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Beyond the North: Nordicity in Canadian Fantastic Literature

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Abstract
Contrary to the claims of some that polar themes are a common feature of Canadian science fiction and fantasy, the far north rarely appears in Canadian fantastic literature. When northern settings are used they serve various thematic and symbolic purposes, and are not, as has been argued, merely part of a Canadian obsession about the north as a fundamental element of national identity. In such texts as Robert Watson's *High Hazard* (1929), Stephen Franklin's *Knowledge Park* (1972), and Tony Burgess's *Pontypool Changes Everything* (1998), the north is portrayed as an Otherworld, a region embodying characters' hopes and fears, and a gateway allowing both protagonists and readers to enter a different, even transcendent realm. As such, the north in Canadian fantastic literature embodies and perpetuates a long-standing Canadian myth: Canada as a place of potential renewal or potential threat, and certainly a space where the familiar and traditional are undermined, and perhaps even destroyed.

Keywords:
speculative fiction, nordicity, Canadian literature, Tony Burgess, Stephen Franklin, Robert Watson

Résumé
Contrairement aux affirmations selon lesquelles les thèmes polaires sont une caractéristique partagée par la science-fiction et la fantaisie littéraire canadiennes, le Grand Nord n'est pas fréquemment mis en scène dans la littérature fantastique canadienne. Lorsqu'ils sont utilisés dans le Nord, les décors nordiques desservent diverses fins thématiques et symboliques et ne relèvent pas, comme on l'a dit, d'une obsession canadienne à l'égard du Nord en tant qu'élément fondamental de l'identité nationale. Dans des textes tels que *High Hazard* (1929) de Robert Watson, *Knowledge Park* (1972) de Stephen Franklin et *Pontypool Changes Everything* (1998) de Tony Burgess, le Nord est décrit comme un Autremonde, une région incarnant les espoirs et les craintes des personnages, mais aussi une issue permettant aux protagonistes et aux lecteurs de pénétrer dans un domaine différent, voire transcendant. En tant que tel, le Nord dans la littérature fantastique canadienne incarne et

perpétue un mythe canadien ancré de longue date, à savoir celui d'un Canada en tant que lieu de renouveau ou de menace potentiels ainsi, assurément, qu'un espace où le familier et le traditionnel se voient minés, voire détruits.

Mots-clés :
fiction spéculative, nordicité, littérature canadienne, Tony Burgess, Stephen Franklin, Robert Watson

For some time now, scholars have been exploring themes of the North in Canadian literature. Sherrill E. Grace, Renée Hulan, Shelagh D. Grant, and, more recently, L. Camille van der Marel and Christina Kannenberg have been analyzing how for authors, the North is less a geographical than an imaginative and ideological space, while Margaret Atwood in *Strange Things* humourously exposes the myths underlying Canadian views of the North. As Grace says, "North is an idea as much as any physical region that can be mapped and measured for nordicity. . . . we are shaped by, haunted by ideas of North, and we are constantly imagining and constructing Canada-as-North" (xii). She sees the North as a "discursive formation" in Foucauldian terms, one shaped, not merely expressed, by novelists (xiii-xv). For perhaps two centuries, writers in Canada have projected their own assumptions and desires on to the region, for various purposes, to the extent that critics have been able to trace common thematic and metaphorical features in depictions of the North across genres.

One area that has received little attention thus far is how the North is portrayed in Canadian fantastic fiction. One reason for the scholarly neglect is that contrary to the claims of some--above all, John Robert Colombo--that polar themes are a common feature of Canadian science fiction and fantasy, the far north is not a common setting or theme in Canadian fantastic literature. Robert Runte, in his critique of Colombo's arguments concerning Canadian fantastic fiction, rightly debunks Colombo's circular argument, one that defines as Canadian any text about polar regions regardless of country of origin (or even which Pole). Yet some authors on both sides of Canada's linguistic divide have written science fiction and fantasy works about the North, and when they do they treat the region in much the same way as their more-or-less realist counterparts do. In fact, we can apply what critics like Grace and Hulan in particular say about the North in Canadian literature to the nation's fantastic fiction, little of which they deal with. To focus on English-language works, it is clear that in these texts the North serves various thematic and symbolic purposes, and not just the pervasive view in the country of the North as a fundamental element of national identity. In such texts as Robert Watson's *High Hazard* (1929), Stephen Franklin's *Knowledge Park* (1972), and Tony Burgess's *Pontypool Changes Everything* (1998),

the North is also portrayed as an Otherworld, a region embodying characters' hopes and fears, and above all a gateway, allowing both protagonists and readers to enter a radically alien realm. Northern spaces can become refuges from southern crises, such as nuclear or environmental disaster; pristine "New World"s allowing for social, scientific, and philosophical innovations; or regions where the very substance of the characters' familiar universe break down. As such, the North in Canadian fantastic literature embodies and perpetuates a long-standing Canadian myth: Canada as a place of potential renewal or potential threat, and certainly a space where the familiar and traditional are undermined, and perhaps even destroyed.

First, we need to place these novels in their literary contexts by reviewing the tropes of fiction about the North that Grace and Hulan have identified. Grace argues that the North "is, above all, Other, and as such emphatically a construction of southerners . . . ideas of North tend to serve southern Canadian interests, be they psychological, spiritual, physical, material, or political" (16). Canadian authors, and others, have portrayed the North ambivalently, as a region of danger, even threat, but also as a site of sublime beauty and spiritual renewal. The North may be "deadly, cold, empty, barren isolated, mysterious" and therefore an ideal setting for adventure fiction, that is, "the narrative of courageous men battling a dangerous, hostile, female *terra incognita* to prove their masculinity and the superior force of their technology" (16). It may also be "a friendly North of sublime beauty, abundance, natural resources waiting to be exploited, and of great spiritual power; this North is `God's country'" (17). Hulan points out that depictions of the North during the nineteenth century also reflected Romantic notions about the need for humanity to connect with nature (5). Thus, according to Shelagh D. Grant, "The British aesthetic myth blended with the American wilderness myth to reinforce a romantic image of north as expressed first in literature and art" (Grant 37). Hulan refers to the metaphorical image of the North as "the sense of mystery and the unknown" (6). Each period of Canadian literature—Victorian, modern, postmodern—has treated the North according to its cultural values and assumptions, so that the reality is filtered by aesthetic beliefs, political ideas, and so on, becoming an imaginative construction (Grace 23–24). Both Grace and Hulan see the North as a gendered space, a "*femme fatale*" or virgin territory that is simultaneously challenging and alluring. Furthermore, the North offers a site for nationalist myths, as Canadians see their country as a whole—not only the part of it above the sixtieth parallel—as the Great White North, thereby distinguishing it from the country's southern neighbour.

Another important factor in our visions of the North is generic. Canadian popular literature set in the North follows a series of conventions derived from American and British adventure fiction; for example, the North becomes our version of the American West or exotic parts of the British Empire, filled with threats both human and

natural.[1] As Hulan shows in her survey of fiction for children and adults, narratives set in the North, like adventure fiction elsewhere, are tales of initiation for young boys and men, who must learn to survive and triumph in the face of great obstacles and even danger. Storms, wild beasts, and evildoers of various sorts beset them, and their ordeals contribute to their becoming "real men." The climate constitutes a distinctly Canadian challenge for popular-fiction characters; unlike the heroes of Westerns, or of tales set in Africa or South America, Canadian protagonists seldom have to worry about hostile natives, but do have to be concerned about the temperature. The heroes are usually southern men who have "moral lessons to learn and spiritual ordeals to undergo" (Grace 183). The hero "must prove himself in a series of tests that, if passed, will confirm his superiority over the North (rivers, cold, emptiness, its wild animals, and other human beings" (Grace 185). As Hulan says, "In literature, people go north to escape, to prove themselves, to learn something, and usually to leave again" (6). Interestingly, Grace further describes the pattern as "white, masculinist agency prevailing over a feminized anachronistic space" (185). For Anne McClintock, an anachronistic space is "prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity" (qtd. in Grace 185)—a point that will be especially applicable to Watson's novel, as we will see shortly.

The works of Canadian fantastic literature analyzed here offer speculations that include portrayals of the North as the realm of both a pristine, if harsh, wilderness and a source of future renewal. Such fiction goes beyond the adventure paradigm, implying that what is found in the North reflects not only past and present challenges but also future possibilities of personal, national, and even human transcendence. Looking at novels from three periods--that is, early adventure fiction, nationalist and internationalist ideas of the 1970s, and postmodernist fiction of the 1990s--reveals how Canadian authors have envisioned and used the North to explore such ideas, and how changing ideological, cultural, and aesthetic approaches to the region led to its different treatments over time.

High Hazard adopts the conventions of adventure fiction that we have been tracing, while also modifying them. The characters are typical for the genre, from the southern hero who travels to the North and faces challenges, physical, moral, and otherwise, to the villains and love interests. For example, the protagonist is Eric Gilchrist, who has suffered a failed love affair and signs on to be a manager at a trading station in the Arctic. Like other adventure heroes, then, he has strong personal reasons for wishing to leave his home, and he goes North to escape something in the South and to isolate himself from society. The other hero of the novel is Jim Drake, an undercover police-

1) On the conventions of adventure fiction in general, see Cawelti; as for Canadian popular fiction of the period, see Clarence Karr's study, esp. 37–39, 164–65. Karr argues that "the Canadian frontier emerged as a favoured setting for internationally popular fiction" (26).

man and another Anglo-Saxon man who, it turns out, also goes North for understandable or justifiable reasons. Meanwhile, the characterization of the villains places the novel squarely in the early-twentieth-century adventure tradition: such corrupt and malevolent figures are frequently racialized, most often as Asian. The evening before his ship leaves, Eric rescues two women from some Chinese white slavers; by a remarkable coincidence the women turn out to be fellow passengers on his ship, the Lady Rathlin, Coralie Stockton and her friend Elizabeth Harte-Meyer. The chief villain is Coralie's boyfriend, who goes by the Anglophone name Earle Sangster but is really a French-Canadian con man named Laroche. Thus, like Eric, Laroche is also going North in order to escape, although for very different reasons. It seems, then, that any male non-Anglo-Saxon character who goes to the North is inherently suspect.

Conventional treatment of race even applies to the novel's romantic subplot. Eric falls in love with the captain's daughter, Della, but is then attracted to Coralie. It turns out that Della is mixed-race and is therefore ultimately unsuitable for Eric; she is the conventional Native girl in popular fiction, whether adventure fiction, Western, or science fiction, who represents primitive sexuality (see, for example, Monkman 44; Johnston 53–54) and who almost invariably pays for her involvement with a White character with her life. In *Fear and Temptation*, Terry Goldie notes that in many texts "the unacceptability of interracial love is raised, but the problem is erased by the death of the indigene woman in the service of her love" (70). Above all, he argues, the Indigenous woman represents the land itself; referring to the two dominant stereotypes of the female Native, he writes, "The maiden represents the optimism that the land holds, the potential of a positive indigenization; the squaw represents the pessimism, the potential that this alien realm will be a negative indigenization, a destructive takeover of the soul" (73). Complicating but not essentially changing the situation is that Della is half-Native; the literary conventions maintain their hold. Della, like the land, is attractive and somewhat alien—perhaps attractive *because* she is alien; at the end of the novel, she conveniently dies to prevent miscegenation as so many such Native female love interests do, and Eric and Coralie are rescued and marry.

As for the North itself, it is portrayed not only as a region for characters to seek refuge, either from personal tragedy or the law, but also as a site of moral purity, a realm of pre-Adamic innocence. At one point, when he has revealed his true identity, Drake tells Eric how much he envies Eric's journey from the corrupt South to this pristine natural world: "`Gee, what a rest it would be. What a glorious change away from crooks and scheming, plotting and thieving, and all that low-down stuff. You're lucky'" (94–95). The only source of evil is malicious human beings. Laroche later returns in another implausible plot twist as the plane carrying him and Drake crashes near the ship, and he becomes an ongoing source of danger for Eric and the others. This Romantic image of the North as a natural source of spiritual renewal pervades

adventure fiction of the period, and shapes the region's portrayal in this text.

Yet the North is also conventionally a testing-ground for characters in such fiction—indeed, that is one of the spiritual benefits that it offers adventure heroes who go there—and that is equally true, if in somewhat unconventional ways, in *High Hazard*. The Lady Rathlin runs into a terrible storm that takes the lives of all the characters except Eric, Della, and Coralie. The rest of the novel is a tale of survival in the harsh North, and above all a voyage into unknown regions that harbour astonishing and even more unlikely mysteries. The characters survive thanks to Della's Native skills, even to the extent of her being able to fight off a polar bear and wolves, while Coralie—a rich young woman who has never had to do much of anything, and is therefore unable to function in a primitive environment—remains fairly useless. One of the ways that fantastic literature conveys its themes is by literalizing the metaphorical—for example, questions of the meaning of humanity may be embodied in a robot or Frankenstein's Creature—and the idea of the North as a primeval space is made quite literal in Watson's novel. In a plot development that hearkens back to John Symmes's hollow Earth theories, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of A. Gordon Pym* (1838), and Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912), our adventurers travel through a cavern in which they are attacked by "a huge monster, neither man nor beast, but something of both" (285–86). They escape other "man-beast"s and find themselves in a land filled with white, woolly elephants, perhaps based on the woolly mammoth, and other ecologically misplaced creatures. The North here is an atavistic land in which the primeval is more than just an impression; it is the home of prehistoric creatures preserved by the cold and isolation. The conflict is thus not only between Eric and Laroche but also between White male and an inhospitable environment, masculine fortitude and female ineffectuality, and the modern—with all its seagoing and aviation technology—and the ancient. As this is a science-fiction novel, the characters here voyage beyond normal Earthly space and time into a realm where nothing is knowable or predictable. During the storm, "it was as if the demons in hell were in league with the furies of the Arctic to prevent them accomplishing their object. Man-made machinery seemed futile against such untiring forces" (104). Later, the characters must endure cold, attacks by both familiar predators and bizarre fantastic creatures, and their own potentially fatal inexperience and the "civilized" qualities that render them unfit—in Darwinian terms—for this environment.

In the end, the novel is little more than a melodramatic potboiler, yet it is noteworthy for the way it highlights this early image of the North: physically and morally unsullied, barren, hazardous, unpeopled—Della is the closest we come to seeing Natives living and functioning in that landscape—and filled with wonders. The scene as the ship travels up the British Columbia coast is a good example of the natural sublime that is a common feature of descriptions of the North by Southern authors

in both fiction and non-fiction; at the same time, given that this is a science-fiction novel, it evokes the unearthly, and thus the genre's version of the sublime, the sense of wonder: the coast offers

> an everchanging yet strangely repeating panorama of bays, inlets, rocky headlands with their lighthouses, fairy-like islands embroidered with grassy patches, their outlines broken by gnome-like firs and lurid arbutus trees; past hamlets by the sea, Indian villages, unexpected log cabins on the very edge of Nowhere; and ever the vast forest-lands marshalled like soldiers on parade and crowding down to the sea-line where the greenish, white-capped rollers of the Pacific Ocean tumbled and broke angrily over the log-strewn, pebbly beaches, as if disputing the right of the forests to encroach on their preserves; while beyond, and on ahead, in unending glory rose pinnacle and peak, peak and pinnacle, the snowhooded mountains of the great Coast Range, one above another, on and on, covering their nakedness where they could with great fleecy blankets of clouds, penetrating the sacred precincts of heaven itself, and at last becoming lost in its infinity. (52–53)

High Hazard confronts Eric and the reader with a kind of cognitive transcendence that renders even our notions of the sublime inadequate. In realist adventure fiction, the North is full of extreme but familiar wonders, challenges, and threats, and the reader can marvel at its recognizable "magnificent desolation"; here, entirely new worlds open up, as Watson tries to raise the bar of how thoroughly Other the North is. The novel makes full use of the North's remoteness, physical and cognitive, to his reader to push the boundaries of what the region can be in his own and the reader's imagination.

Franklin's *Knowledge Park* is a very different kind of novel, a technological and political utopia of sorts that treats the North as a land open for national and international benefit. Alexander Mansell, otherwise known as the Originator, had earlier come up with the idea for a centre of world knowledge—a kind of international Library of Alexandria, with a likely pun on his name—to be built in the Canadian North. The novel recounts the development of Knowledge Park, a dream that comes to fruition despite the foreseeable political challenges both within and outside Canada. The novel features little plot, and the characters are simply spokespersons for points of view or sources of information about the Park's design and construction. All that occurs during the novel's present, in fact, is a celebration of the Park's anniversary on July 1, Canada Day, in the "new century" (actually, the year 2000). The Park was built at Bill Lake because that lake straddles the Ontario/Quebec border, thereby representing the contribution of Canada's two linguistic-national groups.

For both Alexander and the author, Knowledge Park is, in fact, an expression of Canada itself, as Alexander's co-author Harris MacNeil writes in his history of the project:

> More by accident and inclination than by outright design, Canada long ago chose the mosaic instead of the melting pot; an imperfect mosaic, to be sure, providing a tenuous harmony amid diversity, but capable of improvement in a way that a melting pot society is not. For you cannot unscramble an omelette into its constituent eggs.
> The human achievement of Knowledge Park thus far, or so I see it, has been to create a true international proximity; to transpose the ideals of the Olympics from the foot runner, the figure skater and the discus thrower into the full realm of learning; to expand and enrich the mosaic, to sharpen its definition and at the same time increase its flexibility. It remains a mosaic, yet it now possesses the changing facets and the infinite variety of a slow-moving kaleidoscope. (138)

This notion of Canada as a mosaic is very much a product of the time the novel was written: the 1970s, that is, the period of multiculturalism as an official policy. What Mansell has done, then, is reproduce in physical form the values that characterize Canada as he, the author, and supposedly the reader, understand it. He and Canada have overcome political, linguistic, and cultural differences to create something that is constituted of and yet transcends its component elements: a sum that is far greater than its ethnic, linguistic, and regional parts.

The nationalist vision and agenda are clear, and so is the view of the North that makes this project possible. For Alexander, the North is the means by which Canadians can distinguish themselves and also protect themselves from the American influence and the threat that the United States poses to the country's borders, identity, and even psychological condition. He tells Harris what he hopes to achieve:

> "It isn't only a question of living conditions. It affects how we feel about ourselves. It's living strung out along the border which gives us our elephant and mouse attitude and makes us feel small. If we took advantage of the bigness of Canada and shifted ourselves northward, we'd begin to feel bigger and more independent." (55)

He also explains his choice of location in terms that echo Watson's depiction of the North as a physical and mental blank space on which those from the South can impose their vision:

> "The advantage of the Abitibi country…from a practical point of view, is its emptiness. The area is relatively uninhabited. There are timber rights and mining claims, but the cost of resettlement and compensation would not be high. Another advantage is there is a virtually unlimited source of power from all the rivers flowing into James Bay and a virtually unlimited source of paper." (55)

The North, then, offers political, cultural, psychological, and economic resources, benefits that can help Canada become more self-confident and self-sufficient. Indeed, Mansell is successful, as Canada—thanks largely to his project—becomes the world's centre for publishing and a truly peaceable kingdom. In fact, it appears that Canada has been responsible for bringing world peace, and it no longer needs or has an army (78). Much of the world has been inspired by Canada's political example to create federations of states, like the West European Confederation and the Federated States of East Africa (91), the implication being that Canada has devised the best possible way to reconcile regional and national—and now international—interests and governance. This has been Canada's proper, even preordained, role on Earth: to be a world leader, not through strength of arms but by its global vision and tolerance.

In a striking passage that contrasts Canadian efforts with American expansionism during the nineteenth century, the narrator tells us: "Manifest destiny moved north ten degrees of latitude from the banks of the Potomac and the 39th parallel to the shore of Lake Abitibi and the 49th parallel. It was a different destiny, less imperious and in no way territorial, but no less manifest" (119). That is, Canada has acted in accordance with a more pacific, benign, internationalist, tolerant, and forward-looking version of Manifest Destiny. What is remarkable is the degree to which the "Canadian model" (if we can call it that) is seen as not merely morally superior but also inevitable: it is not just a way to attain a new world order but also a "destiny" and one that is "manifest," or self-evident. Again, the suggestion is that this is Canada's purpose—if not God-given, then historical. In keeping with Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier's prediction, the twentieth century does indeed belong to Canada, and the country's world leadership will continue into the twenty-first as well. Canada, not the United States, has become a beacon unto the world. Incidentally, Canada in this novel largely means the English and French settler communities and other immigrants; the Natives are not virtually invisible in Franklin's novel, as they are in Watson's, but they are conveniently out of the way, having their own province now (91). At least they have their own library in the Park (122), which is perhaps some compensation for their being generally ignored by the planners, financers, and builders of the institution.

Knowledge Park is thus very much a product of its era, reflecting the political, ideological, and cultural beliefs of the day, particularly regarding the role of the North in Canada's culture and national identity, and the same can be said for Tony Burgess's *Pontypool Changes Everything*. The novel is thoroughly postmodern in its fragmentary structure, its eschewing of conventional characterization and plot, its epistemological confusion, and above all its focus on language. It is a zombie apocalypse narrative, but even the tropes of zombie fiction are subverted; here, the virus is spread through language, not physical assault, and it attacks language, rendering its victims inarticulate. In her study of the novel, Aalya Ahmad analyzes the novel in the context

of other recent zombie narratives, which she interprets as the expression of those in abject positions:

> Zombies function [...] as gray go-betweens between subaltern and supremacist, black and white, selves and others, lurching over borders as inexorably as they break through farmhouse walls . . . raising the radical possibility of an apocalypse that not only exposes, but also destroys entrenched systems of power feeding on racism, patriarchy, gross inequality and other institutionalized follies. (132)

Novels and films about the zombie apocalypse portray these monsters as rising up against the living, although the latter are often as zombie-like in their own ways as the "walking dead" in their submission to the late-capitalist global economic system. In Burgess's case, the focus is on humanity's growing inability to communicate and to empathize, a condition that afflicts both infected and uninfected characters alike (Ahmad 141–42).

While fitting into this generic context, Burgess's novel offers a regionalist revision of the typical zombie narrative, as it is very much grounded in a particular setting, the Canadian North (Ahmad 140). The novel is an example of what Cat Ashton calls Northern Ontario Gothic: a subgenre that makes use of the region's remoteness, climatic and geographical harshness, and population of (perceived) misfits and outsiders to produce tales of madness and violence. She writes, "Gothic fiction deals with anxiety about identity, about the fragility of stability, and about the present's uneasy relationship with the past. The disruption of stability, identity, and the past have the potential to make the Gothic into the uncanny shadow of the national narrative, and Gothic fiction very easily becomes a regional phenomenon" (160). In the Canadian Gothic, the colonial past is a source of tension between past and present, settler and Native, urban and rural; as Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte write:

> Historically, Canadian writers have used gothic tropes to articulate their sense of the contingency of their presence in Canada. Initially, it is fair to say, the Gothic emerged as a way of responding to the unfamiliar by demonizing and even fetishizing the 'unknown'--be it human or landscape. Often this monstrous presence was figured as an Indigenous one--a danger lying just beyond the garrison but not sufficiently removed. Over time, Canadian writers began to appropriate this force, to bend it to a national purpose, and to map the parameters of an identity that might embrace what was resonantly local so that the Gothic became a way to insist on, rather than deny, a colonial history. In effect, the gothic mode was used to articulate a suitably 'haunted' version of Canadian identity, one that lent the Canadian locale a 'feel' of authenticity because it had been rendered '(un)homely' (that is, both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time). (xvii)

Ashton builds upon their account to argue that in novels portraying Northern Ontario, the "tension between centre and periphery is one of the central tensions in Northern Ontario Gothic" (161); the four novels she analyzes "constitute protests against marginalization" (171). Throughout *Pontypool Changes Everything*, there is a sharp contrast set up between Southern and Northern Ontario. Southern Ontario is the world of security, order, and rationality; Northern Ontario is the realm of danger, the irrational, and atavistic horror. While driving on Highway 7—part of the Trans-Canada Highway—Les describes the region as a place of transformation and violence, a grotesque alien place:

> To the north the land sits high in the sun, like a cresting wave. The land is a market of conversions: farms into gravel pits, gravel pits into heavy machinery depots. And then these depots become the instant little communities that the machines have abandoned. Many people have travelled this highway to Port Perry, and many have carried tragedy. Children catching fire in the back seat with the meningitis that kills them between towns. A young man cradling a severed forearm between his thighs. The terrible family trips that end in violence on a sideroad. . . . The north, on the right, has always risen in an opera of murder; it will broadside every family member, set in motion the suicides of giant people. (37)

In a scene of pure Gothic horror, bizarre creatures take over such geographical features as Lake Scugog, including "fox-fish" and "rat-fish," and "things monstrous because they live too long"; meanwhile, two children, Julie and her brother watch as "a growing herd of zombies is passing through the underbrush" (214). As in Watson's novel, going North means entering an entirely different realm where the rules and even the epistemology of the South no longer apply.

When reports of the epidemic reach the cities, the forces of the South—the Ontario government, medical officials, and others—do try to exert control, even taking draconian measures. According to anchorman Grant Mazzy's television news report,

> "People with AMPS are registered upon diagnosis and are required by law to report to a designated physician weekly. Emergency facilities are now being prepared for those victims who pass into the dangerous later stages. The government has made failure to comply an imprisonable offence. Meanwhile, some northern communities are showing signs of panic and there are instances of people taking matters into their own hands." (153–54)

Later, the government takes an even more radical approach, killing everyone who is not only infected but even suspected of potentially becoming so. These efforts are futile; as Ahmad notes of such narratives, "the zombie, once unleashed, freely ranges over cities and countries, in massive hordes that overwhelm organized resistance, no

matter how expert or militarized" (131). Some degree of natural order remains in the North, but

> In the cities there are greater confusions. As fall approaches several things are contributing to a late-autumn military mania. The disappearance of Toronto's most popular anchorperson, Grant Mazzy; the undeniable presence of cannibals much further south than anyone wanted to accept. Although a plethora of laws exist that might deal with a new breed of violent crime that is highly contagious, and in spite of the horrific acts being committed by Ontarians everywhere, none, not a single person, can be held accountable. (253–54)

As long as the zombie hordes had affected only regions already dismissed as marginal, society paid little attention; now, there is a panic. Modern society is unequipped to deal with such a situation, and reacts with mass, random slaughter, ably assisted by helicopters from the American military. This is in no sense a conventionally romantic, nationalistic, or site-of-masculine-testing view of the North; this is instead, in its violence, a North that eludes all familiar definitions or understanding. Seldom has the region been portrayed as so fully Other.

In these fantastic novels, as in non-fantastic Canadian texts, the North is a space beyond. It is a world of escape, refuge, mystic transcendence, or unknowns and even unknowables; in the case of Franklin's novel, it is a space of the future, representing current hopes and dreams while lying beyond them, while in Burgess's novel it is where even our most fundamental realities break down. Whether it is a land (and sea) of terror, hope, or horror, the North in Canadian fantastic literature frequently is more than a place where we can escape our Southern lives. It is a land that itself eludes us, refusing to be bound by our definitions of space, time, and reality.

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