Shaun A. Stevenson

Sacred and Sacrificial Landscapes

Reading and Resisting Settler Canadian Environmental Discourse in M. T. Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine* and the Navigation Protection Act

In this article, I explore settler articulations of liberal environmentalism through both contemporary settler literature and early so-called environmental policy. More specifically, I interrogate the settler "structures of feeling," to use Mark Rifkin's term, expressed through liberal environmentalism in M. T. Kelly's novel *A Dream Like Mine* and the recently amended Navigation Protection Act. These two distinct textual forms illustrate how structures of feeling build on early settler logics of possession, as well as progressive and fluid conceptions of liberal politics. Rifkin encourages us to understand settlement as that which is enacted through settler structures of feeling. Reckoning with settler structures of feeling "entails asking how emotions, sensations, and psychic life take part in the (ongoing) process of exerting non-Native authority over Indigenous peoples, governance, and territoriality" (342). More pointedly, Eva Mackey asks, "on what grounds, do settlers feel entitled, settled and certain about their right to own and control territory" (8)? Like Rifkin and Mackey, I am interested in both the affective modes of naturalizing settler presence on Indigenous lands, and the material consequences of such affective structures. In what follows, I look to how settler Canadian structures of feeling work as organizing principles that naturalize "particular forms of land tenure and governance" through the enactment of settler liberalism within environmental discourse (343).

Jennifer Henderson describes a kind of settler liberalism that affectively and materially disembeds historical wrongdoing from the broader context and frameworks of Canadian settler colonialism; in so doing, liberal discourses of progress and improvement supersede the material conditions that might

lead to the "restitution of powers, the jurisdictions, the lands necessary for the Indigenous to live as distinct peoples" (31). Through "the subtle and mobile powers of liberal inclusionary forms of national imagining and national culture," to draw again from Mackey, settler liberalism thus mobilizes liberal forms of governmentality toward the disavowal of ongoing processes of settler colonialism (5). It is in the context of settler liberalism, and liberal environmentalism more specifically—through its mobile and fluid assertions of power, enacted through seemingly progressive and inclusionary politics—where I locate the structures of feeling expressed in Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine* and the Navigation Protection Act. In particular, I explore how settler liberal structures of feeling are articulated through two interrelated processes of colonialism, which together form affective, social, and subjective identities in relation to Canadian land tenure and the environment. Specifically, I address the processes of what I will refer to as settler sanctification and sacrifice of landscapes in order to trace the cultural meanings and values that have structured and continue to structure settler Canadians' relationships to land, belonging, and the Indigenous communities that have proceeded them.

Sacred and Sacrificial Landscapes

In *Petrolia*, Brian Black explores the relationship between sacred and sacrificial landscapes and the environment. First, Black mobilizes the concept of the "sacrificial landscape" in relation to the late-nineteenth-century oil boom in northwestern Pennsylvania. He explains how certain landscapes achieve a mythic status developed through the interwoven narratives of divine economic and nationalist progress, and how such landscapes and communities have been sacrificed toward these idealized economic ends (81). Correspondingly, landscapes once sacrificed toward such ends could later become imbued with deeper cultural significance and made "sacred." Of sacred landscapes, Black writes, "[t]heir sacredness derives from one's ability to stand in the locale and reflect upon the action that took place there; however, it also grows out of the power of hindsight and one's ability to consider additionally all the related issues and ideas that have transpired throughout the nation" (170). Thus, according to Black, the sacrificial and the sacred landscape work relationally; landscapes must die, be sacrificed, so that the nation's progress may flourish, and, in turn, become sacred, so that the nation can subsume past violence, sanctifying landscapes within an ever-progressing national narrative. Nuancing Black's notion of the sacred and sacrificial, I contend that within the context of settler colonialism, sanctification of certain

landscapes pre-empts and creates the conditions for the sacrifice of others.

Examples of the sacrificial landscape in Canada range from Alberta's oilsands extraction and Kinder Morgan's attempted drilling on Burnaby Mountain, to the Park Amendment Act (2014), opening parks in British Columbia to energy exploration, and the overhaul of the Navigable Waters Protection Act under federal Bill C-45 (2012). It seems that the sacrificial landscape is almost everywhere in Canada as the sacrificial status is situated on sites previously imbued with just the opposite—a kind of sacred status. As such, I probe the temporal connections between the sacred and the sacrificial in the settler Canadian context. I ask, what are the ways in which the territories of Indigenous peoples, in particular, continue to be disproportionately sacrificed, despite supposed commitments to reconciliation and growing concerns over the nation's environmental record? How does the sanctification of certain landscapes allow for the sacrifice of others, and how is this dual process perpetuated through liberal environmentalism? Ultimately, I argue that attention to the structures of feeling formed and expressed through the settler sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape helps to shed light on both the subjective investments and the material stakes of settler Canadians' engagements with the environment and their place within it.

In *Locations of the Sacred,* William Closson James expands the conception of the sacred beyond traditional religious connotations to include "whatever is of foundational value, what is distinguished from the profane, and what brings order of chaos" (6). I contend that the liberal settler subject is premised on a particular kind of sanctification—the instilling of nature and the land with qualities of the sacred, which in turn instills the settler with a kind of sacred presence on and right to the land. Settler sanctification of the landscape thus functions as a pre-emptive move to project settler values onto the landscape, ordering the chaotic environment of a "New World," and centring settler presence in relation to the reverence and justification of entitlement to land. This sanctification of unquestionable rights to land ensures that settlers are naturalized in place as an ordering presence within the unruly landscape. Through this process of sanctification, countless other landscapes not deemed sacred can be sacrificed to serve the progress of the burgeoning nation. Such sanctification of settler landscapes can be understood as a structure of feeling, as settler presence itself is deemed sacred. Embedded within this process is a complex manoeuvre whereby the dispossession of Indigenous peoples is replaced with the acknowledged and revered "sacrifice" of the

so-called pioneer. While this process of sanctification and sacrifice works through a number of obvious landscapes, from national parks and sites of national heritage to the northern landscape, I explore its operation through two discursive sites: a fictionalized First Nations community in northern Ontario and Canadian environmental legislation.

I read the dual process of settler sanctification and sacrifice first through a literary representation in M. T. Kelly's 1987 novel, *A Dream Like Mine,* before carrying the complexity that this reading draws out to an analysis of Canadian environmental policy. Specifically, I explore the operation of contemporary settler liberal environmentalism in Kelly's self-conscious settler narrative, and the pre-emptive sanctification of the landscape present in Canada's oldest piece of environmental legislation, the recently amended Navigation Protection Act (2012). My reading of these two seemingly disparate texts aims to illustrate that a particular kind of sanctification of the landscape has structured settler Canadian engagement with the environment from the very inception of official Canadian environmental discourse and thus created the conditions for the landscapes' inevitable sacrifice. Further, my comparative reading suggests that this settler sanctification persists through a contemporary liberal environmentalism that continues to see some landscapes as sacrificial through the sanctification of others.

I read policy in conjunction with fiction because literature, along with its ability to critique, complicate, or imagine alternatives, can also figure what is often implicit about legislation. More specifically, in its condensation, its ambiguity, its dramatization of a well-meaning settler consciousness, Kelly's novel helps to illuminate what has made policy seem adequate or progressive. In reading policy documents alongside literary representations of settler Canada, I ground my comparative analysis in the material implications that can be read across various Canadian discursive forms; literature is not a metaphor of something like policy, but is rather another material ordering practice that organizes the nation-state around particular values, motifs, and ideologies. The Navigation Protection Act further serves as a kind of historical anecdote in this way, one that usefully opens up questions about sacrificed and sacred landscapes and their temporal politics. My aim is to intervene in the fields of Canadian literature and politics through a focus on critical comparative analysis that treats environmental discourse as that which emerges and must be understood through its various ideological, aesthetic, and affective formations. Thus, through this comparative reading, I argue that Canadian environmental

discourse—its historical and contemporary material, social, and subjective manifestations—is ordered and articulated through settler liberal structures of feeling and their sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape.

Self-conscious Settler Writing and the Limits of Liberal Sanctification

In M. T. Kelly's 1987 novel, *A Dream Like Mine*, the Canadian sacrificial landscape is represented with violent complexity through a journalist's surreal experiences in an Ontario Ojibway community suffering the effects of mercury pollution in its waterway. The novel has received relatively little scholarly attention, despite winning the Governor General's Award for fiction and being adapted for the 1991 film *Clearcut*. Exile Editions republished the novel in 2009 with an introduction by Daniel David Moses. Between Moses, critical readings of the text by Jessica Langston and J. A. Wainwright, and an unsympathetic review on the heels of its initial publication by Terry Goldie, the reception of *A Dream Like Mine* has been fairly disparate. The novel has been read as appropriative and reductive (Goldie, "The Impossible"), complex and resistive (Langston; Wainwright), and even as anticipating Indigenous struggles to come (Moses). There is consensus, however, on the novel's disorienting narrative, its frustrating, if not poor, execution, and, most importantly, the ways that it seems to resist stable readings of its unsettling characters and unruly political stance.

A Dream Like Mine is no doubt problematic in its representations of Indigenous peoples and cultures, at times reducing them to sentimental elders, or to violent and unstable activists. Reserves, if not romanticized, and strangely absent of people, are portrayed in a state of squalor. This is not to mention the almost nonappearance of Indigenous women, or any women for that matter. Given some of its limitations, we may indeed follow Goldie in reading the novel as "an interesting example of what happens when a white author obsessed with 'getting it right' tries to write right himself" ("The Impossible" 30). Yet, like Moses, I also read *A Dream Like Mine* as an "undeniable return of the repressed" (vii). For all of its flaws, in its best moments, and even in its worst, the novel serves as a complicated confrontation with the liberal sensibilities of settler Canadians and their relationship to Indigenous peoples and the environment—to the sanctified and sacrificial landscape.

The novel's unnamed Ojibway reserve is clearly based on the Grassy Narrows (Asubpeeschoseewagong First Nation) and White Dog (Wabaseemoong Independent Nations) communities in northwestern Ontario, both of which suffered the effects of mercury poisoning when

Dryden Chemical Ltd. dumped ten tonnes of mercury into the English-Wabigoon River system between 1962 and 1970. Despite the obvious political situating of the text, Kelly's narrative is unwieldy. At times, it appears to offer a self-conscious articulation of the limitations of liberal settler sensibilities in relation to Indigenous communities, politics, and environment. In other moments, the novel has little control over its own problematic representation of Indigenous peoples, reinforcing the kind of settler sanctification and sacrifice I interrogate. As such, *A Dream Like Mine* serves as an apt, if complicated, example of the type of settler liberalism that organizes settler relationships to the environment. Kelly's settler subject sanctifies his own presence through limited notions of environmental justice and a perceived waning of Indigenous culture, while perpetuating sacrifice of the environment itself and the Indigenous peoples who inhabit it. The ambiguous nature of Kelly's narrative—its openness to being read as either resisting or reinscribing settler colonial structures of feeling—situates it within this complex terrain of settler liberalism.

Kelly's narrative offers a complicated telling of how Canada's mythicized Indigenous landscapes and corresponding communities are sacrificed in the name of nationalist interests and a seemingly divine sense of progress. Where Black's framework suggests that the sacred landscape will follow in the midst of this sacrificed Indigenous community, Kelly resists reading the landscape as ultimately sacred, illustrating instead how within the settler liberal context, a pre-emptive perception of the landscape's sacredness is what legitimizes the community's sacrifice in the first place. The novel's unnamed narrator represents this pre-emptive move, imbuing Indigenous peoples, culture, and lands with liberal settler sacredness toward the regeneration of his own settler subjectivity. Early on, the narrator reflects on his romanticized notions of indigeneity: "[M]y fascination with Indian culture[ ] was both an obsession and an escape, the equivalent of some people's addiction to science fiction, or fantasy, or mystery novels;" he continues, "[b]ut behind it there was a search for a way out, a different way of life" (44). Through this language of romanticization, the narrator figures a process through which Indigenous peoples, culture, and lands are framed in mythical and sacred terms by a settler modernity that requires an Indigenous Other in order to persist. More specifically, the narrator's perceptions can be read as an attempt to sanctify the Indigenous community, instilling it with romantic and essentialist notions of tradition, cultural practice, and ceremony, in turn, sacrificing the actual politics and lived experiences

of its people within a polluted landscape so that his own liberal sense of environmental justice may prevail. From the very beginning of the novel, he perceives the Indigenous community as a "living myth" (21), with the Indigenous people he encounters expected to reflect his own desires for pristine landscapes and a "sense of the past" that he no longer has access to (22). From the opening chapters, the narrator's liberal stance is presented with derision, inviting a reading of his sanctification of the landscape ultimately as complicit in the sacrificing of the Indigenous community.

In his introduction, Moses writes: "A white man from Toronto, an Indian from northern Ontario, and someone who seems to be a Métis from out west go into the northern wilderness together to fish, and it's not the set-up for a joke" (vii). Far from humorous, Kelly's narrative is often disturbing and unsettling. The novel's unnamed narrator finds himself on an Ojibway reserve somewhere near Kenora, Ontario, tasked with writing a "tight and bright" piece on traditional Indigenous healing approaches to alcoholism (2). Meeting with an elder from the community, Wilf, and a disconcerting Métis outsider, Arthur, the narrator is ultimately asked not to write the story, given some of the sensitive politics of the community. Content to spend his time in the North satisfying his romantic consumption of Indigenous culture, the narrator agrees. His idealized views of Indigenous peoples, however, are shaken to the core, as he must shift his focus from the all-too-familiar trope of the victimized Indigenous person—the notion of "Aboriginal wounded subjectivity," in Dian Million's words (6)—to another trope, that of the violent Indigenous political activist.[1]

The transition in the narrator's sensibilities is embodied, however problematically, through Arthur, and his political will to seek retribution for the pollution inflicted on the Ojibway community's waterway by the local Dryden paper mill. First described as unfriendly and menacing, and later as a psychopath, Arthur is the antithesis of everything that the white liberal narrator desires from Indigenous culture. Upon meeting Arthur, and hearing his proclamation that the businessmen behind the paper mill's pollution are "scum" and "human shit" (18), the narrator's stereotyped notion of indigeneity is unsettled, as Arthur's impassioned political stance is contrasted with the quiet understanding that the narrator has come to expect from his Indigenous hosts. Following this unpleasant introduction, the narrator is once again confronted by Arthur's crassness as he embarks on a fishing trip up the reserve's waterways, on what the narrator imagined would be a traditional tour of the sacred Indigenous landscape by the elder Wilf. As

the narrator probes Arthur on where he's from and his inability to speak an Indigenous language, and thus challenging his authenticity as an Indigenous person, Arthur responds,

> You wanna know where I'm from? I'm from where little wee kids have impetigo and cooties and where their teeth are rotten in the goddamn day-care because they eat nothing but pop and candy at home where the old lady's always out on a party. Where lots of kids under twelve get fucked and have clap. (26)

Both the narrator's romantic sensibilities and affective liberal response are shattered by Arthur's frankness and unlikeability, as the narrator's desired version of indigeneity is confronted by the lived realities of a complicated, politicized Indigenous subject. Here, Arthur insists on the inseparability of social conditions from so-called environmental ones, refusing the abstraction of people from the environment—an abstraction that is integral to the narrator's sacred conception of the landscape.

Arthur quickly becomes the narrative's violent antagonist, abruptly kidnapping both the narrator and the manager of the company responsible for the polluted waterway, Bud Rickets. Resisting the narrator's pleas for moderation, Arthur asserts, "We're through with reports and opinions and the oh so reassuring experts who let it happen and happen and happen. . . . I'm going to kidnap and kill the manager of Spruce Lands Paper unless they stop the pollution RIGHT NOW!" (49-50). The narrative descends into an unnerving, strange, and violent journey as Arthur takes the narrator and Rickets into the wilderness along the polluted waterway through a landscape sacrificed on behalf of the region's pulp and paper industry. The narrator is repeatedly beaten, Mounties are callously shot and killed, and Rickets is tortured, his eye almost gouged out and his Achilles tendon filleted by Arthur. All the while, the narrator pleads with Arthur to seek recourse for the sacrificed landscape through law, at once reinforcing both his own liberal sense of justice and the sovereign state's authority that perpetuates, and prospers from, the sacrifice of the landscape and Indigenous community.

It is difficult not to view the torture of Rickets as an allusion to Jean de Brébeuf, given Arthur's antagonistic retelling of Brébeuf's death early in the narrative. When asked if he knew about "Father Brébeuf," the narrator recalls Brébeuf's grave at Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons and says that he has heard "the Jesuit relations are the basis, or backdrop, for most of our literature" (37). Arthur responds by deriding white Canadian literature, suggesting instead that Brébeuf was killed in Mississippi by the Sioux, and for the crime of "what he was doing to young girls" (37). While it remains

unclear whether Arthur believes in his own retelling, his narrative refuses the popular version of romantic martyrdom of Brébeuf, which resolutely situates his torture by the Haudenosaunee as a sacrifice, both literally and figuratively. Such sacrifice, according to the romantic myth, leads to Brébeuf's sanctification, to sainthood, and, through its retelling within a tradition of Canadian literature, provides the affective structures to sanctify settler presence. In turn, it is used to justify the continued sacrifice of Indigenous peoples and the lands they inhabit. As such, Brébeuf's story often becomes a powerful source of the affective structures that organize and uphold settler presence. Rickets' torture forces the question of whether he will endure the same bloody sacrifice that Arthur treats with so much skepticism; but to sacrifice Rickets would risk making a martyr out of him, sanctifying settler presence in a similar fashion to Brébeuf. Instead, Arthur only toys with the idea, once again refusing the sanctification of this presence, embodied here by Rickets and enterprising liberal ideologies.

In his criticism of Joseph Boyden's *The Orenda*, a novel that also heavily references the torture of Brébeuf as portrayed through the *Jesuit Relations*, Ojibwe scholar Hayden King suggests that familiar tellings of Brébeuf's martyrdom situate Indigenous peoples as "a menace, lurking in the dark forest, waiting to torture or cannibalize" (n. pag.). Further, King argues that such neat tellings—those which I read as illustrative of processes of sacrifice and sanctification—work as a moral alibi for colonialism. In Kelly's novel, Arthur's actions almost caricature the implication of stories like Brébeuf's. His violence and torture are read as meaningless by the narrator, while his refusal to ultimately make a martyr out of Rickets complicates the sanctify-sacrifice process, undermining the settler structures of feeling that might work to naturalize settler presence through preordained narratives of consecration and tired tropes of savage Indians. Arthur's telling renders Brébeuf's story meaningless as complicit in settler structures of feeling, while also ensuring that his torture of Rickets does not serve as a moral alibi for continued processes of colonialism. The historical torture and the contemporary one are denied meaning within settler structures of feeling, and must instead be read as responses by Indigenous peoples for very specific colonial and capitalist incursions.

While the narrative risks reducing the politics of this semi-fictionalized Ojibway community to the violent actions of one potentially unwell and ambiguously identified Indigenous outsider, I read *A Dream Like Mine* less for what it is able to articulate about Indigenous experience—which is

arguably very little—and instead for what this self-conscious settler text articulates about settler colonialism in relation to Canadian environmental discourse in the latter half of the twentieth century. The narrative offers countless moments where the narrator's romanticism and so-called good intentions return to haunt him, upended and denied sublimation. As they journey down the river, Arthur proclaims to his captives, "I'm going to take you on a traditional trip, and we'll have a traditional shore lunch, the kind Indians always make for tourists, with a mess of mercury ripe fish, except Indians have to eat the fish all the time, not just on trips" (70). The narrator's earlier desire for his traditional canoe trip with Wilf is mimicked and inverted to reflect the reality of that which is negated through settler consumption of Indigenous traditions. Further, Wilf, whom the narrator had previously misread as his wise elder ally, fully supports Arthur on his violent journey, seeing it as the only means to right the wrongs done to his community. Through Arthur's derision and Wilf's abrupt change in character, Kelly suggests that it is the settler-narrator's attempted sanctification of a romanticized Indigenous culture that makes him complicit in the sacrifice of the community—a process that trades in a long history of affective structures of sacrifice and sanctification, perpetuated and naturalized through stories like that of Brébeuf.

The novel presents the settler desire for a sacred landscape, one comprised of Indigenous wilderness, traditional canoe trips, and sweat ceremonies, and then refuses it, illustrating the manner in which this desire for the sacred itself becomes complicit in the sacrificing of the Indigenous landscape and community. The narrator represents this denied desire, with his liberal sensibilities persistently under attack and presented as part of the root cause of the violence done to the landscape. In an attempt to sympathize with Arthur's motives, the narrator says: "Look, I'm not unsympathetic. I'm on your side. Pollution may have killed children of mine. My wife has had two miscarriages, for no reason . . . Do you know how many women are having miscarriages now? . . . Everyone's affected" (49). Arthur responds with derision: "Oh a real family man eh . . . . Yeah. I'm sure you have the right opinion. Well we're through with opinions" (49). And then, in a mocking tone that the narrator identifies as the "clichéd, effeminate tone people use when they say things like bleeding-heart liberal," Arthur says, "We're through with 'pollution'" (49). Words like "sympathy," "opinions," and "pollution" are part of so many empty liberal catch-alls for Arthur, marking only the negation of a people and their particular place-based politics. Further, the narrator's concerns express a desire for a futurity, one that Arthur views as an

entitlement to a future that has been denied to the Indigenous community. Thus, the narrator's inclusion on Arthur's journey illustrates how the sacrificing of the landscape must be understood as part of a dense network of political actors and actions, initiated first through its sanctification, and disavowed by a limiting liberal sense of justice. The narrator's liberal sentiment, that which flattens out oppression and structural inequalities, and which effectively makes space for cultural difference within liberal pluralism, but only "without rupturing the core frameworks of liberal justice" (26), to draw from Elizabeth A. Povinelli, becomes complicit in the sacrificing of the Indigenous landscape and community. Through the narrator's sanctification of the landscape and its people, the actual Indigenous community has been hollowed out, made absent, with space only for limited forms of cultural recognition left in its place. The settler sanctification of the landscape becomes a move to vacate a real landscape and its real inhabitants, imbuing the land instead with a clichéd and empty sanctity toward the ends of settler regeneration and national progress.

Nancy Fraser suggests that liberal politics are sustained through affirmative, rather than transformative, models of redistribution, which "strive to alter or modify the second-order effects of first-order root causes" (qtd. in Coulthard 19). Within the Canadian colonial context, Glen Coulthard argues, a liberal politics of recognition makes it impossible to address the "generative material conditions" (19) that maintain the status quo and allow the sacrificial landscape to persist. The narrator of Kelly's novel represents this mode of liberal environmentalism, as his interests and sympathies lie not in addressing the unjust distribution of power and resources that would see some communities sacrificed for the sake of others, but in his desperate attempt to suggest how the second-hand effects are experienced by all of us—how pollution, for example, is something that we can all relate to. The narrator's goal is to highlight how we experience all of these effects equally, and thus to mark Arthur's actions as irrational and unjust within his liberal sense of justice.

While the narrator views many of Arthur's actions and the journey down the river as deplorable, by the narrative's conclusion there is a sense that everything that has happened has taken place in order to further the settler narrator's political awareness, as if by prophecy. Wilf tells the narrator, "[t]his man Arthur, he had to come. There were two, before. They drowned, and called him up from deep water" (140). Even more pointedly, when confronted about his actions in the final moments before his death, Arthur tells the

narrator, "I did it because you wanted me to . . . That's what you expected" (146). The narrator responds with a simple "[y]es," "realizing he was right" (148). Arthur's actions are thus situated, ultimately, as necessary, and as the fulfillment of settler liberal desire. Where the narrator's liberal critiques are presented with constant derision, his ultimate wish for a violent response to past wrongdoings is fulfilled by Arthur, the Indigenous political activist. While Arthur's return to the water completes the prophecy outlined by Wilf, the novel's conclusion reads more accurately as a prophecy of white liberal regeneration and a purification of liberal politics. Arthur facilitates the narrator's movement beyond his comfortable liberal modes of critique, allowing for the enactment of violence on the crass manifestation of his politics, embodied in the character of Rickets. Once these actions have taken place, Arthur returns to the water from whence he came, sacrificed so that the narrator can learn something important about the limits of his former political position.

Kelly's narrative is not a straightforward one. While its self-conscious articulations of settler liberal desire work to resist, or at least call attention to, the settler structures of feeling that perpetuate a dual process of sanctification and sacrifice of both Indigenous lands and peoples, as well as of settler presence, the novel's narrative structure also reinscribes certain problematic tropes in its representations of Indigenous peoples. Indeed, the text mobilizes shallow notions of indigeneity in order to call attention to affective settler processes, once again incorporating Indigenous peoples as the necessary Other for the articulation of settler Canadian identities. To quote Goldie, the image of "them" once again becomes "ours" ("Semiotic" 192). As such, *A Dream Like Mine* must be read with caution. It serves as a rich text for interrogating how settler social and subjective identities become formed and articulated, even as the text itself becomes implicated in such formations. Further, it provides a complicated articulation of the affective structure of liberal Canadian environmentalism—a structure which trades in relationship between settler sacrifice and sanctification. In what follows, I contend that Canadian environmental policy also performs this unwieldy and complicated kind of articulation; what might be taken for a progressive stance on environmental policy can in fact produce the complex conditions for the exploitation of the environment. Next, I explore how Canada's oldest piece of environmental legislation is illustrative of the temporal tensions between the settler sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape, similar to those expressed in Kelly's narrative, and how this temporal process has structured, and continues to structure, settler Canadian environmental discourse.

The Navigation Protection Act and the Ordering of Settler Subjectivity

I shift from literary narrative to environmental policy here because literature figures the inseparability of social conditions from environmental ones with a narrative depth that is often absent in policy. As such, moving from literature to policy aids in identifying the affective structures that shape and order government legislation in ways that might not be readily apparent. Having traced settler sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape through fictive action and character in Kelly's novel, I will demonstrate how such processes are also evident in so-called environmental policy, which in its very construction and articulation works to abstract people from environment, thus eliding the affective manifestations and structuring of such policy. Indeed, the self-conscious settler character is absent in policy; and yet, I hope to show how a long history of Canadian environmental policy is what orders and becomes manifest in complex and contradictory articulations of settler subjectivity, such as those expressed through Kelly's characters and narrative. More specifically, in this section I show how, rather than gesturing to a comprehensive and progressive protection of Canada's waterways, from its very inception the legislative measures put forth through the Navigable Waters Protection Act worked through a similar process of sanctification as discussed above; correspondingly, in both Kelly's text and environmental policy, settler sanctification creates the conditions for the wholesale sacrifice of the landscape.

More than a century of government legislation has fostered relationships that abstract Canadians from the environment. Arguably, however, none has been so abrupt or sweeping as recent legislative measures enacted under the former Conservative government's omnibus Bill C-45 and the changes made to the Navigation Protection Act, formerly known as the Navigable Waters Protection Act (NWPA). The NWPA, first enacted in 1882, has been understood as Canada's first piece of environmental legislation.[2] While its primary purpose was to protect the public's right to navigation within Canadian waters, the law has been understood as the single most integral piece of legislation in the protection of Canada's lakes and rivers from obstruction and pollution related to the activities of industry (Winegardner, Hodgson, and Davidson 602-03).[3] While the definition of what constituted a "navigable water" was relatively ambiguous within the Act, the Supreme Court of Canada adopted the "floating canoe" test in 1906, suggesting that any water in which one could float a canoe was within the scope of the Act (Attorney General v. Fraser). A conservative estimate suggests that

this definition of navigable waters pertained to at least 31,752 lakes larger than three square kilometres (Canada, "Atlas" n. pag.). When smaller lakes and rivers are taken into account, the "floating canoe" interpretation covered bodies of water estimated in the millions. Indeed, the conception of waters included under the previous NWPA was immense, suggesting that environmental protections were integral to Canada's development and sustainability as a nation.

With the ushering in of the Navigation Protection Act under Bill C-45 in 2012, the NWPA was renamed and amended to include a schedule that lists only those navigable waters for which regulatory approval is required. The protections of the Act now pertain only to "the busiest navigable waters in Canada," a definition limited to ninety-seven lakes, sixty-two rivers, and three oceans (Canada "Navigation Protection Act" n. pag.). In a press release in May of 2009, then-Transport Minister, John Baird, announced, "[o]ur government, led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, is cutting red tape to address today's economic needs and reflect current realities" (Canada, "Federal Government" n. pag.). The 2009 amendment signalled a shift in the meaning of "protection" under the Act, from one grounded in wide-reaching, albeit ambiguous, environmental protections, to a focus on the exclusive protection of economic growth and navigation safety. Baird's statements, which would set the stage for the larger amendments of the Act under Bill C-45, encapsulate the Harper government's approach to water and environmental legislation as one rooted almost exclusively in revenue generation and the facilitation of resource development. Such an approach seems to sacrifice Canada's waterways for unobstructed access to capital accumulation.

The changes made to the NWPA under Bill C-45 have been widely criticized by opposition parties, environmental groups, and First Nations. The Conservative government's position was that the NWPA was never intended to protect the environment, but rather to ensure that waterways were safe for navigation (Paris n. pag.). Yet, while the former Harper government's environmental stance is problematic, so too are views that position the former NWPA as representative of an ideal national relationship with the environment, now fractured following Bill C-45. Indeed, extensive environmental damage had been done in the 130-plus years that the NWPA was in place. The mercury poisoning of the Wabigoon River highlighted in *A Dream Like Mine*, for example, occurred unabated for almost a decade, and half a century before the amendments made under Bill C-45. Indeed, the various common law cases—the communal push to ensure that the NWPA

included environmental protections over the past century—do gesture toward, at the very least, a desire to legislate a relation to the environment that considered its significance in a way that has since been foreclosed upon through the amended legislation of the Navigation Protection Act; however, the separation of people from environment perpetuated through the amended Act was already well established in the former NWPA. From its very inception, the legislative measures put forth through the NWPA worked through a process of settler sanctification similar to the one discussed above in Kelly's novel. Correspondingly, such sanctification has engendered, and I would even argue created, the conditions for the wholesale sacrifice of the landscape under the more recent Navigation Protection Act.

The Conservative government's assertion that the NWPA was never intended as protection of the environment encapsulates the kind of rhetoric that this piece of environmental legislation was always meant to delineate—that is, that the Act is, first and foremost, about the settlers' right to navigation. It is the presumed right to the navigation of Canada's waterways where the settler sanctification of the landscape is situated. While ensuing court cases sought to broaden the Act's scope to focus on environmental protections, its primary function was always to make way for and protect the building of settler infrastructure on this land's waterways. Through such legislative measures, settler Canadians were given a sacred right to navigation through the adoption of one of the nation's earliest laws governing the environment. This kind of legislation is of course double-edged, at once ensuring order to the inevitable development of the settled waterways, while simultaneously ensuring that said waterways were indeed developed. What remains constant within the NWPA is the sanctification of a vast and unruly network of water that works to centre the settler right to build on and move through these corridors.

In the introduction to *Capitalism and the Web of Life,* Jason W. Moore suggests that a conceptual binary between nature and society is fundamental to understanding capitalism and its role in environmental degradation. Moore argues that "'Society' and 'Nature' are part of the problem, intellectually and politically; the binary Nature/Society is directly implicated in the colossal violence, inequality, and oppression of the modern world; and that the view of Nature as external is a fundamental condition of capital accumulation" (2). While Moore is certainly not the first thinker to highlight the implications of the Cartesian binary that would situate nature and society as two mutually exclusive categories, his intervention at the level of

historical materialism lends itself to understanding the sanctification of the landscape through policy such as the NWPA. In historical materialist terms, the NWPA produces space—that of the new nation's waterways—in the image of its own relations of production. As such, the institution of the Act reflects settlers' relationship to the landscape they inhabit, ensuring that their rights are what structure and order the landscape in congruence with the social relations of production brought with them from Europe. Where settler subjects are centred in relation to the environment, their rights take on a kind of sacred status, sanctifying the landscape toward the capitalist ends of settler colonialism, as colonial ordering practices abstract settlers from the environment to allow for the landscape's eventual sacrifice.

In the context of this paper, it is difficult to discuss the NWPA without thinking of Arthur and his captives canoeing down the polluted waters of Kelly's fictive community. The same operation of settler sanctification that allowed for the sacrifice of the Indigenous community and landscape in Kelly's narrative is at work in the rhetoric of the NWPA. Where the unnamed narrator sanctifies the Indigenous community, reifying Indigenous peoples' perceived "mythic" relationship to the land so that actual Indigenous peoples and politics may be sacrificed, environmental policy such as the NWPA has worked to construct and reinforce an affective settler subjectivity wherein the settlers' right to navigation has been reified and treated as sacred. While these processes of sanctification may appear different—one a liberal kind of sanctification enacted through misguided notions of good intentions, and the other a settler-centred right to unmitigated land access—they work through similar structures of feeling that take part in what Mark Rifkin calls "the (ongoing) process of exerting non-Native authority over Indigenous peoples, governance, and territoriality" (342). In both instances, settler sanctification functions as a pre-emptive move to project settler values onto the landscape in an attempt to order the perceived chaotic environment and organize settler presence toward the reverence and justification of settler entitlement to land. Kelly's narrative demonstrates a contemporary process whereby a settler subject sanctifies the Indigenous landscape with all of his liberal desires, thus sacrificing actual Indigenous presence on the land and reasserting his own sense of entitlement to a long-gone pristine landscape; but his narrator must be understood as enacting a settler subjectivity that has been formed through long-standing relationships of abstraction from and entitlement to land. Put another way, where environmental policy often appears subjectless, seeking to represent the ordering of processes that are to be viewed as

inevitable, settler literature helps to illustrate the complex and contradictory social and subjective manifestations of long-standing environmental discourse wherein the settler subject is always already abstracted from the environment through hollow discourses of rights and entitlement.

Conclusion: Resisting Settler Sanctified and Sacrificed Landscapes

I do not intend to undercut the necessary environmental protections fought for and articulated through some government legislation, nor do I wish to give a pass to the abhorrent neoliberal policies enacted under the omnibus bills of the Conservative government under Stephen Harper that would see the Canadian landscape sacrificed as never before. I would, however, like to stave off any conception of the sacrificial landscape that locates it within a kind of liberal temporality, making it impossible for us to understand the kinds of root causes that allow such sacrifice to persist. Indeed, it could be suggested that the sacrificial landscape in Canada is no longer simply relegated to Indigenous communities, which have faced attempted sacrifice almost since the moment of contact, but that it now extends outwards, as communities and landscapes previously unscathed are sacrificed in the name of the economy and a singular conception of national progress. To be sure, when some of the nation's most precious landscapes—its national parks, or pristine bodies of water—are sacrificed toward the ever-expanding extraction of resources, it would seem that the sacrificial landscape has become indiscriminate. This tendency, however, to view this sacrifice as an expansion, a profaning of the sacred, is part of the same nexus of complicit liberal justice seen in Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine* and in the Navigation Protection Act.

From its inception, Canadian environmental engagement can be understood through a dual process of settler sanctification and sacrifice of the landscape. This paper has shown how this process works through both more contemporary liberal environmental discourse, as represented in Kelly's self-conscious settler text, as well as how it has long been ingrained in Canadian environmental policy. This dual process of sanctification and sacrifice can be understood to work at both the level of affective settler experience, as well as through national institutionalized structures with their corresponding material consequences. Something as important and oft-celebrated as Canadian liberal environmentalism has not, and does not, escape the complex work of settler colonialism, and the ongoing formation of social and subjective identities that allow this colonialism to persist as natural and normative. These structures are mobilized and felt in myriad

ways, with the process of settler sanctification and sacrifice serving as one illustrative lens through which to explore their operation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge the continued insight and support of his supervisors, Jennifer Henderson and Eva Mackey, who helped him work through various iterations of this paper. He acknowledges the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and thanks the reviewers and editors of *Canadian Literature* for their significant feedback.

ERRATUM

On page 55, the sentence beginning with "Examples of the sacrificial landscape in Canada range from Alberta's oilsands extraction..." should be prefaced by the word "Potential." As such, the sentence should read: "Potential examples of the sacrificial landscape in Canadian environmental discourse range from Alberta's oilsands extraction..." We apologize for the omission.

NOTES

1 See for example, Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian* and Daniel Francis' *The Imaginary Indian*.

2 Between 1882 and 1886, the scope of the Act broadened coverage from bridges and dams to "wharves, docks, piers, and other structures" (*Revised Statutes 1886*). In 1886, it became known as "An Act respecting certain works constructed in or over Navigable Waters," eventually becoming commonly known as the Navigable Waters Protection Act. While the Act was never intended as protection for the environment, its focus on navigable waters has been interpreted in various common law cases and even ensuing government legislation to have protection of waters built into its legislation. The amendment of the Act, even by its title, removes the focus of water to that solely of navigation. For more information, see Winegardner, Hodgson, and Davidson as well as Kirchhoff, Gardner, and Tsuji.

3 In Friends of the Oldman River Society v. Canada (Minister of Transport), it was ruled that the Navigable Waters Protection Act "has a more expansive environmental dimension, given the common law context in which it was enacted." Further, as Winegardner, Hodgson, and Davidson point out, "during the creation of environmental legislation in the 1990s, the NWPA was linked to that goal [of providing environmental protections]" (602).

WORKS CITED

"An Act Respecting Certain Works Constructed in or Over Navigable Waters." *The Revised Statutes of Canada*. Vol. 1. Ottawa: Brown Chamberlin, 1887. 1243-44. Print.

Attorney General of Quebec v. Fraser / Attorney General of Quebec v. Adams. 37 SCR 577. Supreme Court of Canada. 1906. *The Canadian Legal Information Institute*. Federation of Law Societies of Canada, n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.

Black, Brian. *Petrolia: The Landscape of America's First Oil Boom*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000. Print.

Canada. "The Atlas of Canada." *Natural Resources Canada*. 31 Aug. 2016. Web. 1 Dec. 2015.

—. "Federal Government Moves Toward Modernizing Navigable Waters Protection Act." *Transport Canada*. 8 May 2009. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.

—. "Harper Government Announces Plan for Responsible Resource Development." *Natural Resources Canada*. 17 Apr. 2012. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.

—. "Navigation Protection Act." *Transport Canada*. 15 Dec. 2014. Web. 17 Aug. 2015.

Coulthard, Glen. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2014. Print.

Francis, Daniel. *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*. 1992. Arsenal Pulp, 2012. Print.
Friends of the Oldman River Society v. Canada (Minister of the Environment). 2 FCR 651. Court of Appeal. 1993. *The Canadian Legal Information Institute.* Federation of Law Societies of Canada, n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2015.
Goldie, Terry. "The Impossible Dream." Rev. of *A Dream Like Mine*, by M. T. Kelly. *Books in Canada* 16.8 (1987): 30-31. Print.
—. "Semiotic Control: Native Peoples in Canadian Literatures in English." *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism*. Ed. Cynthia Sugars. Peterborough: Broadview, 2004: 191-203. Print.
Henderson, Jennifer. "Residential Schools and Opinion-Making in the Era of Traumatized Subjects and Taxpayer-Citizens." *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes* 49.1 (2015): 5-43. Print.
James, William Closson. *Locations of the Sacred: Essays on Religion, Literature and Canadian Culture.* Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2000. Print.
Kelly, M. T. *A Dream Like Mine.* Toronto: Stoddart, 1987. Print.
King, Hayden. "The Orenda faces tough criticism from First Nations scholar." *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.* 7 Mar. 2014. Web. 10 Jan. 2016.
King, Thomas. *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. Doubleday Canada, 2012. Print.
Kirchhoff, Denis, Holly L. Gardner, and Leonard J. S. Tsuji. "The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 and Associated Policy: Implications for Aboriginal Peoples." *International Indigenous Policy Journal* 4.3 (2013): 1-14. Web. 3 Dec. 2015.
Langston, Jessica. "'We call that treaty ground': The Representation of Aboriginal Land Disputes in Wayland Drew's *Halfway Man* and M. T. Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine*." *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 38.2 (2012): 179-97. Print.
Mackey, Eva. *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002. Print.
—. *Unsettled Expectations: Uncertainty, Land and Settler Decolonization*. Winnipeg: Fernwood, 2016. Print.
Million, Dian. *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2013. Print.
Moore, Jason W. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. New York: Verso, 2015. Print.
Moses, Daniel David. "Introduction." *A Dream Like Mine.* By M. T. Kelly. Toronto: Exile, 2009. i-xi. Print.
Navigable Waters Act, Revised Statutes of Canada 1985, c. 92. Don Mills: De Boo, 1988. Print.
Paris, Max. "Navigable Waters Act at Committee One Last Time." *CBC News.* 7 Nov. 2012. Web. 1 Dec. 2015.
Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011. Print.
Rifkin, Mark. "Settler States of Feeling: National Belonging and the Erasure of Native American Presence." *A Companion to American Literary Studies.* Ed. Caroline Field Levander and Robert S. Levine. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. 342-55. Print.
Wainwright, J. A. "Invention Denied: Resisting the Imaginary Indian in M. T. Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine*." *World Literature Today* 73.2 (1999): 256-60. Print.
Winegardner, Amanda K., Emma E. Hodgson, and Adrienne M. Davidson. "Reductions in Federal Oversight of Aquatic Systems in Canada: Implications of the New Navigation Protection Act." *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences* 72.4 (2014): 602-611. Web. 12 Jan. 2016.