

Notes on Dwelling in The Arctic

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The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*. What if man's homelessness consisted in this, that man still dies not even think of the *real* plight of dwelling as *the* plight? Yet as soon as man *give= thought* to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that calls mortals into their dwelling.

—Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking"¹

How far north will a mind consent?

—J. Michael Yates, *The Great Bear Lake Meditations*²

We could call Franklin's disastrous first expedition (1819-1822) a lesson in learning how to "dwell." It is, of course, a negative lesson, a "how-to" guide of what not to do unless suffering and death are the ultimate goal. But, strangely enough, even in the shortcomings of this expedition one finds an element of dwelling that reverberates in more contemporary, more perceptive thought. Indeed, while it has been argued that the New World experiences of Franklin and his men were heavily (if not completely) mediated by Old World preconceptions,³ within the texts something unique does indeed come to presence—the tremendous conflict between the explorers and the Arctic of their exploration. Intent on representing the Arctic according to pre-conceived European standards, the explorers were not prepared to let the Arctic disclose itself in any significant way. But as we read over these texts we begin to realize that the explorers' experience of the land placed a tremendous strain on their literary resources. That is, the land *itself* resisted European appropriation in the very texts, the very language, of these explorers. As it stands, however, to say that the "land itself" resisted such appropriation is a rather nebulous claim, and one that is prone to vague, romantic, and even pantheistic misconceptions. Hence, this paper is both an examination of the "land itself," and of the sorts of insights which the land founts. In addition to the Franklin texts, we will also be examining the Arctic poems and prose of various non-aboriginal artists, and it is, I suppose, rather ironic that I would choose to discuss Arctic landscape by examining the texts of indi-

viduals who are profoundly foreign to the world and to the land of which they speak. The more one examines the issue, however, the more one begins to realize two things: first, that from the early expedition journals to contemporary prose and poetry, the Arctic has played a consistent, definable role in white, Western writing; and second, that the nature of this role is such as to prompt the realization that the roles of native and foreigner are not nearly so polarized as one might think. This is not to say that the land reduces these roles, in some mysterious way, to a facile unity—we are not, nor ever will be, “just folk”—but it does found the recognition that foreigners are born in the limits of nativity, and that nativity itself spawns the foreignness that haunts it. As Heidegger writes, “rightly considered and kept well in mind,” this conjunction of seeming opposites provides the grounds for an introspection that avoids the pitfalls of an untenable universality and the limited relevance of an overly specific historicity.

To begin with, and without becoming too deeply involved in the intricacies of Heidegger’s definition of “dwelling,” we should note several key aspects of the term, and the way in which Heidegger’s use of the term intersects with the main body of his work. Heidegger introduces the term in his essay, “Building Dwelling Thinking.” The form of the essay itself is an inquiry into the meaning and origin of the verb “to dwell,” and as the essay develops it becomes evident that Heidegger sees the term within the context of existence itself. As Albert Hofstadter writes:

In “Building Dwelling Thinking”—note the absence of commas, intended to enforce the identity of the three—Heidegger develops the essential continuity of being, building, dwelling, and thinking. Language makes the connection for us: *bauen*, to build, connects with *bauen* to dwell, and *bin, bist*, the words for be. Language tells us: to be a human being is to be on the earth as a mortal, to dwell, doing the “building” that belongs to dwelling: cultivating growing things, constructing things that are built, and doing all this in the context of mortals who, living on earth and cherishing it, look to the sky and to the gods and find the measure of their dwelling.⁴

Heidegger sees dwelling, then, as the sort of human existence which is both concerned and engaged—that is, existence which is engaged in a search for its own roots, and existence which is concerned with both the nature and the well-being of its own environment. If this sounds like a rather utopic view of human existence, then we have not adequately addressed the complexities of the concept. Indeed, at the heart of Heidegger’s concept of dwelling is conflict. We begin to see the nature of this conflict when we note the parallels between Heidegger’s concept of dwelling and the concept of authentic existence that Heidegger outlined in his earlier work.⁵ It seems clear

that by “dwelling” Heidegger is referring to—and elaborating on—his concept of authentic existence: the emphasis on disclosure, both of the self and of one’s environment, the explicit connection between dwelling, *buan*, and *bin*, be and, perhaps most importantly, the repeated references to mankind’s essential “homelessness”—which, like death, “individualized Dasein down to itself” by disclosing Dasein’s *own* “potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world” (BT 308; See also BT 232)—certainly support such a conclusion. Humans exist most authentically, they “dwell,” when they acknowledge the essential contradiction—between home and homelessness—that founds their existence. “There is much that is strange,” Sophocles writes, “but nothing/that surpasses man in strangeness.”⁶ Heidegger cites these lines in order to emphasize the fact that dwelling is an unremitting “oscillation” between the “always ready,” the founding familiarity of the world within which one exists, and a certain homelessness, the “angst,” born of an awareness of one’s ownmost possibility of *impossibility* (i.e., death), which constantly undermines the unity and singularity of this world. To those who listen, this oscillation prompts moments of disclosure, but Heidegger makes it clear that existence as a whole is always beyond the transparency so yearned for by new historicists.⁷ Heidegger does not, however, see the impossibility of such transparency as a shortcoming; rather the very historicity which functions as the horizon, the *limit* of disclosure, also functions as the *provenance* of all disclosure of beings. This two-sided definition of limit, of *peras*, is central to Heidegger’s thought.⁸ Hence, when one “gives thought” to humanity’s essential homelessness, one does two things: one quite literally gives over thought to the contemplation, the preservation (in both Heidegger’s and the conventional sense of the word) of limits; and one also gives thought, takes the time to think, of the measure, of the limit, of one’s world.

But how does this concept of dwelling connect to our examination of Arctic landscape? The grounds for this connection lie in Heidegger’s belief in the fundamental, world-founding power of the conflict between the familiar and the strange. “When outsiders travel to the Arctic,” John Moss writes, “something special happens; not always but enough to be remarkable. In contours of the divers landscape visitors discover aspects of themselves not usually accessible.”⁹ The unique environment of the Arctic, I would argue, possesses two things: first, it possesses an exemplary ability to found such moments of disclosure, and second, it provides us with an answer to the *why*—it provides us with the source of its own disclosive agency. All “things,” Heidegger argues, *thing*; that is, in the act of being things all things have an “agency” of their own.¹⁰ “The thing,” he continues, “stays—gathers and unites—the fourfold. The thing things world. Each stays the fourfold into a happening of the simple oneness of world” (181).¹¹ By gathering we

understand a bringing together that sets something forth; hence, in the gathering of the thing a world—and an earth—come to presence. But, as Heidegger writes, this is not an obtrusive, easily appropriated, presencing: “thinging itself is unpretentious, and each present thing, modestly compliant, fits into its own being. Inconspicuously compliant is the thing: the jug and the bench, the footbridge and the plow. But tree and pond, too, brook and hill, are things, each in its own way” (182). The Arctic is also a “thing” and it too gathers world in its figure. The Arctic, however, is neither inconspicuous nor compliant. Indeed, what is pre-eminent about the Arctic is its very insistence on presence. Over time—and in its own time—the Arctic, the land itself, reiterates its own selfhood, its own earthly being. One can say, for example, that the Arctic *is* one thing, or that the Arctic *is* yet another, but what constantly returns to this discussion of the Arctic (as it should to all things) is the injunction from the land itself that at all times it simply also always *is* beyond the grasp of its explorers. Thus, it enacts moments of human disclosure *not* because it is a barren space upon which humanity inscribes itself, but, rather, because its insistence on limits, its very presence, brings humanity’s “dwelling” to the fore.

In our examination of the texts to follow, then, we find a twofold pattern: first, we continually catch glimpses of an Arctic that resists appropriation, which surfaces in the texts as a withheld promise—or threat; and second, in the words of the “outsider,” the foreigner, aspects of world, of language *as* language, “mere/memos re/languages,” as bp nichol writes,¹² are held up like a negative to light. The texts of the Franklin expedition are an excellent place to begin. We note, first of all, a number of their salient characteristics. We should always bear in mind that these texts are far more “constructed” than they first appear. They belong to a genre of eyewitness reportage whose “authenticity” is complicated by both conscious and unconscious factors. We should also note that in the texts themselves a curious paradox comes to light. Exhaustively detailed, the various journals record the proceedings of the expedition and the nature of the new land with almost unparalleled exactitude. And yet. Details, questions, the very “land itself” eludes the explorers’ grasp. And while we could say that the explorers failed to capture the essence of this new land because they were unwitting victims of a Eurocentric discourse, there is evidence pointing to the fact that the explorers were more conscious of both themselves and their situation than they were willing to reveal. We find some of this evidence in a letter of Dr. Richardson’s which I. S. MacLaren cites in his “Retaining Captaincy of the Soul: Response to Nature in the First Franklin Expedition.” Richardson, writing to his wife, describes in vivid detail the desolate and lonely “nature” of the land. It is clear that he feels threatened: “I must not, however, go on writing in this

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strain; there are yet two months of water to come, and I must endeavour to acquire and preserve that contentment which can render every situation tolerable" (67). Moreover, as MacLaren observes, it is equally clear that "remaining captain of his own soul becomes Richardson's goal" (67). MacLaren then examines the journals and paintings of the other members of the expedition. In each case, he uses the explorers' presentations of the expedition as evidence for the way in which the explorers perceived the experience. The problem, however, is that he conflates perception with expression, entirely discounting the constructive agency of the explorers. He writes: "The reader could be pleased to wonder . . . but the explorer could not: it was not in his orders" (82). The issue is, I would argue, more complex than MacLaren allows. It seems clear that the explorers *did* wonder, that they were fully aware of the powerful presence of this new land. Indeed, as Richardson's letter illustrates, the land revealed to them both their own insignificance and the possibility of insignificance as a whole. And the explorers, shivering in inappropriate shelters and persisting in a displaced way of life, refuse to contemplate what the land reveals. They prefer, instead, to fix their gaze on visions of their homeland. Hence, the explorers' reaction to the Arctic is a *willed* reaction. One can learn to "dwell" in such moments of displacement; it is, however, much easier to turn to the source of one's discomfiture and, like Captain Ahab, attempt to kill it.

Franklin provides us with some additional insight into the nature of the explorers' relationship with the land. Franklin is renowned for his heavy, pedantic style. "Thick English," as he is dubbed in Wiebe's *A Discovery of Strangers*,¹³ wrote in a way that seems to emphasize his own earnest, methodical character. While his style undoubtedly says something of his character, Franklin also took pains to present himself as he no doubt saw himself: as a sober and respectable member of English society. When, for example, Franklin observes the shortcomings of voyageurs, Indians, or penurious traders, he *always* prefaces his remarks with the same regretful platitude: "I feel the duty incumbent on me to mention. . . ." ¹⁴ In each case, Franklin makes it clear that such observations have nothing to do with personal dislike or emotional considerations; they are simply one of the more onerous consequences of his dedication to truth and rationality. And while we cannot prove that Franklin was entirely conscious of the process of fabricating authority, he certainly knew the rules: he knew that much of the authority—the "authenticity"—of this text relied on his own rationality, on *his* presentation of his own reasonable, commonsensical nature. Hence, Franklin also enjoins the reader's belief because he draws so effectively on the *forms* of a rational discourse. The lists of provisions, the endless daily journals, and the careful observations function as both witnesses to the experience and witnesses to

his relation of the experience. We know that Franklin engaged in some very "creative" writing, but, supported with this wealth of empirical data and with his own reasonable tone, it is hardly surprising that the British reading public accepted the *Narrative* so readily and questioned the expedition's leadership so rarely.

Moreover, it is the *Narrative's* pre-eminently reasonable tone that grants significance to those rare occasions when the tone falters, when Franklin's relation of events becomes less controlled, less scientifically detached, and more emotional. Predictably enough, the most vivid example of such a "break-down" can be found in Franklin's relation of the expedition's deadly return from the Arctic Ocean. We find a strange conjunction here. On the one hand, Franklin betrays both an impatience with the voyageurs and a certain paranoia about their behaviour; on the other, references to "the great Author and Giver of all good," "the bounty of Providence," "the Supreme Being," and "Divine will" suddenly begin to appear everywhere.¹⁵ "If I were deeply cynical," Wiebe notes, "I might point out that the historical record implies that the greater the numbers of their fellow heroes they [the explorers] take with them in death, the greater the so-called heroism and of course the proportionately larger the resulting memorials."¹⁶ "If I were cynical, I might point out that the greater the difficulties facing the explorers, the more prone they are to blaming their companions, and, failing that, to quoting scripture and calling on "the bounty of Providence."¹⁷

But this is perhaps an unfair observation. We could certainly argue that Franklin's sudden proselytizing is an effective rhetorical ploy—invoking "Divine will" is certainly a swift and easy way to avoid mortal adjudication—but the point requires some qualification. In particular, while Franklin may have decided against editing the more overtly religious sections of the *Narrative* because his alternatives were distinctly unpalatable, there is evidence that Franklin would have preferred a much more scientific, detached approach. Franklin may have been an extremely religious man, but his religion involved more reason than emotion. When the explorers realize, for example, that an eclipse is scheduled to occur during their stay with the Tetsot'ine, they take "advantage of this occasion to speak to them respecting the Supreme Being, who ordered all the operations of nature, and to impress on their minds the necessity of paying strict attention to their moral duties" (NJ 228). Here, Franklin emphasizes only the rational aspects of his religion; the irony, of course, is that he attempts to prove the superiority of this religion by manipulating what he perceives as the Indians' overly superstitious nature. With even greater irony, and as a fitting symbol for the progress of the expedition as a whole, a "heavy snow-storm" ensures that neither the explorers nor the Indians actually see the eclipse. It is a similar failure, a failure to control the

proceedings of the expedition, that pushes Franklin into the more impassioned Christianity of the later sections of the *Narrative*. As Franklin loses authority the tone of the *Narrative* changes from detachment to involvement, from autonomy to dependence—reluctant dependence on the voyageurs, fervent dependence on God, and, finally, dependence on “even” the Indians. Indeed, throughout these sections, the greatest indication of Franklin’s editorial discretion lies in the fact that the tone of the *Narrative* is much *less* religious than that of the letters he sent to Midshipman Back.¹⁸ All of these factors suggest that the experience overwhelmed Franklin, that the constant expression of his faith was, in fact, a *reaction* to the land and not simply an indication of the sort of preconception that prevented him from seeing it.

Barry Lopez, in *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape*, coins an elegant phrase which helps clarify the situation. When the Inuit kill a bear, Lopez writes, the dead bear is “propitiated with gifts. Such an act of propitiation is sometimes dismissed as ‘superstition.’ ‘Technique of awareness’ would come much closer to the mark, words that remind you of what you are dealing with.”¹⁹ Franklin’s propensity to speak in religious terms is also a “technique of awareness.” The difference, of course, is that Franklin does not appeal to religion to remind himself of what he is dealing with, but, rather, to remind himself of his own background, to remind myself of who *he* is. In the last days of this terrible trek, Franklin clings to his belief in the face of a land whose presence, whose unavoidable, ineffaceable presence, has entirely defeated him. We turn to another example: at an earlier stage of the same trek, Franklin mentions that food was still divided by “messes”—between the officers and the other men. Richard C. Davis notes: “The division of messes seems particularly uncalled for when the food consisted of putrid bone marrow or *tripe de roche*, but it was a convention Franklin preferred to maintain in the name of discipline and order.”²⁰ Eventually even this convention broke down, but the fact that Franklin maintained it for so long reveals more than just a desire for order. Clearly, discipline and order are not, of themselves, an end but a means. Franklin himself could provide us with a rational and cogent argument in support of the benefits of a disciplined military. But if we have learned anything from Heidegger, it is that humans do not divide their existence between the progress of their lives and the pathways of their thought. Hence, it is safe to say that Franklin’s *irrational* pursuit of discipline and order was in defence of a very specific way of thinking. Or, to put it another way, Franklin’s insistence on order was also a “technique of awareness,” a way of re-affirming meaning in the face of the *mere possibility* of unmeaning.

Consider the situation: between fainting and stumbling, too weak to

even shoulder his own belongings, Franklin still maintains the scrupulous division of rotten marrow and northern lichens. This is more than inflexibility this is an act of faith. One takes afternoon tea in the Congo, or reads vesper in a tent, covered with lice and mosquitoes and stinking with constant dysentery, for precisely the same reason: these are forms of belief, affirmations of ideology. In each case the explorers return to that upon which their world is founded: reason, discipline, order, the neat script of the King James Bible. Each acts as a talisman against the “barrens” outside, each repeats, like a soothing mantra: I am not absurd, my world is not absurd, these words are not absurd. . . . Therefore, even in the texts of these ardently metaphysical explorers, the land itself *does* emerge—as threat, as recalcitrant witness, as a “whiteness” which, they later maintain, improvements in technology will subdue. As the language, the world, of the explorers, it constantly emerges in the figure of this “thing” called the Arctic. Within its dis-placed zone foundations emerge, foundations as explicit as order and discipline or as implicit as a perception of the “desolate” character of the land. In each case, it is the contrast between such foundations and the land itself which enjoins dwelling, which thrusts forth both the foundations themselves and the question of such foundations in general.

It is this question of foundations which provides the connection between the texts of Franklin’s first expedition and the work of contemporary Canadian poets. The first issue which we encounter, however, in J. Michael Yates’s collection of Arctic poems, *The Great Bear Lake Meditations* (1970), is humanity’s essential homelessness. Yates writes, on the second page of his unpaginated volume: “The wolves say to the dogs what the madman of me says to the citizen. I need to go fishing until I need to return.” With this first poem Yates establishes the character of his “northern retreat.” And, first and foremost, it is a retreat: Yates makes it clear that he is escaping into an “otherness” that is both equal to and, ultimately, as temporarily satisfying as his civilized existence. Yates’s second poem underscores the transience of the sense of belonging he finds in either place:

First sense as I awaken under the fans of northern summer light: perhaps I shall get well here. Who can remain that long? Light has more duration than the eye. To remain too long is to become a sickness of another syndrome. I’ve summoned and survived that too—and carry it, asleep now, in the caves and crevasses of my blood.

Yates also sketches the Arctic as a deconstructive zone, one which provides the space for his own meditations and one in which his own world comes to presence. He writes:

The roads I followed here are washing away. This is the Lazarus who returned

with no more to show than a yawn, the taste of dying in his mouth, vague hunger, thirst and no recollection of awakening at an earlier dawn. This was the sleep within the tent that I sewed. I entered, shut out the weather and went to sleep for darkness' sake. The afternoon and the insects have waited. I dream I only dream I am awake.

Here the land becomes a place of re-birth, and here the poet awakens from the "death" of his civilized existence. Fittingly, however, Yates presents this not as an awakening but as a release into slumber, an exercise, as Wiebe would put it, in "playing dead." Yates writes: "This is the sleep of mastodon and mammoths; this is not the sleep of winter bears I've buried beneath the cornices of words." This is not, in other words, the sleep, the silence, induced by the assertive, expropriative power of words; this is, instead, a more primordial re-turn. Yates sleeps for the "sake" of the darkness that eludes cognition, and he writes "I dream I only dream I am awake" because he wants to emphasize that in such a state of awareness—of awakening—things also emerge.

And the first thing that does emerge is humanity's all-too-often-arbitrary definition of *thing*, of things: "Not even the mosquitoes," Yates writes in the next poems, "are the mosquitoes here." But if, in this dis-placed zone, even familiar mosquitoes reflect the strangeness that is their own, then what of that most familiar of things, language itself? Yates writes:

Language melts in my mouth like August ice caught in a flash-change of weather. Nouns dissolve in search for things to name, the search for nothing, the no-thing at the edges of wind and water. Sound of a loon stuns the silence, a bloom, a hatch of insects. The bird or something to do with birds follows me into my sleep. One particle of the dark I carry with me into the light. It's nothing I would name.

Yate's nouns are disconnected from the Arctic landscape. In this state of "disconnection" something of the nature of naming, of saying,²¹ emerges. In the naming of Yate's "bird" *as* bird, in the "cornices of words" that bury bears, there is a consigning to "darkness," an elision of the full being of the animal so named. But this "flaw" in the nature of language is only a flaw when we view language and beings a certain way. When human being, through language, is viewed as the endless and limitless articulation of meaning, then any and all impediments to this articulation are viewed as a threat. From such a perspective, language holds sway in a linguistic universe wherein historic is a threat, the autonomy of all beings is a threat, and, for the way it highlights both these things, the "white" Arctic itself is a threat. If, however, we see human existence as beginning in limit, as an out-standing, an ecstatic (from the Greek: *exo*, "out of" and *histanai*, "place") exposure

to the disclosure of beings, then limit also becomes provenance and a cloistered, complacent sense of home becomes a sickness as chronic as intimations of “cosmic emptiness.” As Yates writes: “It is the nothing at the floors of all my black water that whispers into my dreams: I am alive.”

And Yates explores this concept of limit in some detail. He does this by exploring the limits of the poet’s art, the limits imposed by the Arctic’s own presence, and, finally, the limits of the poet’s own historic sense of self. Yates first hints at the limits of a poet’s art in a poem in which a poet and a carver are discussing poetry, carving, and art in general. He writes:

He [the carver] came to this city with his family from a small village now very distant in time and space. I’m on my way into the bush again. We speak of the diseases of both places, of the little there is to depend on concerning art and people. . . . he cannot understand why one who carves well doesn’t also dance well, and sing and write beautiful books. We agree and don’t understand together.

In this little poem there is a dual sense of limit: first, art itself slips beyond reach, leaving the artist with “little . . . to depend on”; second, the artist lacks omniscience—he does not possess an abstract, readily interchangeable ability; at a fundamental level he himself is always given over to a particular medium. Moreover, as Yates makes clear in a subsequent poem, even within the artist’s own domain the “things” he gathers somehow manage to elude his grasp:

Legend: The god in the sun made two men. In the hands of one he placed a book. An axe handed the other. *Decree:* In search of one another they shall circle the earth forever. *Curse:* May you walk upwind all of your days. *Act:* The left hand loses memory of the right. Neither blade nor word gives the feel of gods at this long high noon of the night. The wind, like consciousness, appears only in other things.

In this poem Yates sets up a series of relationships which all revolve around the question of limit. Hence, the man of the word and the man of the blade are connected by their search for one another but are doomed to never meet. The wind opposes them for “all of [their] days,” yet it is this very wind which the men attempt to coax into appearance. The god which first make the artist, the god which provides the artist with the very means—the word, the blade—to seek his maker, always remains beyond reach. And the pivotal sentence in this poem—“The left hand loses memory of the right”—emphasizes the fact that all of these elements, the men, their art, the wind, and the gods, remain elements of one body, inextricably bound together and yet somehow held apart. Thus, the fate of both the poet and the carver is twofold: first, bound by earthly ties, they endlessly chase the wind, an earthly “thing,” in

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an effort to reach the gods; second, the wind and the gods, gathered in "other things" (a first aurora, the skeletal streets of a lonely city), remain forever beyond their reach.

This then is the limit, the fate, of the art with which the poet attempts to "capture" his Arctic experience. But the Arctic itself, as body, as presence, exacts its own limits. Yates presents his recognition of these limits in another poem:

I haven't time, because the glacier dwindles beneath this escalate light. If the ice has always been going, I haven't known it, and there isn't—clearly—time. I sense the fish begin to rot before the boat casts off—so little has time been. The absence of anyone or anything by which I measure my motion outside time commits me to death before my death. In time, but not of time, the fish move not moving in the shapes of water that move and do not move. Ice is and is not, quite simply. Emptiness contains is emptiness contained. Nothing speaks for the blue moraines.

At first glance this dense poem yields little, but if we attune ourselves to the ways in which Yates dis-places conventional turns and terms of speech, then some insights emerge. The poet, we can assume, is standing before a glacier, and it is the sheer presence of this glacier that founds his meditation. Yates writes "I haven't time," which sounds simple enough, but we should proceed with caution. Indeed, if we peer part the edges of our conventional sense of this phrase, we can see that Yates's confrontation with this glacier brings him to the realization that he literally does not *have* time, that time is not something he can simply strap to his wrist. The obvious alternative is that the poet is thrown over to time, that time "has" the poet. Hence, "[t]he absence of anyone or anything by which I measure my motion outside time commits me to death before my death." But this is more than a poem about time; this is a poem about presence. Whether ruling time or ruled by time, humans themselves are responsible for time's invention. Confronted with this glacier, which moves by the years and melts by the centuries, Yates can only observe: "there isn't—clearly—time." Yates's meditations then broadens: the fish, like the glacier, *is* in time—the poet's time, but it also maintains its presence outside the time which is the poet's existence. "Ice is and is not" because at one and the same time *is* both ice as we define it and some timeless substance that remains to haunt its definition. Similarly, the very moment we turn to assertion, when we say "emptiness contains" one thing or another, we "contain" (1. restrict 2. elide 3. obscure) the emptiness, the propriety, that remains to each being. Hence, nothing *does* "speak for the blue moraines." Nothing is the limit that sets out the blue moraines, and it is the nothing in each presence (glacier, fish, ice, moraines) that speaks for presence

itself. Again, the Arctic finds this disclosure because its very presence stretches meaning and dis-places worlds, bringing us closer to the edges, to the limits, to the no-thingness that belongs to each being.

Yates's encounter with the land also finds a recognition of his own limits. The poet comes to the Arctic, we are told, "to become an animal, to turn the whole day toward food and a place to sleep warm." As his language disconnects and deconstructs, so too does the poet's own sense of self: "Small cracks begin at the bases of marble angels that were his ideas. His days come down like trees felled to feed an insatiable fire. Like trees felled to raise a cabin whose windows and doors vanish a little hour to hour." In Yates's presentation of this deconstruction there is a sense of threat, a feeling that beneath the stability of the poet's world there is a bottomless abyss. At Yates writes:

At freeze-up and break-up the suicides occur. . . . At freeze-up the pliant things we depend on go solid. At break-up the ice-bridges we've gotten used to give way. . . . You can only go inside and wait it out. You never know when there'll be nothing there.

But, as Heidegger observes, "the poet's vocation is homecoming."²² It is the poet's responsibility to wander in the strange, to rummage around in the "rejected things, the things denied,"²³ only to return to the place in which the poet makes her home. Thus, empowered by the dis-placing agency of the Arctic, Yates "unbuilds" himself and his world in an effort to understand *his* foundations:

I've been right here, in the air, without scaffolding, turning expertly at coruscate nuts, lock-washers, ends of mammoth bolts at all my contiguations. . . . It was good at last to come around to what at last was good to come around to. Side by side and storey by storey, I unbuild toward the centre. I'm sitting in sheer air now—very slowly, very reflectively, bending back and forth now and then, just a little, the flared feet of the last cotter key.

Here again, however, Yates makes it clear that such ambitious deconstruction presents a threat to the poet. But the source of this threat is *not* Yates's meditation on the nature of his own origins; rather, the sense of threat stems from the fact that these meditations hold no consideration for the poet's own limits, his own historic body. The implication that haunts this poem, for example, is that the poet lives in the very building being unbuild. Or, to put it another way, beyond geographies of the body or the metaphysics of evolution, the poet is both the scientist *and* the specimen pinned open for dissection.

In recognition of this fact, Yates, in one of the last poems of this collection, presents the dangers of failing to recognize the limits of human

presence. He writes:

I'm coming soon to the end of me, to the edge, the drop-off, to the place where the tundra halts, even the mosses don't survive, and the ice presides for all seasons. . . . I came up from the south, from the equator at the centre of all bone where the hot dark whispered into my animal listening. But there was something else, always something else, had to be. . . . I'm coming soon to the end of me, to the membrane which contains all my mortal remains. The needle of my compass points always north like the finger of a prophet until I become north, and, like a shot swan, it bewilders in terrible circles. There is no object in the white landscape upon which to triangulate. Hunter and weapon merge, and the quarry whirls at the box-canyon wall to battle the nothing at all behind him.

This poem draws on all three of the themes we have already touched upon. Intimations of humanity's homelessness emerge from Yates's statement that "there was something else, always something else, had to be." The Arctic, the "north" emerges throughout as a dis-placed, deconstructive zone. The south, "the equator at the centre of all bone," symbolizes Yates's origins, his own world (as a relational context of significance). The North becomes the "other" to which Yates's restlessness drives him, and within which the foundations of his own origins come to light. "I'm coming soon to the end of me," he writes, and this movement is analogous to the "unbuilding" we examined earlier. But while Yates's unbuilding merely threatens him with nothingness, in the movement beyond body, beyond "his mortal remains," he *becomes* nothingness. In other words, by "unbolting" all connections, rejecting all mysteries, the poet effaces all limits and levels the very world of his existence. Thus, the poet's nothingness is not of the sort that resides in the tension of a mystery, or a limit; rather, it is an undifferentiated nullity that is both everywhere and nowhere. "There is no object in the white landscape upon which to triangulate" precisely because all limits have collapsed and nothing remains that can out-stand. Finally, the "hunter" is the poet, and he scours the land for himself. The very presence of this land provides the hunter with the nothingness, the dis-placement, with which he hunts his "quarry." When "hunter and weapon merge," the poet himself becomes a nothingness. As for the quarry, the poet, he much battle himself in search of himself in defence of his own existence. "Emptiness is" becomes his own "emptiness contained." Yates, then, is speaking in defence of his *own* nothingness: in effect, he is saying that "true" nothingness, an undifferentiated vacuum, awaits those who do not return to themselves a measure of the nothingness which provides the space for all beings to exist. In this presentation of the peculiar nature of nothingness, Yates tackles the "classic" quandary of the deconstructionist (who must, someday, construct) and emerges with that which he cannot deny—his own earthly body, his own historic presence.

Rudy Wiebe's *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic* (1989) is also a "poem" about presence. What is fascinating about this work, however, is that Wiebe, like the "Mad Trapper" he pursues, "doubles-back" on his own trail, beginning with assertion but constantly ending with question. *Playing Dead* is precisely an exercise in "playing dead": it is Wiebe's attempt to examine the conflict between his own desire to find meaning, to empty secrets, and the Arctic's injunction of limits, secrets, and silence. In the first chapter, entitled "Exercising Reflection," Wiebe examines the texts of the first Franklin Expedition. Throughout the course of the chapter he illustrates the explorers' failure to exercise reflection. Ironically, in order to do so he employs one of Franklin's strategies. Like Franklin, he gathers a seemingly endless collection of facts and numbers and adds them like weights to the substance of his argument:

The [the explorers] have laboured over 1224 miles of rivers and coast that summer, the last 300 miles on foot with the voyageurs sinking in September snow under ninety-pound packs because the freezing rivers and rapids have finished what the sea had begun in destroying their canoe. (25)

Wiebe even uses numbers and facts supplied by the explorers themselves: he cites Hood's exhaustive list of the expedition's belongings in support of his argument that the explorers "travelled heavy" (22). In effect, Wiebe flogs the reader with all these facts, beating the reader into an unconditional acceptance of Wiebe's assessment of the situation.

But beyond Wiebe's desire to correct the historical record (which is certainly a factor here), Wiebe also uses this accumulation of facts as part of a larger strategy. The outlines of this strategy emerge in the final paragraphs of the chapter. After Wiebe's facts have accumulated into a great, white monolith, he writes:

But when one goes to the Mackenzie Delta, Franklin and Richardson seem amazing irrelevant. There they appear little more than blind or at best partially seeing men who will force themselves upon a landscape, will try to bulldoze through whatever confronts them and who, when this deliberate blindness kills their companions and, eventually, themselves, will become heroes to be forever memorialized. . . . However, on a tributary of the Mackenzie River, the Peel, such thoughts seem to me unimportant; at best merely clever. (43)

With this last statement Wiebe creates a wonderful anti-climax. After expending twenty-four pages on a careful explanation of the shortcomings of the expedition, Wiebe discounts his labours with one small sentence. The swiftness with which Wiebe "doubles-back" leaves the reader, who has been coerced into following Wiebe, somewhat disoriented. And it is this disorientation which Wiebe himself employs to disclose the "true" (i.e., contingent,

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even “amazingly irrelevant”) nature of the seemingly implacable facts which Wiebe musters to support his case. There is, of course, a notable distinction to be made here. Wiebe is *not* saying that his argument is incorrect; he is saying, however, that in the presence of the land itself it simply does not matter. Like Yates’s glacier, Wiebe’s Peel, “strange and secret” (43), maintains a presence that discloses the emptiness of Wiebe’s numbers and the insouciance of Franklin’s exploration. The river, Wiebe continues, “reveals nothing at all; only glistening surface”—and this is precisely the point. The river, by revealing nothing, gathers nothingness itself between its banks, and Wiebe is forced to the limit of his rational argument. Beyond that limit, he notes, there are “[s]ecrets; secrets everywhere” (44).

Wiebe uses the second chapter of *Playing Dead* to search for the body of Albert Johnson’s secret I believe some of the wider secrets of the arctic landscape will become clearer. At least I hope their outline will” (52). But this second chapter is founded on Wiebe’s own return to the place in which Johnson’s story, his “told and untold, his trackable and untrackable, story” (66), first “took” place:

I saw what I had imagined, tried again and again to image years before: I saw the tight reversed S turn of the narrow river outlined by the straggling black spruce, the tight reversed S turn where Johnson, deceived at last by the twists of the river, ran backwards in his tracks. . . . It was so exactly as I had imagined it, in the plane I knew I was dreaming. It seemed I saw through that window, past the strut and the motionless wheel, under the shadow of that wing the actualization of what I had dreamt sixteen years before and then dreamt over and over again, tried to snare in the words of a short story, of a film script, of an essay, of a novel. There, exactly on such ice, between those precise tiny bristled trees; fifty-five years ago. (57-8)

Like the poem we examined from Yates’s collection, this entire passage revolves around the issue of limit. It is the limit of Wiebe’s art which dictates that a short story, a film script, an essay, and a novel are still unable to capture the essence of Johnson’s flight, to capture the substance of his secret. It is the limit of place, of presence, that Wiebe emphasizes in his last line: “There, exactly on such ice, between those precise tiny bristled trees; fifty-five years ago.” And Wiebe, finally *there*, in body at the place he has described so many times before: “It was so exactly as I had imagined it. . . . I knew I was dreaming.” Wiebe knows he is dreaming because the rational mind insists on a distinction between what we imagine and what we see. There is, of course, a distinction, but it exists much more clearly between what *is* and what we see, than between what we see and what we imagine. In the gathering of such a place, “between those precise tiny bristled trees,” Wiebe comes to a twofold realization: here, imagination and perception emerge in

the proximity which they always share; and here, in the reverse S turn of the narrow river upon which Albert Johnson died, place, limit, body, and presence emerge as that within which humans truly dwell. Accordingly, Wiebe uses the remainder of the chapter to explore imagination and perception, to explore the stories of the story which is Albert Johnson's life. And in the limit of Johnson's life, in the man's own refusal to have it spoken, Wiebe sees something of the autonomy, of the secrets which the Arctic holds as its own.

Wiebe's third and final chapter is also a doubling-back to a recognition of limit. His focus in this chapter, entitled "In Your Own Head," is on language. He examines the presentation of the Arctic put forth by various explorers, anthropologists, and by the Inuit themselves. His discussion of these texts is ostensibly an exploration of *what* the Arctic is, but in this exploration aspects of language as language also come to light. Indeed, the bulk of this chapter is a critique of language, a critique of both the recorded actions of earlier explorers and the worlds which they unwittingly (and inevitably) reveal in their depictions of the Arctic. Wiebe's critique is also an exercise in reflection, for Wiebe "corrects" the historical record as he goes along. At the same time, however, Wiebe's collection of myopic "discoverers" speaks for much more than mere correction: the sheer number of barbarities and inaccuracies, carefully and methodically recorded by these men, illustrates the dangers of treading with confidence where so many have erred before. And indeed, while I would argue that Wiebe eventually does find "True North" in the Inuit presentation of the Arctic, it seems clear that the True North is not—nor ever has been—a location. Instead, True North emerges here as a way in which to listen. Wiebe cites Orpingalik, a member of the Netsilik Inuit:

A person is moved just like the ice floe sailing here and there out in the current. Your thoughts are driven by a flowing force when you feel joy, when you feel fear, when you feel sorrow. Thoughts can wash over you like a flood, making your breath come in gasps and your heart pound. . . . And then it will happen that we, who always think we are small, will feel even smaller. And we will fear to use words. But it will happen that the words we need will come of themselves. When the words we want shoot up of themselves—then we get a new song. (119)

And this too is "playing dead," a listening which is founded in patience, humility, and a recognition of the limits of human experience and language.

"I am trying to understand and accept that," Wiebe writes, "and to prepare myself. To walk into the true north of my own head between the stones and the ocean. If I do, I will get a new song. If I do, I will sing it for you" (119).

In *this* song, Wiebe's text, the limit of the Arctic emerges in the line separating "the stones and the ocean." It is the ocean which grants the Inuit life, the ocean waters which first grant Europeans access to the Arctic. As Wiebe notes: "One might deduce from my considerations that all humans beings, certainly all whites, made their entry in the arctic landscape by means of water. . ." (77). But water both begins and ends in land, and for white explorers the presence of Arctic land has always frustrated their efforts—in boats and metaphors—to be elsewhere. The explorers, Wiebe writes,

want water, and not in its peculiar, inconvenient at best and deadly at worst, mix of ice / fog / liquid either. They want nothing except liquid water so they can get past the land because they do not want to stop in the Arctic at all: they merely want it to be a convenient passage to another place altogether. And the Arctic has never cooperated; it is too much itself to be merely a means for anything. (77)

As we have seen before, this "being itself" is both the land's definition and its exemplary lesson. Wiebe notes that "the movement (life) of humans beings is analogous to the line water draws upon land" (78), and if we allow him the conceit an interesting set of correspondences emerges. The water which gives life becomes life, becomes world, and the land that holds the water becomes the earth and the earthly "things" which found the limit of human worlds. The two cannot exist apart and yet are never simply one, for, as Heidegger observes, it is the "essential strife" between the two that disclose each to each:

The earth cannot dispense with the open region of the world if it itself is to appear as the earth in the liberated surge of its self-seclusion. The world in turn cannot soar out of the earth's sight if, as the governing breadth and path of all essential destiny, it is to ground itself on something decisive.²⁴

Wiebe, walking the line between water and land, is listening for things he will never say complete "decision," but in the very frustration of his utterance the land grants him a language in which to speak.

Moss's *Enduring Dreams* is also a text about speech, and it too takes the form of a constant doubling-back. Throughout the text, Moss moves back and forth through time, place, text, and body. Each movement, however, keeps circling back to a core of central issues, many of which are already familiar to us. It was Moss, if we recall, who writes that "[i]n contours of the diverse [Arctic] landscape visitors discover aspects of themselves not usually accessible." And Moss, like his predecessors, presents the Arctic as a deconstructive zone. More principally, though, Moss's concern is with the Arctic's *actual* presences, its own being, and the way in which this presence is represented in a foreign—that is, English—language. Because he begins this

search for True North with a mimetic conception of language, Moss is particularly concerned with the (in)accuracy of historical representations of the Arctic.²⁵ In the face of misrepresentation, Moss attempts to find *the* “true” Arctic in two ways: first, by analysing Arctic narratives and recorded history, both public and private; and second, through his own personal experience of the Arctic. It is, finally, through his own Arctic experiences that Moss also finds True North, and it is, again, much more than mere location. Indeed, as Moss “discovers” the Arctic he moves from a mimetic to poietic conception of language, one which is founded on the Arctic’s own lessons: the importance of listening and the necessity for limit. To begin, we turn to a conventional truism, which maintains, in effect, that in order to “know” a certain place one must travel there. This implies, accurately enough, that in order to know the Arctic one must actually visit the Arctic. But getting to “know” the Arctic—or any landscape, for that matter—is not simply a case of visiting. As Heidegger demonstrates, humans are given over to specific worlds, and it is the nature of these worlds that they do not merely “condition” one’s perception of a land, they *found* perceptions of a land.²⁶ And between one’s world and the land itself one finds the *landscape* that belongs to a particular region. And so, because worlds themselves originate, emerge, and even end in language, language becomes the space in which to look for a measure of the land that one perceives.

It is precisely this reasoning which first prompts Moss to turn to the texts preceding his own. He writes:

When you enter Arctic narrative, you enter every narrative of the Arctic ever written. When you enter the Arctic in person, you become part of the extended text. When you write the Arctic to affirm your presence in the world, you become in writing an imaginative creation. You could imagine anything and write down and it would seem real forever. (105)

Here, history becomes the narrative in which, and through which, narratives themselves are written. This is, as Moss later notes, an issue of “[T]ext echo[ing] text” (143), but it is also an issue of text writing consciousness: texts can only echo texts through the hands of their authors. Hence, Moss is concerned with the texts preceding his own because they have “written” his very perception of the Arctic: “Conventions of the text precede, determining how the wilderness is read; because these texts hold such an enormous power—“You could imagine anything and it would seem real forever”—the authenticity of these texts becomes all important. So Moss, like Wiebe, but on a much larger scale, searches through a vast collection of Arctic literature in an attempt to piece together what is real, and to discard what merely “seems” real.

Michel de Certeau, in his analysis of Montaigne’s “Of Cannibals,” ob-

serves that Montaigne's essay proceeds by "establishing a distance from nearby representations [of cannibals]. . . . Faced with. . . increasingly authoritative discourses, the essay only repeats: that's not it, that's not it."²⁷ Moss also examines the representation of an otherness, and he too continually repeats, "that's not it, that's not it." He writes of Yves Thériault's *Aguguk*:

It has sold nearly half a million copies since it was first published in 1957. It is standard fare on curricula, especially in Quebec. It has been celebrated by critics, including myself, both for its allegorical transformation of Inuit life into an emblem of emerging Québécois nationalism and for the apparent accuracy of its vision of Inuit reality. Yet, for all that, it is racist, sexist, and egregious misappropriation of native experience. (85)

In this passage, Moss's belief in a text's ability to structure reality emerges in his preoccupation with the popularity of Thériault's work. His concern over Thériault's errors is obvious, and it leads to the following observation:

[I]f misappropriation occurs in the course of writing another's life, if the lines running through the text between writer and reader, between textual reality and actuality, limit or distort that other's world, then such a work should be treated with the same contempt we hold the mindless tracts of misogynists, racists, and religious fanatics. (86)

The indignation which Moss expresses here is understandable and necessary; his directive, however, is inherently problematic. If, for example, reality itself is a limitless text of "infinite complexity," then on what basis are we to judge actuality? Moreover, the very moment we admit that there *is* a difference between "textual reality and actuality" we admit that *all* writing will somehow "limit or distort [an]other's world."

But this is, in a way, what Moss proposes all along. He views language as mimesis, but he really does not trust the reflection. Indeed, what Moss sees reflected in most Arctic texts are endless projections of the author's *own* world. The Arctic itself is conspicuous by its absence: "From intertextual adventuring we conceive the Arctic wilderness a place where stories happen, written down, in effect, to articulate terrain like the lines of a topographical map. Narrative writes narrative. The rest is empty; solipsism is endemic" (143). Clearly, Moss does not consider that the solipsism he finds so pervasive in these texts may, in fact, stem from the disclosive agency—the very presence, the "emptiness"—of the Arctic itself. As we have already seen, foundations are swift to emerge when they are displaced by the Arctic. Moss is more concerned, however, with accuracy, with "getting" the Arctic right, and "language," he notes, "is the problem" (14). Because all southern languages are displaced in the Arctic, because they are always spoken from another world, another *landscape*, they can never represent the Arctic with any degree

of accuracy. Moreover, because text precedes perception, perceptions of the Arctic are radically circumscribed by the language of one's origin. This is, it would seem, an insolvable (new historicist) dilemma. But Moss proposes a very Heideggerian solution. He writes: "If all the world's a text, then everything we know and do is intertextual. Not only is life a metaphor but living it is plagiarism. But only if. There are ways out; there are ways back again" (41).

Moss's "way out" is to restore limit, to re-turn to an Arctic "beyond" language. "The more time I spend in the Arctic," he observes, "the less sure I am about what I imagine it to be, even on the best authority" (41). In this passage, the actuality of his Arctic experience is contrasted with the "authority" of Arctic texts. Clearly, the experience itself undermines the singularity of Moss's original, textual—metaphysical—conception of the Arctic. Hence, Moss finds his "way out" by visiting the Arctic in the flesh. We see this most clearly in the fourth chapter of *Enduring Dreams*. This chapter is conspicuously divided into two parts: the first is an examination of a variety of exploration journal, and it is entitled "Landscape Writing Landscape"; the second is a collection of Moss's own Arctic observations, entitled the "Katanilik Journals." In the journals of the first explorers Moss sees "landscape writing landscape": a European landscape (written itself) writing the explorers' perception of the Arctic, and the ensuing textual "landscape" writing the Arctic of our own contemporary perception. In the second part of the chapter, Moss explores his own relationship with this Arctic landscape, and, like Yates, in the presence of the land itself he finds an overtly non-textual, deconstructive space:

Busy in the awkward chill of morning
I forget how old I am, forget my name, forget to watch
my hands, nimble with details, glistening;
I forget everything
but how to eat for the weather, break camp
in the fine mizzle that covers our gear,
how to shoulder the weight, walk out of the circle,
with no evidence left of our passing
into the opening landscape. (114)

Significantly, it is by releasing all worldly details that the landscape "opens" for Moss and his partner. This is "playing dead," or "sleeping." At the very moment this occurs, however, Moss and his partner are moving out of one of the most significant figures of human existence in the Arctic: the "circles" of stones that aboriginal peoples left hundreds, even thousands, of years ago. These circles *are* evidence of Moss's own passing: it remains in the figure of

his poem, in the words with which he gathers the experience. But, like the circles again, Moss's poem speaks for both a presence *and* absence—his presence in the Arctic, whose presence, in turn, dis-places Moss from his southern world; and the presence of each word, each precise description, juxtaposed with the very forgetfulness of words that discloses the "opening landscape."

Moss's journals, in fact, centre on this question of presence and absence. Moss gathers Arctic "things" in precise, vivid detail, but in his collation of the land Moss keeps doubling-back to a meditation on the elusiveness of the land itself. His "entry" for "Saturday, July 25, 1992," is a perfect example. The entire poem is composed of a long, careful description of an extremely brief occurrence: Moss finds an old Canadian flag and buries it. He finds the flag, he writes,

in the shattered bright of a split boulder
held in the clawed shadows of moss campion,
wormwood and prickly saxifrage, among
the clumped gravel, mouse-eared chickweed and Arctic heather
lapland rosebay and snow cinquefoil,
mountain aven and bilberry,
the caribou scat, the beginnings of soil
in the lee of our tent. . . . (116)

He then describes the flag in similar detail, and as the poem moves to a conclusion he returns to a more "concrete," mundane tone: "after coffee / I bury it under a rock that is clenched in lichen, / replacing the rock exactly, / as if it had never been moved" (116). Here, Moss is using the same strategy Wiebe used in *Playing Dead*: Moss's descriptions pile up like a growing refrain of human insistence, while the flag itself is a powerful symbol of human machinations enacted both upon and against the land. In addition, the "rock" that buries the flag is a fitting symbol for the land itself, whose presence, like the presence of the Peel River, makes such human imposition "amazingly irrelevant." At the same time, however, in Moss's careful description we catch a glimpse of the *necessary* strife between world and earth. It is, for example, in Moss's precise language that the earth—the Arctic— emerges within its *own* particular limits: each careful phrase reiterates: here, now, in this particular place, this particular moment. And it is Moss, if we recall, who "replac[es] the rock exactly, / as if it had never been moved." Moss's human agency is both a response to, *and* an evocation of, the autonomy of the Arctic, which, we recall, requires a human world if it is to appear as the earth in the liberated surge of its self-seclusion."

And it is, in the end, within this strife that Moss finds True North. In his

fifth chapter, entitled "Ultima Thule and the Metaphysics of Arctic Landscape," Moss's conception of True North emerges in his definition of Ultima Thule:

there is a distinction between Thule and the Northwest Passage in the shaping mind of Canada. . . . Adventures of the past who sought the east in a westerly direction found the north an impediment (and the south, distracting). The Arctic was not a destination; of only incidental consequence. But explorers of the longitudes, from Pythias to Robert Peary, dreamed of pinnacles, not passageways. . . . The Arctic was a place to be; visionary, not linear. Not means, but end. Ultima Thule was about the substantiality of dreams; not a dream to be endured. It is the difference between being and becoming, presence (however unlikely) and imminence (however promising). . . . (135)

Ultima Thule is *phusis* over *meta-phusis*, landscape (shaped by humans; shaping humans) over space. But as with Heidegger's conception of earth, Ultima Thule is not simply beyond language, as if language were inevitably metaphysical. Ultima Thule is also "about the substantiality of dreams"; which is to say, it is the region in which human will re-turns to the earth on which it is founded. Thus, "[n]ot every writer," as Moss notes, "finds the Arctic barren. . . . [Some] write their language into Arctic landscape, and in their writing carry readers to the very edge of territories undreamed in the dreams of others" (132). And this is language beyond mimesis; this is language as *poeisis*: a gathering, a making present. Within such language, Ultima Thule *can* indeed appear, and the way in which it appears is primordially, fundamentally, as itself. That is, the essence of the Arctic emerges as we have already seen it emerge from the texts of these poets: it emerges in its own autonomy, its own necessary limit. Ultima Thule, then, is a *landscape*—like all landscapes—of *both* mind and substance; a conjoint creation of those who live in time and experience a measure of the land's disclosure, and the land itself, which, as Moss notes, is "eloquent in its refusal to yield" (xii).

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Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," trans. Albert Hofstadter, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 363.
2. J. Michael Yates, *The Great Bear Lake Meditations* (Toronto: Oberon Press, 1970).

Hereafter cited in the text.

3. See, for example, Richard C. Davis's "Introduction," in *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence: The First Arctic Land Expedition, 1819-1822*, ed. Richard C. Davis (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1995). See also I. S. MacLaren's "Retaining Captivity of the Soul: Response to Nature in the First Franklin Expedition," in *Essays on Canadian Writing* 28 (Spring 1984): 57-92. Hereafter cited in the text.
4. Albert Hofstadter, "Introduction," in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. xvi.
5. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 308. Hereafter cited in the text as *BT*.
6. Sophocles, *Antigone*, cited in Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 146.
7. Among other things, Foucault in particular has been accused of a constant vacillation "between totalizing and detotalizing impulses" (Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, cited in Horace L. Fairlamb, *Critical Conditions: Postmodernity and the Question of Foundations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 171; I would argue, however, that his greatest shortcoming lies in his inability to adequately address the problem inherent in human self-knowledge. He admits that "the positive knowledge of man is limited by the historical positivity of the knowing subject," but because he can only see limit as a threat, he looks forward to a utopian, "pure theory of language," and to the discovery of the "formal structure" of the unconscious. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp 372, 381, 380.
8. "Limit," Heidegger notes, "is always that which limits, determines, gives footing and stability, that by which and in which something begins and is." Martin Heidegger, "On the Being and Conception of *Phusis* in Aristotle's *Physics B, I*," trans. Thomas Sheehan, *Man and World* 9.3 (August 1976), p. 245.
9. John Moss, *Enduring Dreams: An Exploration of Arctic Landscape* (Concord: House of Anansi Press, 1994), p. 125. Hereafter cited in the text.
10. Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Hereafter cited in the text.
11. The "fourfold" to which Heidegger refers is the fourfold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals, that he explores in his later work. It is difficult to provide a swift definition of these terms. In "Remembrance of the Poet" (translated by Douglas Scott in Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being*, ed. Werner Brock (South Bend: Regnery/Gateway Inc., 1979)), Heidegger refers to the mortar and stone of a people's dwelling, and the patterns of sunshine that regulate their existence, as "angels" of earth and sky. Hence, these angels of earth and sky play a foundational role in the creation of a people's historical existence. This role extends into the election and rejection of those historical divinities whom mortals thrust up throughout the course of their existence. Indeed, if we are to define the four-

fold, as "elements" of world (which in itself outsteps cognition), are always joined, always reciprocating: "In the ringing of the mirror-playing-playing ring, the four nestle into their unifying presence, in which each one retains its own nature. So nestling, they join together, worlding, the world" (180).

12. He writes, in "Parallel Lines":

a final
movement

to speak

language
is merely
memory

mere
memos re

language

bp nichol, *An H in the Heart: A Reader*, eds. George Bowering and Michael Ondaatje (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), p. 160.

13. Rudy Wiebe, *A Discovery of Strangers* (Toronto: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 26.
14. See Davis, ed., *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence*, pp 79, 108, 149, 269.
15. John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of The Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969), p. 413, 418, 427, 443. Hereafter cited in the text as *NJ*.
16. Rudy Wiebe, *Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1989), p. 43. Hereafter cited in the text.
17. As Charles M. Sherover writes: "A founded existential ethic would not. . . out of disillusionment or despair, permit the suggestion that 'only a god can save us.'" Charles M. Sherover, "Heidegger and Practical Reason," in *Phenomenology: Dialogues and Bridges*, eds. Ronald Bruzina and Bruce Wilshire (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), p. 34.
18. See Franklin to Back, 15 October 1821, and Franklin to Back, 17 October 1821, in Davis, *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence*.
19. Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1987), p. 113.
20. See Davis, *Sir John Franklin's Journals and Correspondence*, note 452, p. 198.
21. For a complete discussion of "saying," see Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," trans. Albert Hofstadter, in *Basic Writings*, pp 197-203.
22. Heidegger, "Remeberance of the Poet," p. 125.

23. Wallace Stevens, "The Well Dresses Man With a Beard," in *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Vintage, 1990), p. 247.
24. Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," pp 174-5.
25. After all, according to a mimetic conception of language, "things attain to existence only in so far as they are able to form the elements of a signifying system." Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 382.
26. As Heidegger writes: "'Earlier' than any presupposition which Dasein makes, or any of its ways of behaving, is the 'a priori' character of its state of Being as one whose kind of Being is care" (BT 249).
27. Michel de Certeau, "Montaigne's 'Of Cannibals': The Savage 'I,'" trans. Brian Massumi, in *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986), p. 69.