drawings: some childish and faded, others by a more accomplished hand. All of them letters. A through Z" (38-39). This collection corresponds with and augments (as both research [brochure] and dream [drawing]) a list that Ambrose has written, a compilation of all the places he plans to visit with his wife before he dies. He has one month, and so one place for every letter of the alphabet seems an appropriate arrangement. Ambrose wishes to claim these places as larger contexts. He intends to have these locations represent the life he shares with his wife before that life is over. And he plans for them to leave immediately.

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Ultimately, a map, legend, or a set of instructions for the inheritors of a collection is an insufficient outline for the collection itself. Ambrose's list of places on its own is not the

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[8] "One may start from the fact that the true collector detaches the object from its functional relations. But that is hardly an exhaustive description of this remarkable mode of behavior" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector], 207).

actual collection. The list, like the map, a set of directions, a writer's outline, is only the beginning of project and passage.

"A" is for Ambrose, the collector, who recollects a past conversation with his wife as they lounge on the patio of a café in Amsterdam. "A" is for Amsterdam, a city where Zipper buys the small leather journal with a pouch for safekeeping "reminders and receipts and bits of things" (46). To test it out she buys an "A," an artifact/postcard that she does not send but instead secrets inside the journal as a surprise souvenir for Ambrose. Suddenly, Zipper is overwhelmed. She realizes that the purchase of an artifact for Ambrose in Amsterdam signifies her "A," awareness, specifically her moment of death-awareness, her awareness[9] of Ambrose's approaching death.

For Zipper, the twenty-six letters of the alphabet have different signifieds: "*E is for Eiffel's tower, standing in Paris. L is for London and home. Z is for Zipper. T is for terrified. H is hopeless*" (61, Richardson's emphasis). She convinces Ambrose that they should embark on her alternative "E." Once in Paris, the tactile properties of the physical sites and objects around them exhume certain memories. For Zipper, it is the site of the antiquarian bookshop where she and Ambrose first met, when she was buying a second-edition *gastronomique.* At the time she considered it a "good souvenir ... of a first trip to Paris" (76). Zipper realizes that she has felt that she and Ambrose in a sense *own* this shop, and she fears that "soon it would belong to other lovers, selfishly claimed as *their* Paris"

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[9] We need only recall what importance a particular collector attaches not only to his object but also to its entire past, whether this concerns the origin and objective characteristics of the thing or the details of its ostensibly external history: previous owners, price of purchase, current value, and so on. All of these—the "objective" data together with the other—come together, for the true collector, in every single one of his possessions, to form a whole magic encyclopedia, a world order, whose outline is the *fate* of his object. Here, therefore, within this circumscribed field, we can understand how great physiognomists (and collectors are physiognomists of the world of things) become interpreters of fate. (Benjamin, "H [The Collector] 207)

(79). On *this* visit to Paris, because the contexts have shifted, the figuratively collected object changes in meaning. The bookshop is still a souvenir of her first encounter with Ambrose, but one she holds in a present where his death is approaching.

Zipper quickly exits the bookshop, and scurries to a stall where she buys a type block, a "particularly worn wooden cube [that] felt soft and good in her hand" (80), for Ambrose. When Ambrose feels the type block in his palm, even with his eyes closed, he knows "the character by touch" (81). He is calmed by the presence of an object that reminds him of his own collection, and one that represents both its origins (his childhood, his father) and the collection's residence (his home). However, the meaning of a type block, for once, is also tied to his present. The type block reassures and comforts Ambrose because his current contexts have made him homesick, anxious, and scared of all that he is going to lose. He clutches at this new possession, a gift from his wife. His experience as a collector enables him to identify the object based on touch alone: "Uppercase, a bold sans serif from a headline tray. He felt the sharp zig and zag of the letterform. The smooth face of the block, the worn and rounded edges. Feels large and heavy for something so small" (81). Zipper, concerned they are running out of time, from the beginning of their trip tries to think of "clever ways to rearrange the alphabet" (57). She fails to realize that, as an intrepid tourist constantly observing her surroundings and carefully choosing suitable souvenirs, she is surfacing a *plethora* of memories and meanings to associate with each letter on Ambrose's list.

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The "AZ/ZA" on *The End of the Alphabet's* spine inspired me to turn to *S/Z,* which could be called a list or companion piece to Barthes's most important collection, language

itself. *S/Z* is a precise preservation, in print, of the ideas, meanings, and memories of its collector, Barthes. The book refers at length to Balzac's *Sarrasine*. The slash between letters refers to the clash between "S" for Sarrasine, the male protagonist, and "Z" for La Zambinella, with whom Sarrasine falls in love. Ambrose and Zipper, too, often disagree or quarrel (they are opposites in many ways), while Zipper describes Ambrose as "the only man she had loved. Without adjustment" (Richardson 9). *The End of the Alphabet* is undoubtedly not just a quest novel but a love story.

Barthes's following statement from *S/Z* applies to both narrative and collection: "There are said to be certain Buddhists whose ascetic practices enable them to see a whole landscape in a bean. Precisely what the first analysts of narrative were attempting: to see all the world's stories (and there have been ever so many) within a single structure" (3). The individual signifier, an object, a name, a single letter in the alphabet, grants the writer, and then the reader, access to "the infinite play of the world" (5). Ambrose is familiar with the process of collecting type letter blocks as objects with a (former) utilitarian function. But his last trip with his wife presents him with a different alphabet, where the letters become cerebral signifiers with ebullient possibilities. As a result, "A," for "Amsterdam," for "Ambrose," for "Awareness," can speak to many other meanings, memories, and narratives. The letter escapes the confines of Ambrose's last arrangement, his alphabetical list of places, and gains infinite life in the collection.

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Amsterdam, Berlin (Brandenburg Gate), Chartres, Deauville, the Eiffel Tower (rather than Elba), Florence, the Great Pyramids of Khufu in Giza, Haifa (missed), Istanbul (for the healing properties of a spa), then Kensington Gardens—and Ambrose and Zipper

are home, in London. Their passage breaks the rules of its outline and its prior arrangements. Ambrose becomes too weak to carry on and he and Zipper must cycle back to their beginning. "K," as signifier, has more meanings than just "Kensington Gardens." It also stands for "MNOPQRSTU." Ambrose and Zipper sit in deckchairs by the Round Pond, and Ambrose shares with Zipper what the letters represent. He starts by describing a beach in Mumbai, and then talks about New York, where he has been once before, and Osaka, where he finds it amusing that the department stores have hostesses (130). Ambrose is overcome with panic when he cannot remember V. When at last he does, when he 'remembers' a perfect day that he and Zipper spent in Venice, "Zipper [says] that was how she remembered it as well" (134). Zipper decides that for this letter, she will share the collector's desire.

Shortly after Ambrose's death, Zipper finds the last article that her husband contributed to their collection. It is a piece of paper on their kitchen table, with Zanzibar "scribbled over. In the margin was written *Zipper.* With the proper amount of swoosh to the Z" (136, Richardson's emphasis). As survivor, Zipper is overwhelmed with how to continue the collection. First she questions whether or not she even should. As the final letter, is she *part* of the collection, rather than participant in its process? She proposes, "L is for List ... W is for Was It Something I Did? D is for Something I Didn't Do? S is for Something I Should Have Done?" (112). Grabbing the journal, and "fanning the pages like a conjuror," Zipper retrieves "odd items from the journal's envelope. Souvenirs" (112). She discovers that her findings, "the bits and baubles [that] materialized from [her] pockets" (112), comprise a bigger pile that she first thought. She unearths the original stash of paper things stored in Ambrose's suitcase under the bed. She gently adds her own souvenirs to

the swell of maps, directions, drawings, and gestures. Then she finds her companion, her accomplice, the journal, and ends *The End of the Alphabet* with a beginning. Zipper writes on the book's first, fresh page, "*This story is unlikely*" (139, Richardson's emphasis).

Collection: Awareness II

Often at the funeral[10] of a loved one, the mourners will discuss doing what the person who is deceased 'would have wanted.' He or she would have wanted, for instance, a particular song played, but not those flowers, and certainly would not have been pleased to see *her* at the reception. In addition, she 'would have wanted' that ring to go to her granddaughter. He 'would have wanted' his son to have his compass.

Barnes identifies the issue with this subjunctive frequently used at funerals. His brother, who has taught philosophy at Oxford, Geneva, and the Sorbonne (1), pointed out at their mother's funeral that "there are the wants of the dead, i.e. things which people now dead once wanted; and there are hypothetical wants, i.e. things which people would or might have wanted. ... [Ultimately] 'We can only do what *we* want'" (6, his emphasis). The collector has been, as Platonists say, "liberated from corporeal impediment" (Barnes 43), and so when Barnes faces the task of giving away his mother's belongings after her death, he realizes that the task is a difficult one for him because it seems to be "an exhumation of what *we* had been as a family" (11, my emphasis), not solely what his mother had once thought of her belongings.

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[10] "[T]he need to accumulate is one of the signs of approaching death" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 208).

Collection as Memoir

Michael Ondaatje was inspired by "the bright bone of a dream" (15) about his father[11] to return to Sri Lanka to study and write about his familial past. Ondaatje left his home country when it was still Ceylon and he was eleven years old, and had not been back since. Significantly, Ondaatje does not spend the entirety of his (what would become two) return journeys to Sri Lanka (1978 and 1980) stationary. He explores, wanders, and seeks out as many family members as possible. Other days he stays alone, and allows the sites and objects to speak for themselves. *Running in the Family* is Ondaatje's memoir of his familial past written conscientiously from the perspective of a writer, a *flâneur,* and, significantly, a collector.

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Staying at his aunt's house, surrounded by "so many ghosts" (19), Ondaatje is spurred on by ironic collecting dreams. In one, a man asks his father if there are any antiques in the house, to which he replies, "Well … there *is* my mother" (20, his emphasis). Ondaatje sleeps midday, and spends his afternoons, when dreams blur into waking life, talking with his family. He listens and takes note of stories that he later will enclose in the folds of his slim volume. His family's memories are fictions that are alike (in the sense that they are concerned with the same family, the same country) but that are also absurd

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[11] "The physiological side of collecting is important. In the analysis of this behavior, it should not be overlooked that, with the nest-building of birds, collecting acquires a clear biological function" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 210).

mimicries of one another. In the memoir, since various family members orate their versions of the past for Ondaatje, "[n]o story is ever told just once. Whether a memory or a funny hideous scandal," Ondaatje recalls, "we … return to it an hour later and retell the story with additions and this time a few judgments thrown in" (19). This is the way that Ondaatje's "history is organized" (19) as collection.

Running in the Family also showcases the sometimes-carnivalesque scenes of Ondaatje's parents' courtship, set against a backdrop of Ceylon society in the first half of the twentieth century. It is a collection of affairs, betrayals, accidental deaths, and unexpected births around which each individual narrative or anecdote adopts mythic proportions: "They could have almost drowned or fallen in love and their lives would have been totally changed during any one of those evenings" (40-41). Yet in the process of collecting the stories of his parents' past, Ondaatje finds that, as inheritor of the collection, he must often ask "[w]here is the intimate and truthful in all this?" (43). Sometimes the elongations and exaggerations of the collection confound Ondaatje. Its parodies inhibit him from ascertaining authentic origins, determining through *whose* lens the history has been skewed, and who has authored the story. Every narrative object has a different meaning, depending on the storyteller who offers it to Ondaatje. He will have to find the ideas for *him* in these things, on his own.

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Ondaatje's brother, who lives in Toronto, shares his curiosity about their ancestral land, and collects maps of Ceylon. These maps, some accurate, some not, document a cartographical evolution from "mythic shapes into eventual accuracy" (Ondaatje 53) on the wall of his home. When seen altogether, as a collection, the "shapes differ so much they

seem to be translations" (53) of one another. Each map has very different characteristics depending on whether it is the product of research, remembrance, or rumour.[12]

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In Ceylon, Ondaatje finds a photograph of his father and mother taken in 1932 on their honeymoon. The print has been made into a souvenir, a postcard. Ondaatje's parents are making faces at one another, and mocking the formal tradition of having their wedding photo taken. Ondaatje claims this record of an unexpected, spontaneous moment as proof "that they were absolutely perfect for each other ... this theatre of their own making" (136). Not only is the object rare, because it is "the only photograph [Ondaatje has] found of the two of them together" (136), but it is an exquisite example of how "[i]f anything kept their generation alive it was this recording by exaggeration" (143). This very amplification of the past keeps it alive and palpable for family members, and thus exaggeration is what enables Ondaatje to retrieve his family's anecdotes and histories years later. The stories remain memorable because they have sentimental and nostalgic *value,* but also because they are extraordinary in one sense or another, they entertain an audience in the present as they sustain a connection to the past. They survive because of their performativity. Indeed the photograph does little to sate Ondaatje's desire; rather, in providing him a means by which to more fully imagine his parents, it stokes it.

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The archaic thalagoya is a sub-aquatic monitor that can be found in Ceylon, but is "seldom found anywhere else in the world" (61). This creature is a scavenger, it has been

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[12] A collector's relationship with his or her objects is "enriched through his [or her] knowledge of their origin and their duration in history—a relationship that now seems archaic" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 211).

known to eat garbage in addition to toads, eggs, and young birds, and has a tongue that "catches" objects (61).[13] Ondaatje recounts that "[t]here is a myth that if a child is given thalagoya tongue to eat he will become brilliantly articulate, will always speak beautifully, and in his speech be able to 'catch' and collect wonderful, humourous information" (61). The thalagoya and the myth of inheriting its talent figuratively represent the system of collecting, inextricable from the structure of its products (once grouped together, as collection).

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Ondaatje re-presents the myths and tall tales of his heritage. He transcribes sound bites of various family members trying to get their stories "straight" (85). He assumes that there are things that have been left unsaid. But, at the same time, because the absences are at least alluded to, what is missing from outside of the text is brought within; references and speculations themselves become part of the collection. Ondaatje collects the histories of his family members and, specifically and significantly, he is an archivist of the belongings that the dead have left behind. He thinks of words such as "*love, passion, duty, …* so continually used they grow to have no meaning—except as coins or weapons" (152, his emphasis) and, thus, as objects. But because he does not know what his father thought of these "things" (152) he cannot know what he thought of, how he viewed, what he loved or felt dedicated to, in the collection of his life. Only Ondaatje's desire to know his family and the history of his birthplace can order the myths and stories that he collects.

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[13] "Perhaps the most deeply hidden motive of the person who collects can be described this way: he takes up the struggle against dispersion" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 211).

Barnes talks about the archive that is near his desk. He remarks that, contained within "a shallow drawer, a few yards from where I am writing, sits the entire corpus of documentation: the certificates of birth and marriage and death; the wills and grants of probate; ... the passports, ration cards, identity cards ... the scrapbooks and notebooks and keepsakes" (27) of his parents' narratives. There remains something sacred about the possessions of the dead. After his mother's death, Barnes knows it is time to throw out the pouffe that his parents have had in their living room all his life. As a teenager, Barnes discovered that it had been re-stuffed with the shreds of his parents' love letters. He did not announce this discovery to his family, and yet he was disturbed that something potentially meaningful to him was so meaningless to them. When tossing the pouffe into a dumpster, Barnes suddenly feels "as if I had buried my parents in a paper bag rather than a proper coffin" (34). With the pouffe gone, Barnes knows that a collection of his parents' correspondence existed, but preceded him, and entered his own life only in shreds before being cast off as rubbish. As a result, Barnes will always know that the collection of paper keepsakes and reminders, housed near his desk, always in proximity to his writing life, is not complete.

Throughout his memoir, Barnes articulates the fractured status of his family records and the fallibility of his own memories. In *Running*, Ondaatje displays his narrative non-fiction *as* fragments (essays, snippets of conversations, excerpts from national and family histories, myths, and anecdotes, and his own poetry) that, after all, have been subject to the perspectives, interpretations, imaginations, and memories of his family members in their re-collections of the past. Both Barnes and Ondaatje, as authors and collectors, writing about

their fathers, and dreams, and collections that constitute, create, and challenge their pasts, connote a self-awareness that their works are fated to be patchworks.[14]

Collection: Awareness III

> He had not been well during that last year after the depression. He was content though. I think that both of us were impatient men. But the cactus and the gardening—you know—we had taught ourselves something. Now my wife and I have moved to this small house and the furniture still hasn't arrived, but I don't really care. The Buddhists say if you have things you only worry about them. I go cycling at three in the morning when the streets are empty … I'm really enjoying myself. I keep telling my wife we should get ready for the other life, the flying.
>
> Michael Ondaatje, *Running in the Family*

My original dream[15] of collections, of an endless corridor in my basement, still recurs. But sometimes I am not alone. I encounter my father. A dead person without economic needs, he is free to hang out in the basement all day, reading the newspaper, moving boxes and files, sorting through old letters and photographs. In a more recent incarnation of the dream I find him in his crowded office. He is behind his desk, looking through a drawer. I can barely see him behind the stacks of books on his desk. They must be a few feet high. They could fall any minute. My father seems slightly irritated or preoccupied. He does not look up, does not say anything, although I know he knows I am there. I might be bothering him. But I have news I want to share with him. I tell him that I now work for a large firm as a technical writer (a fiction in real life, though strangely a

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[14] "As far as the collector is concerned, his collection is never complete; for let him discover just a single piece missing, and everything he's collected remains a patchwork" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 211).

[15] "[W]e may say, the collector lives a piece of dream life. For in the dream, too, the rhythm of perception and experience is altered in such a way that everything—even the seemingly most neutral—comes to strike us; everything concerns us. In order to understand the arcades from the ground up, we sink them into the deepest stratum of the dream; we speak of them as though they had struck us" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 205-206).

recurring premise in my dreams). My father stops searching through the drawer of pens (what has he lost in there?) and turns to face me. Poker-faced. Years of practice from Garage Sales. Oh really? What kind of terminology have you learned? I do not respond. If you have started work in this capacity, my father reasons, surely you will have learned some new jargon. And in the dream, we both contemplate the capital for my job. I remain silent. I have no new words that I can share with him. I smile. He smiles. It is a trick. His joke. A riddle. Despite where I go, what I do, I will just go on and on, using the same words, in different arrangements.

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Fathers, writers, critics, scholars, Romantics, ghosts, oilmen, scouts, puppeteers, photographers, tour guides, God, Noah, (Noah's wife), animals (cats, crows), mythologists, archaeologists, storytellers, salesmen, taxidermists, trackers, hunters, curators, city planners, artists, diarists, chefs, anthropologists, scavengers (garbage-pickers), undertakers, children, poets, historians, postal workers, mothers, hoarders, memoirists, sons, daughters, and the dying as collectors.[16]

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The contemporary Canadian writer reinvents out of the original scraps; instead of starting from scratch, a writer may parody, marry order and disorder, disappear people, retrieve ghosts, and scatter their collections. Pick-up sticks. Begin again.

Of course, to appease publishers (and readers), a fiction, even a fiction that is a collection, must end at some point. But while a collection may seem to be finished—a

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[16] "Animals (birds, ants), children, and old men as collectors" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 211).

notebook with meticulous writing covering every space—tucked within the seams or sleeves there are always more mementoes. If a collection appears to end, it is an ending where the object, the glass, tilts on the collector's forehead, and a graceful dip keeps it alive for another rotation. The collection is a trick, a performance.

In turn, *this* conclusion resists closing. This is the end that does not end, but wishes instead to reiterate its original statement in new context. The collection proposes continuous practice, and a methodology for writing and for reading that is a slow walk down a long corridor, demanding the realization that the passageway, the arcade, is endless. In the end, objects are finite, but their meanings, their narratives, and their languages are not. This is the end that calls for creative disorder[17] and ongoing collection. This is the end that begins.

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[17] "How the scatter of allegorical properties (the patchwork) relates to this creative disorder is a question calling for further study" (Benjamin, "H [The Collector]" 211).

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