

Daryl Hine at the Beach

In one of the few articles ever written on Daryl Hine, Robert K. Martin says that “[o]ne of the ironies of Canada’s intellectual life is that the greatest Canadian poets are often unknown or disliked in their own country” (“Coming Full Circle” 60). We can see what Martin means if we consider Carl F. Klinck’s categorical statement in a standard reference work from 1976 that “[i]n no respect whatever is Daryl Hine’s poetry ‘Canadian’” (324). By that point, Hine had lived outside Canada for well over ten years. But even as early as 1961, when Hine still lived in Canada, Louis Dudek had taken him to task for deviationist tendencies:

[Hine’s] kind of poetry—however admirable it may seem—contains a peculiar vice of “this age of hard-trying”: a desire to excel in some direction completely irrelevant to poetry, an excess setting art above ordinary men and even ordinary poets, a kind of culture-mania that began in 1910, but that in Canada we associate with Toronto. (23)

Clearly, it is not enough for poetry to seem admirable. Poetry should be at the level of ordinary men, a level which is even below that of ordinary poets. Canadian poetry is ideally something done by poets for their intellectual inferiors, and Dudek feels that Hine’s vice prevents his poetry from being fit for mass consumption.

One of the assumptions behind Dudek’s review is that Canadian poetry should always be tied to landscape. Poetry not rooted in the soil will fall victim to the culture-mania which has already devoured Toronto. Dudek fought energetically against what he saw as the cultural elitism of the

Canadian poetry of his day and he accused various poets of various things. In the case of Hine, the crucial word is "vice." We can use Martin's study of the attacks on Patrick Anderson as a way to interpret this talk of peril, infection, and impurity in reference to Hine's work. Martin has shown how Dudek and others were ultimately so successful in promoting a vision of Canadian poetry as manly and as distinct from high Modernism that Anderson is now barely acknowledged as a Canadian poet ("Sex and Politics"; see especially 118-19). Dudek's latent homophobia is more obvious in his comments on Anderson than in the article on Hine, but in both cases his strategy is to present the things which make him uncomfortable—a connection with international modernism and a clear, if hardly explicit, homoeroticism—as betrayals of the Canadian ideal. In *Homographesis*, Lee Edelman points out that homosexuals are traditionally considered inauthentic people and that their sophistication is therefore seen as false "sophistication," a term which

for nearly a century, has been to the homophobic designation of gay men what "cosmopolitanism" has been to the anti-Semitic designation of Jews: the label by which they are stigmatized as posing a threat to the natural order through their embodiment of an urbanity that counterintuitively calls the natural into question. (227)

Without perhaps consciously sharing these homophobic assumptions, critics have tended to follow Dudek's lead in appealing to regionalism as a way to define and confine Canadian poetry and sophistication, under a variety of names, as a way of stigmatizing what is seen as inauthentic. A Canadian poem is supposed to be typical of the metropolitan region in which it is produced: virility for Montreal, culture for Toronto, and, I suppose, trees for Vancouver. A related, if more subtle, view of what Canadian poetry should be was set out by A.J.M. Smith in the *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* the year before Dudek's review appeared. There are three poems by Hine in this anthology; because of the year of Hine's birth his are the last poems in the book. In his introduction, Smith says that "whatever else it may be Canadian poetry is and always has been a record of life in the new circumstances of a northern transplantation" (xxiv). Smith ignores the fact that many Canadians were born in Canada rather than being transplanted and that many are transplanted to other parts of Canada or North America; he goes on to talk about two kinds of Canadian poetry, the second of which is linked to international Modernism: "The danger for the second

group was to be merely literary" (xxiv). More discreet than Dudek, Smith speaks of danger rather than vice, but the point is similar: verse which is modernist or cultured or, heaven forbid, literary may lose the right to call itself Canadian.

In her revision of the Oxford anthology in 1982, Margaret Atwood also included three poems by Hine, including "Point Grey," to which I shall return. Like Smith, Atwood sees the Canadian landscape itself as *fons et origo* of Canadian poetry; the poems in her anthology "record the collision between a particular language and a certain environment, each of which has affected the other" (xxvii). Any activity is displaced from the poetry itself, which becomes a passive recorder, like a tourist's slides of Niagara Falls or Lake Louise. Towards the end of her introduction, Atwood sums up her philosophy of the connection between poetry and landscape: "Of all the art-forms, poetry—rooted as it is in the inescapably concrete, both in images and in verbal usage—is the least easily translatable from place to place as well as from language to language" (xxxix). Atwood's dictum does not allow for poems which are, so to speak, rooted in rootlessness, poems which deal with dislocation and with not belonging and, most importantly for my purposes, poems which present dislocation and not belonging as desirable and good. While both Atwood and Smith are distinguished poets and critics, the definitions of Canadian poetry which they and the many critics who follow them promote (with widely varying levels of subtlety) leave out too much. With the laudable aim of identifying the distinctive qualities of Canadian poetry, the most famous and influential critics of our country have tended to impose a rather unappealing and restrictive orthodoxy.

One way to escape these generally unhelpful definitions is to leave Canada altogether, as Hine did. For the few American critics who have written on Hine, as for Americans in general, Canada is irrelevant. For them, Hine is really an American poet. For instance, at the beginning of a discussion on Hine, Richard Howard dismisses British Columbia as "that Boreal accommodation" (174). J.D. McClatchy speculates on the neglect of Hine in the United States: "his talents and achievements have been ignored not because he is considered a 'Canadian poet'; even if such a category can be invoked it is a matter of geography, not of sensibility or ambition" (167). What McClatchy means is obviously that Hine's Canadian qualities are *merely* "a matter of geography." The regional classifications of Canadian literary studies are swept away and replaced by the larger distinction of

American/not American, which is perhaps as far as American critics are interested in going. Although both Howard and McClatchy make many excellent points about Hine's poetry, I think something is lost in ignoring or being unaware of the fact that Hine is not just another American on whose national origins it would be unconstitutional to dwell. Even after Hine moved to the United States in the 1960s he continued to write frequently about the country in which he grew up.

I

For me, the aspect of Hine's poetry which deals with Canada is inextricably linked to the aspect of his poetry which deals with homosexuality. Unfortunately, Hine's reception as a gay poet has not been significantly better than his reception as a Canadian one. There are no poems by Hine in Stephen Coote's influential anthology of gay verse for Penguin, for instance, and no mention of Hine in St James Press's recent reference work on gay and lesbian literature. Examples of Hine's neglect by specialists in gay studies could easily be multiplied, perhaps partly because the critics seem to have been baffled by Hine's treatment of sexuality. Klinck remarks that

A good deal of erotic behaviour seems to be going on, or to have been going on—satiety and remorse are two discernible moods in a few of the poems—and the words “vice” and “lust” recur as words; but syntax and imagery combine to veil from the reader exactly what is happening. (325)

Even Robert K. Martin appears to be unable to lift the veil: “There are gay themes in almost all his work . . . but these are generally discreet and, in any case, ‘literary’” (“Coming Full Circle” 69). I would say that all the themes in Hine's poetry, and particularly in his early poetry, are handled in a way which is discreet and literary. This may well be the problem: gay critics tend to like open and explicit sexuality, at least in literature.

The clearest example of critical refusal to appreciate Hine as a gay poet is demonstrated in Douglas Chambers' article on Canadian literature in English for *The Gay and Lesbian Literary Heritage*. Hine does not measure up to Chambers' standards of gay poetry. Chambers contrasts him with Edward Lacey, who is not “constrained, as Hine often is, by the traditional forms his poems often take, and his risks are sometimes full of juicy joy. ‘“Wanna get sucked off?” he said; is better than prosy melancholy” (139). By contrast, in his article on Hine for the same work of reference, Patrick Holland sees him as one of the poets who “have given serious homosexual poetry a place in

the mainstream of American poetry” (365). Here again, though, Hine is classified as an American. Holland tells us that “[a]s an intensely literary poet with enviable classical learnedness, Hine’s affiliations are with the gay American formalists Richard Howard and James Merrill, rather than with any Canadian school of poets” (364). Unfortunately, Holland is probably right, but Hine’s lack of affiliation with Canadian poets should not disqualify him from being considered Canadian.

The poem which Chambers describes as characterized by “prosy melancholy” is “Point Grey,” from Hine’s 1968 collection *Minutes*. I want to use this poem and two others from the book (“August 13, 1966” and “Among Islands”) to show that Hine’s poetry can be both unmistakably Canadian and unmistakably gay (if not perhaps up to the standard of “juicy joy”). In order to do so, I shall use the theories of W.H. New and M. Travis Lane, who seem to me be to the most helpful of the critics who have attempted to define the role of geography in Canadian literature. New’s comments come from an article which asks a number of questions: “Is B.C. literature something happening in B.C.? or something B.C. people understand about themselves and their relation with the rest of Canada, the rest of the world? or something others perceive about people and life in B.C.? or all three?” (“A Piece of the Continent” 3) At the end of his article, he sums up his findings:

I have referred to the function of B.C. in others’ eyes as periphery, as playground, and as paradise; I have mentioned the tense relations between local aspirations for social propriety and an equally strong impulse to celebrate the wilderness; I have alluded to the mythological underpinnings of cultural attitude and to real socioeconomic inequalities, and I have implied a contrast between the prophet’s promise of absolute order and the trickster’s offer of a temporary balance. (“A Piece of the Continent” 27-28)

All three of the poems I shall discuss take place in British Columbia, in settings which could be considered paradisiacal: “Among Islands” in the Strait of Georgia and “August 13, 1966” and “Point Grey” on the beaches around Point Grey which have been for decades a place where men go to have sex with each other—both paradise and playground. Perhaps the most relevant part of New’s summary is the contrast between absolute order and temporary balance. These poems of Hine’s celebrate temporary balance: the speaker’s intimate connection with the unknown men with whom he has sex and with the landscape in which he is not quite a tourist, but certainly not a resident.

In her article, Lane proposes replacing regional considerations with formal ones (179). The fourth kind of poem she proposes—the self-displaying

lyric—fits the poems of Hine’s which I discuss. In fact, it does so literally, as two of these poems take place on beaches. Lane says that this kind of lyric explores “the poet/persona/self in its relation to something outside the self”; the “something outside” may include family and local history; nature; mythic archetypes or literary precedents; and sexual identity (188). As I read them, Hine’s poems do all of these things. All the poems are set in British Columbia, where Hine grew up; all take place in natural settings; all celebrate casual sexual encounters. In other words, all these poems engage the typically Canadian theme of the relationship of human beings to the landscape in which they find themselves. One of the distinctive aspects of Hine’s poems is his choice of natural environment. In these poems, he reminds us that waterways through resort areas and a beach in a suburb of a major city are as close as most Canadians get to the forest primeval or the frozen tundra beloved of anthologists and critics.

I want now to return briefly to Dudek, Smith, and Atwood. These critics provide a useful starting-point for my analysis and suggest ways in which Hine can be seen to be working in Canadian traditions after all. Dudek’s comments rest on the familiar opposition between culture and nature. Hine does not reject this opposition altogether: his point is rather that we cannot know nature except through culture. This point is emphasized by his choices of setting. To begin with, in the highly urbanized southern part of British Columbia, nature has to be officially designated as such in order to protect it from urban sprawl and in order to market it for the purposes of the tourist industry: ultimately, nature is that which is not urban. The settings of the poem—the beaches which are easily accessible from suburban neighbourhoods and the ferry which takes tourists from town to town through the Strait of Georgia—are situated on the boundary between nature and culture. Moreover, the culture we find in these poems is not simply or even primarily high culture (like, for instance, the international Modernism which Smith saw as a danger to Canadian poetry) but rather culture in its widest sense of the arrangements by which we live: the schedules of our working lives, which occasionally give us the leisure to become consumers of nature, family groups, the etiquette which governs meetings between strangers, and the place names with which we organize nature.

Smith called Canadian poetry “a record of life in the new circumstances of a northern transplantation.” Hine modifies this statement to show that the transplantation is a process that is endlessly repeated, and his interest in

these poems is with transplantation on an individual level, rather than with grand narratives of *coureurs de bois*, fur traders, and farmers. The cultural and economic practices I have mentioned do not occur once and for all: they recur in different forms at different times and, of course, different people experience these practices differently. I have chosen "Among Islands," "August 13, 1966," and "Point Grey" partly because they deal with various kinds of transplantation: of humans into nature, of the city-dweller into the country, of the gay man into public space. Thinking of transplantation as ongoing and as occurring on an individual level as well as on a collective one gives us another way to understand Atwood's comment that Canadian poems "record the collision between a particular language and a certain environment." We can take the particular language in this case as Hine's idiolect, a form of English used by a man who is gay and Canadian and a poet and who finds himself in an environment. This environment is simultaneously an area officially designated as nature and, more generally, the heterosexual world in which we all live. Written at the very beginning of the liberalization of the laws governing sexual behaviour, these poems show how gay men, in their collisions with each other and with the heterosexual world which surrounds them, have been able to make certain areas of public space their own, whether temporarily, as in the encounter on the ferry in "Among Islands" or in a more lasting fashion, as with the beaches in the other poems.¹

II

I shall begin with "Among Islands," which takes place on a ferry going through the Gulf Islands near Vancouver. The poem begins with a contrast between permanency and transience: while "The ferry is at home among the islands" (1),

We are exiles everywhere we go
Stranded upon the veranda, castaways
In the family living room. (3-5)

The family is not invoked as an image of intimacy or permanence and the space controlled by the family is not a refuge. The speaker and his male companion—are "stranded" as in a shipwreck between indoors and outdoors. The conventional idea of the family as a haven is further undermined when the men imagine that they were begotten "In haste and shame" (24) by people who were

like two floating islands
That clashed perhaps in ecstasy and parted
Leaving behind a continent of self. (26-28)

Here heterosexual sex is presented as casual and impermanent. The state of being an island, of not being "a piece of the continent," is the basic condition of humanity, a point suggested by Hine's epitaph for the poem: "Fratrum quoque gratia rara est" (Mutual regard is rare even among brothers). This line from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* refers to the breakdown of familial and affectionate bonds in the Iron Age. In the world of the poem, as in the Iron Age, the relationships which are supposed to be lasting and meaningful have ceased to function, and any affection, any "gratia," however impermanent, is valuable. In the context of the poem, this point of view would apply both to the manner in which the men imagine they were begotten and to their own coming together. The brief clash of ecstasy—or collision—is the highest good.

Hine shows how the speaker of the poem and his companion work out their desires and their connection as they move through the waters on the ferry and, in a parallel motion, through what would appear to be an entirely casual and meaningless meeting between two men in the process of going from one place to another. All three of the poems by Hine I wish to discuss take place in public, but while "August 13, 1966" and "Point Grey" take place on beaches (that is, in spaces which are traditionally seen as erotic and which are devoted to leisure), "Among Islands" is firmly situated in public space. The family home which is the poem's backdrop is generally held to be the centre or basis of society as a whole, but it is there that the men are "castaways"; for them, and for many gays, the interstices in which everyone is out of place provide the basis for a gay sense of belonging. "Among Islands" demonstrates that it is in the lack of regulation and in the fluidity of relations among people who are not at home that gays can create a space for themselves in what may be a hostile environment.

The appropriation of landscape for one's own uses in a journey is similar to the appropriation of language for one's own uses: language itself may be transformed by the individual. In "Among Islands," this transformation begins with place names. The speaker describes himself as "Natural where I am affected / And strangely moved by the very names of islands" (15-16). The names of the islands among which the ferry travels are "Created as the Word was out of nothing" (21). In "Among Islands," the names of the

islands are arbitrary: they are not organically part of the islands. The names exist as a way of measuring our passage from one place to another. By extension, the same is true of language itself and of personal names. When the speaker says he is natural where he is affected, he refers to the impossibility, in a world of arbitrary names, of knowing what the real individual or island is: rather than nature (the thing itself), he has only culture (the name given to the thing). The speaker implies that nature is itself a form of affectation and that it is in being affected by someone that real identity lies, whether the person who affects us is part of our lives on dry land or not. The referents for proper names (actual people or places) exist only in relation to other referents. For this reason, real names are merely a convenience and are not important in the context of the poem: "We respected the fiction of each other's names" (55). The names may be fictional because the men have given what are conventionally called false names or they may be fictional because even the name given one by one's parents is arbitrary; in other words, all names are false names. What matters is the nature of the passage, the intersection of two trajectories.

Hine is not simply referring to the use of an alias here. He is implying that even a real name is a sort of alias. This is especially significant when we remember that Daryl is not his first name anyway, as he was christened William Daryl Hine. In his autobiography, *In & Out*, Hine speaks of taking the name Thomas when he was baptised as a Catholic as an undergraduate:

the first I'd already suppressed
about puberty, liking my second
or middle name better. (44)

He makes it clear that Thomas never really took, and that everyone calls him Daryl. Or almost everyone:

till this day my own family won't
go along with me; only at "home"
am I known to the natives as William. (44)

Hine's discussion of his names in *In & Out* provides us with a way to interpret Hine's names symbolically (as he himself does): William is associated with his family and with childhood; Daryl with the beginning of sexuality; and Thomas with his attempts, in his late teens and early twenties, to give up his homosexuality. Hine's point in "Among Islands" about the arbitrary nature of names is literally true of himself: a name is always a fiction, even if it is the name by which one appears in, for instance, library catalogues.

Of course, learning someone's name is conventionally the beginning of acquaintance; like other forms of learning, this kind ends ignorance. But in this poem, Hine praises ignorance:

You can do anything
With that which you do not know, what you possess
Like the gifts of the gods, unknowing. Islands,
Sunny, south, pacific islands float
Upon a cloudy sea of ignorance;
And that mysterious love which has given us
Everything asks nothing in return. (38-44)

The two men among islands float free of the facts anchoring us in a world characterized by suffering and exclusion: "That August afternoon you told me nothing / And I asked you no questions" (52-53). Because of his ignorance of the facts, including his companion's name, the speaker is able to name the relationship however he chooses: "So welcome, brother" (39). The poem ends with an idyllic picture of the two men

Leaning in a fraternal silence on
The railing of the ferry, guest, companion
Side by side, cruising among islands. (56-58)

The impermanence of the connection between the two men is brought out by the pun on "cruising." Hine reminds us that the two are on a boat and their journey together will end. As well, the men are cruising in the sense of looking for new encounters. But their connection is a real one: Hine presents chance encounters as something which makes up for the absence of any serious connection in those relationships, such as familial ones, which are supposed to be our natural sources of affection and intimacy; the parallel in the landscape is that the islands—seen from a ferry during a vacation—are better than the mainland. Part of their superiority lies in the fact that there are many of them while there is only one mainland. The multiplicity of islands can be seen as offering almost unlimited opportunities for new encounters.

"August 13, 1966" is a title which could easily serve as the caption for just the sort of tourist photograph Canadian poetry is expected to imitate. But there is a tension between the blandly precise title and the opaque, allusive nature of what is actually going on in the poem. The unnamed speaker meets a unnamed and beautiful man on an unnamed beach:

Emerging from the naked labyrinth
Into the golden habit of the day,

Glittering with sweat, a wrestler
 With the sun, in his fierce palaestra,
 Every drop an angel and a man. (1-5)

Although the beach is not named, some of the details in the poem and its similarity to “Point Grey” suggest that Hine intends to invoke Wreck Beach or one of the other beaches at the foot of the cliffs around Point Grey. In that case, the labyrinth could be the network of paths where men go to have sex; Hine strengthens the sexual association by describing the labyrinth as naked. By contrast, the man, who is naked (as Greek wrestlers were in the palaestra), is described as being clothed in “the golden habit of the day.” This recalls Oscar Wilde’s description—as reported by Frank Harris—of athletes at the ancient Olympic Games as “nude, clothed only in sunshine and beauty” (146). The men are in a place where clothes are superfluous and nakedness is entirely appropriate. The sense that the man belongs to the landscape is emphasized by Hine’s description of him as both human and angelic, both an actual man and a sort of *genius loci*, sex with whom will provide a spiritual connection between the speaker and the beach and will collapse the dichotomy between nature and culture.

As the poem progresses, the speaker replaces the landscape as the focus of attention: “You stop before the simple backdrop, look / And listen not to the abstract ocean but to me” (7-8). But the landscape is not merely superseded; rather, it is incorporated into the encounter: “At our backs the breakers serially / Beat a tattoo upon the flat-bellied beach” (9-10). The beach is metaphorically equated with the desired human body, and the motion of the waves is like a series of lovers moving upon that body. This motion is a tattoo, at once fetishistic decoration and military display. In the latter sense, it recalls the image of the man as a wrestler. Both war and wrestling are acceptable ways for men to have physical contact with each other; in the world of the poem, these kinds of collision become sexual rather than hostile. The action of the human sphere—the two men together—and the action of the natural sphere—the waves and the sea—come together in a harmonious whole. What is typical of the collection *Minutes* as a whole is that the harmony, like musical harmony itself, is temporary, as the ending of the poem shows: “Meanwhile we sit absorbed and precious to each / Other, for the time being where we want to be” (13-14). The line break underscores the temporariness of the connection, but as this temporariness is equated with the serial nature of the waves themselves it represents an equivalence between humans and the landscape they inhabit.

“Point Grey,” one of Hine’s best known poems, names its setting, although even this naming is ambiguous. Point Grey is a cape and a neighbourhood, but the poem clearly takes place on the beaches at the end of the cape. The poem begins with the speaker’s taking advantage of “The first fine day . . . in months” (4) to walk down the cliffs to the beach: “Reflecting as I went on landscape, sex and weather” (6). These are the three main themes of this poem and of *Minutes* as a whole (the stress on the uncertainty of the weather certainly seems authentically British Columbian). One of the differences between this poem and “August 13, 1966” is that “Point Grey” initially deals with these themes in a less philosophical way, as we see when the speaker reaches the beach:

I met a welcome wonderful enough
 To exorcise the educated ghost
 Within me. No, this country is not haunted,
 Only the rain makes spectres of the mountains. (7-10)

The welcome can be seen both as a sexual act and as the open view of water and mountains. It is the official sign that he has passed from an intellectual world to one in which the tension between mind and body ceases. A metaphysical problem is seen, in a strikingly accurate description, to be a natural phenomenon: it is the mountains that are ghosts, if only in the rain. This image leads Hine to explore the educated ghost’s point of view. To him, the mountains raise the problem “of living and the pain it causes” (13) and lead him to the gloomy hypothesis that “the air we breathe is mortal / And dies, trapped, in our unfeeling lungs” (14-15). The idea here is that the usual human relation to landscape is characterized by hostility and the inability to understand the landscape intellectually.

After this, Hine returns to the welcome. The disjunction between humans and nature can be remedied by the fortunate and fortuitous connection of landscape, sex, and weather:

Not too distant the mountains and the morning
 Dropped their dim approval on the gesture
 With which enthralled I greeted all this grandeur. (16-18)

The speaker’s gesture is a sexual act which is also a recognition of and response to the natural beauty of the setting, and, of course, that natural beauty includes both the beach itself and the men who go to it. The fact that the mountains approve of the gesture indicates that, as in “August 13, 1966,” a balance, which, as the reference to “morning” suggests, is temporary, has

been reached between the man and the environment. And as in “August 13, 1966” where the speaker meets a man who is angelic as well as human, this balance is partly spiritual:

Beside the path, half buried in the bracken,
 Stood a long-abandoned concrete bunker,
 A little temple of lust, its rough walls covered
 With religious frieze and votary inscription. (19-22)

To the sexually charged gaze of the speaker, the dilapidated bunker and the obscene graffiti which cover it are imbued with a transcendental sexuality. The reference is to a series of concrete bunkers at the foot of the cliffs which were built as emplacements during the Second World War. As in “August 13, 1966,” hostile encounters between men become sexual.

In the final stanza of the poem, Hine returns to philosophical contemplation. At this point, however, he is more precise. The general problem of lines 11-13 has become specific:

Personally I know no one who doesn't suffer
 Some sore of guilt, and mostly bedsores, too,
 Those that come from itching where it scratches
 And that dangerous sympathy called prurience. (23-26)

Guilt, Hine suggests, is our natural condition. He puns on the etymology of prurience (from the Latin *prurio*, I itch) and reverses the traditional cliché about scratching where it itches in order to stress that sexual guilt does not require sexual action: the mere existence of sexual urges is enough to make us feel guilty. To scratch where it itches can be defended as natural behaviour, but if even the urges we cannot control are sources of guilt, as in fact they are in the Christian tradition, there would appear to be no hope. The speaker appears to have been possessed once again by his educated ghost.

And yet in the temporary paradise of the beach there is hope after all:

But all about release and absolution
 Lie, in the waves that lap the dirty shingle
 And the mountains that rise at hand above the rain. (27-29)

This release is both sexual fulfilment and a state of forgiveness, as the word absolution suggests. The release and absolution come from the landscape, which is once again sexualized: the waves lap the beach and the mountains, now clearly visible, rise with phallic potency above the rain. Sexuality, sacredness, and the perception of landscape merge in the experience of being at the beach: “Though I had forgotten it could be so simple, / A beauty of sorts is nearly always within reach” (30-31). Chambers calls this a “bloodless

reflection" (139) and, in *Articulating West*, New feels that the ending "affirms plaintively" the presence of a beauty which is only "of sorts' and there only for the moment" (151). What I have tried to show is that the temporariness of the beauty the poet finds—the fact that it is a collision rather than a permanent transplantation—is something which he treasures. It is only too easy to overrate the joys of permanence.

The educated ghost who turned the landscape and his place in it into complex philosophical issues now sees the simplicity of things: his relation to nature and to his sexuality can happily be combined in the setting of the beach. This sense of combination is reflected in the poem's title, as Point Grey is the name both of the geographical feature where the beach is located and of the neighbourhood above the beach. By giving this title to his poem—as opposed to calling it "Wreck Beach," for instance—Hine is perhaps being discreet, but he is also establishing a connection between the prosperous suburb at the top of the cliffs and the cruising ground at the bottom. The relation between the two could be seen as an opposition between culture (the suburb) and nature (the beach), which would literally be an opposition between high and low; Hine presents it instead as continuity. In his choice of settings for these three poems, Hine insists on the connection between humans and the landscape in which they live and through which they have made roads like the path which leads to the beach or the ferry route that takes people on holiday from the city to the cottage. The beauty of landscape and of sex and of weather, to return to the speaker's reflections at the beginning of "Point Grey," is within reach, just as the mountains are at hand. At the beach, sexuality and nature can be experienced simultaneously and ratiocination gives place, for a time, to physical activity. Hine's poems celebrate the fusion of the Canadian landscape and gay male sexuality in an unprecedented way, and if the conjunction of these things can only be achieved "nearly always," that is perhaps the most that can be hoped for in a climate so uncertain.

NOTES

- 1 For a discussion of this topic in an urban context, see Chauncey.

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