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PRAIRIE POETRY AND METAPHORS OF PLAIN/S SPACE

LAURIE RICOU

*Gertrude Stein says
you have to have flown across the Mid-West
seeing the patterns of the fields
to understand modern painting.
What I say is
you have to have walked that land
a whole Dakota afternoon
to understand modern writing.*

Stephen Scobie, McAlmon's Chinese Opera

McAlmon's *Chinese Opera*, the most significant prairie poem from Canada since Robert Kroetsch's *Seed Catalogue* and Eli Mandel's *Out of Place*, concerns "understand[ing] modern writing" more than it does "the Mid-West."¹ Indeed, it is only by the most expansive definition a prairie poem at all. Yet it is an appropriate source of epigraph, not only because it touches on metaphor, space, and poetry, but

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because its emphasis is characteristic of a shift in plains poetry and in its criticism, which prompts this essay. Furthermore, as a Canadian poet's tribute to a neglected American modernist, Scobie's poem might also remind us of the recent acceleration of comparative studies of Great Plains literature. Although most of us still talk out of a long immersion in one literature or the other, and have to stretch at the intersections (as in my dependence on anthologies for some sense of the breadth of poetry in the Midwest), the 49th parallel is not quite the barrier it once seemed.

"Prairie hides its surprises/in the open—" writes one young Saskatchewan poet.² Readers of prairie poetry are familiar with this sense of something utterly obvious, yet completely elusive. "How do we . . . find the astounding *here*?" Robert Kroetsch asks. "And the first answer, the one that must be resisted, is the attraction of the landscape itself."³ The assumption that prairie poetry is a meaningful category, having something to do with a sense of place, may similarly be so obvious it needs resisting. Arthur Adamson, one of the few critics who has grappled with the theory of literary regionalism, notes that "it is not description of

prairie scenery . . . that makes a regional writer, but the ability to translate descriptive elements into metaphor."⁴ Metaphor is the crucial subject, because it is the most profound human means of making connections, of relating to space, of finding intersections. As Paul Ricoeur puts it, "metaphor is the rhetorical process by which discourse unleashes the power that certain fictions have to redescribe reality."⁵

"Some people call their scenery flat," William Stafford marvels; "I think around them rise a riches and a loss."⁶ The fullest discovery of the riches and the loss, the prairie's "surprises," is certainly made through metaphor. "As figure, metaphor constitutes a displacement and an extension of the meaning of words."⁷ The definition suggests my intention: not to espouse a simple determinism—a particular landscape causes a particular perception—but to discuss, by consideration of some persistent metaphors in plains poetry, the displacement and extension of the meaning of words, especially such words as *space*, *place*, *plains*, and *prairie*. Such a broad definition of metaphor is appropriate to the overview attempted in the first half of this essay; a different enquiry might distinguish more particularly among various kinds of metaphor.

There are, of course, a great many more approaches to regional definition than that provided by space and metaphor. My emphasis may well hide the surprises of character portrait and absorbing story in much prairie poetry. It may also ignore the complexity of cultural definition, especially the importance of economic patterns, Indian mythology, and ethnic diversity. A study focusing on women writers might reveal very different patterns of metaphor.⁸ Finally, among essential qualifications, is that so many plains poems are so plain and almost without metaphor.

The contemporary taste for the plain sentences of "prose lyric" at least make the explicitly predicated metaphor unusual.⁹ Therefore, I use I. A. Richards's still useful terms, "tenor" and "vehicle," despite the limitations noted by Ricoeur, particularly where the metaphor has clearly identifiable elements and,

in Owen Thomas's words, the "metaphor . . . says explicitly (although perhaps only in its deep structure) that *A is B*." But where explicit equation is not evident, a broader conception of metaphor is required. As Owen Thomas goes on to explain, a *word* or *phrase* may be "figurative when the definitional matrix of the word, the set of features, has been modified in some way so that it acquires, temporarily and in a particular context, a different and non-literal meaning."¹⁰

Ricoeur cites Pierre Fontanier's *Les figures du discours* (1830) for its classification of metaphors embraced by a crucial pair: "'the physical metaphor, that is, one in which two physical objects (whether animate or inanimate) are compared;' and 'the moral metaphor, in which something abstract and metaphysical, something from the moral order, is compared with something physical, the meanings of both being affected whether the transfer is from the second to the first or from the first to the second.'"¹¹ This distinction is a crucial one for my study because the metaphor conceiving the physical landscape as something abstract and metaphysical provides the most interesting possibility for beginning to define a plains poetic. Even the persistent physical metaphors incline to the meanings inherent in metaphors dependent on abstraction (for which I would prefer some less problematic label, such as "metaphysical metaphor"). In this essay, I discuss examples of these two species of metaphor and examine the more purely metalinguistic concerns and associational methods of Edward Dorn and Robert Kroetsch, in order to suggest that the regional metaphors have become a means of exploring language and, therefore, metaphor itself.¹²

LANDSCAPE LYRICISTS

Terrence Heath's poem "The harp is strung," for example, imagines the prairie as a vast harp, where the wind plays a song for "those who / . . . died."¹³ The controlling metaphor—grassland is a harp, the lyre in the prairie lyric—defines the gentlest harmonies in nature. But

the poem concentrates on the strings, the tight wires, the lines, which give shape to the space, and especially on what is between the lines—plain space, absence:

so many things are not
present, not called up,
not heard.

This movement from “harp” to taut “strings” to the “not called up” describes metaphor in plains poetry. The traditional metaphor, involving a startling displacement and using a vehicle quite rich in sensory content, is found to be limited, even within the poem itself. Slightly more congenial is the less visible, almost two-dimensional image of the string. Tropes of absence, although they are fewer than metaphors dependent on image, are often, in their less precise suggestion, more resonant. For plains poetry, the truism that metaphor is “a way of speaking of the unknown in terms of the known” is likely to become speaking of the known (the plains) in terms of the unknown.¹⁴ The familiar metaphors in landscape lyrics redescribe the plains as a sea or a line, as the wind or the sky, or often as some abstraction. They seem to share a sense of the plainness of the plains, of the subtle beauty of unspectacular landscapes. John F. Nims’s “Midwest” is created by “delirious nature/Once in a lucid interval sobering here.” Metaphors for the minimal landscape themselves avoid the delirious, translating it as a space of incomprehensible simplicity, a place so obvious and encompassing as to be nonexistent. The memorable phrase “depth of surface” catches for me the common element in these metaphors, just as, for Dorn, it sums up “the whole meaning of the prairie.”¹⁵

Prairie schooners and oceans of wheat seem ordinary; “the grassy sea” is almost a dead metaphor.¹⁶ As writers from Herman Melville to Rudy Wiebe have shown, the potential in the proposition that the prairie is a sea is very great.¹⁷ But even with this most sensorily vivid of the metaphors discussed here, a prominent suggestion is that of a landscape of immobile

motion, whose solidity is an illusion. Beyond us there is always “a stretch of open country / That strives into the sea.” The sea metaphor does not so much suggest the appearance, or smell, or feel of the prairie as it suggests a space that cannot be known by the senses nor, therefore, by the mind: “not a single white sail of meaning / broke the horizon, though we waited for hours.”¹⁸

That long, uninterrupted line of horizon is almost as prominent an image for the landscape lyricists. Indeed, as in Heath’s “The harp is strung,” almost any line will do to give definition to a space imagined to be without contours and natural lines. Images of roads, fences, railways are all fascinating: they are so definite, yet they disappear in the near distance. Robert Sward’s “Turnpike” describes such a road: “we were in the air, the hole that went through / Itself.” Gary Geddes, in “Noon Train,” finds in Jean-Paul Lemieux’s painting an apt image to sum up a book of prairie memories: “it is not more / than a diminishing line of brown / in two grey fields.” Not surprisingly, the telephone or telegraph wire is another diminishing line of particular importance to the plains poet: it not only shapes space but connects a community. Yet the associations are usually more poignant than promising, because the distance remains. “My voice . . . is drawn thin by the wire,” claims Ted Kooser; “the one you hear goes far / and ghostly voices whisper in,” answers William Stafford.¹⁹ Always close to the associations of these various lines is the line of verse and the geometric definition of line. The line reduces space to two dimensions, then, it seems, to one, and ultimately to pure concept: the prairie becomes a visualization of something that does not exist, a *distance* between two points.

That distance is often filled by wind. Eli Mandel brings the two metaphors together when his “Saskatchewan Surveyor” pauses “at a correction line / to read the wind’s grammar.” The relationships established by wind are, of course, among the most elusive imaginable. When Garry Raddysh compares the “small sounds” he makes moving in the flat land to

"the wind/in agony/as it struggles/not to take root/in the prairie," he is posing the possibility that prairie is nothing more than wind. Again the metaphor contains suggestions about sound and language. The wind implies the dimension of a plains poetic that might be found in voice; Marcia Lee Masters writes of her father, Edgar Lee Masters: "the long/Terse-drying winds swirled up from turgid wheat/Were in your words."²⁰

The wind, invisible yet tangible, immediately raises possibilities of a space whose spaciousness is implied by metaphors creating a landscape both invisible and intangible. Several other familiar metaphoric vehicles test these limits. One is snow—most memorably, because most simply, used in George Bowering's "A Sudden Measure":

This sudden snow;
Immediately
the prairie is!²¹

Another is light itself or sky and therefore the infinite universe. For example, when Harley Elliott writes that "we are a tiny constellation of lights," the solid landscape once again disappears as the prairie becomes cosmic space.²²

The prominence of such relatively indeterminate images, near the limit of sensory apprehension, might make still more attractive metaphors in which image itself disappears. Abstractions are, perhaps, the ideal vehicle for metaphors conveying the plainness of plains space. In the fifth section of the opening part of Thomas McGrath's *Letter to an Imaginary Friend*, in which the poet remembers his college education, there is a droning on flatness presumably because the notion is so cliché. The logic of flatness dictates that abstraction takes over:

Maximum entropy
End of circularity, everyone flat in
the streets, Equal.²³

Both experience and place itself lose dimension, shape, or image and can only be expressed by abstraction. In one sense it doesn't seem to

matter what abstraction—entropy or equality—as long as it can't be seen or counted or touched. In a poem titled "In Open Prairie," Kenneth McRobbie claims, "We have/got used to/being overwhelmed." That reaction seems to motivate the turning to abstraction. William Stafford can't analyze "The Peters Family": "a no-pattern had happened to them:/... Their world went everywhere." Douglas Barbour evokes the distances with the grand abstraction, a "magnanimity." Openness is inherent in concept, as McRobbie again shows:

innocence
rises
from the plain,

illusion
straining
into plane²⁴

McRobbie's poem indicates one further extension of this approach, when *both* elements of the metaphor are abstractions. When the possible metaphors run out and the abstractions are "illusion," pun and tautology remain. Space might be a metaphor for space, plain a metaphor for plain. "Matter stares at space as dry as space."²⁵ As Naim Kattan tellingly remarks, there's a Nabokovian subterfuge here, which might remind us of the appropriateness of Scobie's linking Stein, the Midwest, and modernism: "In *Lolita* Nabokov describes this space, always similar to itself, forever repeating, and as in any tautology, the repetition adds nothing to the sense."²⁶

EDWARD DORN AND
ROBERT KROETSCH

At this playfully subversive limit to our subject, it is appropriate to turn to Edward Dorn and Robert Kroetsch, poets who seem to use the language of place "to understand modern writing." Putting together Dorn's "Idaho Out" (1965) and Kroetsch's "Seed Catalogue" (1977) might, at first, reinforce all the conventions about American-Canadian differences. In

Dorn's poem is the frantic energy of an outsider on the road; in Kroetsch's poem is the quieter commitment of a settler dreaming the roots of a community. Dorn seems compelled to a style so distinctively personal that it is almost private; Kroetsch, however personal his style, remembers his model, the catalogue that everyone reads. "Idaho Out" is a space poem, of moving through, and "Seed Catalogue" is a time poem, of growing and growing up. Thus, they represent the usual national differences that Canadians, at least, love to cherish. Naim Kattan expresses the traditional distinction this way:

The civilization of the United States is a civilization of space without time. It cut its ties with the mother country. Communities in turn chose to enlarge their space, proceeding from discovery to the conquest and from the conquest to the devastation of a nature that took the place of time. . . . In his exploration of the West, the Canadian followed another path. . . . The link with time was not cut and space was simply the prolongation of another space. . . . Freedom for the Loyalist lay not in the conquest of space but in faithfulness to a tradition and the conquest of the self.²⁷

Dorn and Kroetsch, both "very turned on by paradoxical aspects of thinking," would enjoy the neatness of this contrast but distrust the easiness of the dichotomy. In the two poems are many similarities that embrace the paradox. Both poets use poetic forms that assert endless change. Both poets are stimulated by absence: they find the "fulcrum that's art" in a place and culture that is not "too obviously interesting."²⁸ Both poets incorporate many of the metaphors discussed above. But, most crucially, they invert the original direction of a search for regional metaphor and, in looking for a metaphor for language, turn to the abstract plains space that was once the primary subject.

"IDAHO OUT"

In "Idaho Out," space is comprehended, first, by traveling through it. The journey from Pocatello to Missoula "hauling . . . / furniture,"

and the return, carefully mapped, give narrative underpinning to the poem.²⁹ But the space embraced is much more than that seen along the highway; the movement of the poem is *out*, imaginatively, in many directions: to "salt lake" (p. 109) and "alameda," to "nebraskan hills" and "archipelagoes," to "the peneplain / of central america and the jerseys" (p. 110). Again, definition seems to lie in the undefined: the poem's place is everywhere; or, in other words, the direction of the poem is simply *out*, that is, beyond limits and boundary.

But in Dorn's love of paradox, the abstractness of "out" is balanced by the particularity of the "natural landscape," "the thing to be known" (p. 107), as Dorn proclaims in his epigraph, quoting the cultural geographer Carl O. Sauer. In making his poem not only a travel narrative but also an extended gloss on Sauer's "The Morphology of Landscape," Dorn incorporates a theoretical reflection on space more overtly intellectual than that in any other prairie poem I can think of. Sauer's vocabulary permeates the poem; the term that is most central is "areal" (p. 107). The essence of geography, Sauer argues, is "the study of the areal or habitat differentiation of the earth." "We are interested," he says, "in that part of the areal scene that concerns us as human beings because we are part of it, live with it, are limited by it, and modify it."³⁰ If, on the one hand, space is a diffuse, unreachable "out," it is also "habitat," and when Dorn uses the term "areal," he is insisting on the complex, anthropocentric, interdependent phenomena that create a landscape:

The objects which exist together in the landscape exist in interrelation. We assert that they constitute a reality as a whole that is not expressed by a consideration of the constituent parts separately, that area has form, structure, and function, and hence position in a system, and that it is subject to development, change, and completion.³¹

It would take a book to explore the forms and structures and functions of Dorn's area, from bottle-shaped valley to boys trespassing in bars, from bitterroot to a "nature / . . . seeding

very badly" (p. 115). What can be done here is to show how Dorn's long poem seems to comprehend many of the familiar metaphors found in the lyrics. Obviously the poem, set on a road, involves "following/of line" (p. 111), or less tangibly, "a line of time" (p. 110). "My / peculiar route is across / the lost trail pass past," Dorn tells us. Here, playing with the forms suggested by the place names, the poet shows the road itself disappearing, the vanishing point of plains lines: "the poles have been strung for our time together" (p. 107).

The interdependence of "the phenomena that make up an area" is the object both of Sauer's scientific task and of Dorn's poetic task. The image of lines provides the vehicle linking "place facts" to a disappearing place.³² The flow of this poem is the flow of images in a window: there is no sea, but the "rushing edges" (p. 114) of road/river: this rushing is the flow of language, since Bitterroot is not only the showy state flower of Montana, but the name of both a river and a national forest.

The "accord to the earth" (p. 112) that Dorn treats is movingly, but always easily and jokingly, conveyed by the archetypal metaphor of the land as woman. It is the one metaphor that seems to deny disappearance, to depend on the tactile rather than the intangible properties of its vehicle. On the other hand, there is the paradoxically untactile; Dorn takes us "on a trip / that had no point." One expression of the aimlessness is that the journey could be occurring solely in the sky: "we stopped in the biting / star lit air often" (p. 113). Dorn teasingly reinforces the sensation of the vanishing plains landscape by toying with the state motto: "the sky / is not / bigger in Montana" (p. 115); and later: "the sky is a hoax" (p. 121). Moving in sky, which itself is illusory, again is typical of the inclination to define a difficult abstraction, *space*, through the abstract or nearly abstract. Space is not only the distance between objects but the cosmic infinitude:

So he goes anywhere apparently
anywhere and space is muddled
with his tracks. [P. 115]

Knowing the place is not for Dorn a cataloging of the metaphors that comprise a plains poetic (although he seems to do that), but an analysis of metaphors to show their limitations, an exploration of the metaphor in language itself. Here, for example, infinitude might also be a patch of kitchen linoleum, and some ink spots designating an undefined place ("anywhere") become a metaphor, "apparently," for a specific location. Dorn is at least as much concerned with the morphology of language as with the morphology of landscape. And nowhere is this interest more obvious than in Dorn's attention to the possibilities of "areal," that paradigm for the whole poem. Not only does "areal" describe the complex of interrelationships through which man makes space a habitat, but the "totality of its forms" themselves make Dorn's space known. By introducing the term in his fifth line, provoked by an association with air, Dorn reminds us that his space is *aerial* and therefore made of air, and unsubstantial. The literary allusion, pointing the agile fun and fantasy of his method, Dorn makes explicit: "areal is hopefully Ariel" (p. 107). The overt references to an areal knowledge frame the poem. "I am ashamed of my country," Dorn reflects in the last section of the poem,

that, not as areal reality, but as act
it shames me to be a citizen in
the land where I grew up. [P. 120]

Here, though it is surely obvious from the beginning, Dorn's feeling for the morphemes stands out. Embedded in the word is the "real," Sauer's sense of the natural landscape as the source of whatever truth might be known. But "the problem for the writer of the contemporary long poem," Kroetsch has written, "is to honor our disbelief in belief."³³ Dorn's spacious word is surely ideal, because *a-*, as a prefix, denotes the unreal, or, better, an absence of a sense of reality (the matter, on the analogy of *apolitical*, is not even raised in the consciousness). No wonder, then, that "areal" may also be read as "a reel," a good-humored,

system . . . has some kind of unity."³⁷ The most obvious of the possible unities in "Seed Catalogue" is the story of the seeding and growth of the poet himself. Again, as in Dorn's poem/journey, there are many provocative directions to follow. One form of growing up might be found in language itself:

a person passes from young childhood to adolescence when he recognizes the existence of abstractions. He moves from adolescence to maturity when he recognizes that abstractions can be discussed and partially defined metaphorically.³⁸

The pattern of questions (how do you grow . . . ?) implies such a movement from image to abstraction to image as metaphor. Asking the question, how do you grow a gardener (or a lover, or a town) precedes the same question about the abstract "past" and about the poet. The final question—"how do you grow a garden?"—in which the syntax is juggled for the first time (reminiscent of Dorn's splitting up of "areal"), marks the poet's manipulation of language to test its full metaphorical potential.

Like "Idaho Out," Kroetsch's poem notices some of the familiar metaphors of the landscape lyricists, while it appears to question their limitations. One indication of the questioning lies in a formal tension in the poem described by Peter Thomas: the poem moves back and forth between "story . . . having always a tendency towards hyperbole, the tall tale" and "the song of love, which requires the close intimacy of naming."³⁹ The metaphors I have been discussing usually appear in the lyrics, where the concern predictably is with place and feeling, not with voice and event.

As in the Dorn work, the metaphor of sea has almost no place in Kroetsch's poem. Wind, however, does have some prominence as one possible definition of "the home place":

No trees
around the house.
Only the wind.
Only the January snow.
Only the summer sun. [P. 49]

This section taken by itself implies that Kroetsch's space is blank and threateningly inhuman. But in this poem the conventional image is likely to seed its contrary—in this case, the flourishing home. Later, for example, Kroetsch seems to parody the conception of plains as cosmos by recognizing that an Edmonton hotel's revolving restaurant is "the turning center in the still world" (p. 60). Instead of being lost in a whirling universe, the poet comprehends all his space. Kroetsch also knows the tradition of mapping the prairie with lines "of barbed wire" (p. 58), but here insists that an equally good job can be done with Uncle Freddie's "perfect horse-barns" (p. 63).

Yet neither are as crucial as the lines of print, the lines of poetry. The primary subject—words are a catalogue of infinitely fronding seeds—becomes inescapable in the seventh section of the poem. The abstractions, as the poet matures and as the focus swings to the *how* of poetry, can be defined, partially, by metaphor. In the poem's opening section the metaphors are buried and incidental, part of the energy of the rural voice, but apparently not part of the young child's consciousness. By section four the speaker is becoming aware of abstraction. When he poses the question of community—"How do you grow a prairie town?" (p. 53)—the answer begins with an extended metaphor:

The gopher was the model.
Stand up straight:
telephone poles
grain elevators
church steeples.
Vanish, suddenly: the
gopher was the model. [P. 53]

Here, in a personal and unusual metaphor based on a very precise image, Kroetsch might be writing a description of the usual metaphors of the landscape lyricists. The metaphoric vehicle disappears as soon as the reader focuses on it: "Everything: an absence" (p. 53).

Kroetsch confirms the central importance of this paradox by immediately following the

vanishing gopher with the longest sustained passage in the poem, the stunning catalogue of absence. Here, at the center of the poem, an overwhelming abstraction—absence multiplied and remultiplied—is the obsession. Kroetsch seems to gloss this turning point in his article on the long poem:

Place becomes space.

The beautiful blankness of the page.

Absence.

In the middle of the argument, of the journey, of the descent: where the traditional traveler, in the traditional story, traditionally receives the secret knowledge that enables him both to return and go on:

we come to a dispatch of silence.

Place is no longer the subject. The definitive regional poem is an antiregional poem. It contains the regional metaphors—they are catalogued because the subject is language itself. Words are the seeds, and they are, on the page, silent. Like Dorn, Kroetsch does not use language to define space, but senses the possibility of defining language through the language of plains space. At the vanishing center of the "Seed Catalogue," poetry emerges as the subject and the growing poet finds part of the poem's definition in one of those familiar metaphors:

This is a prairie road.

This road is the shortest distance
between nowhere and nowhere.

This road is poem. [P. 58]

Kroetsch is able to exploit his sense of a plains poetic in order to deny it. As he notes in another lyric in the last section of the poem:

West is a winter place.

The palimpsest of prairie

under the quick erasure

of snow, invites a flight. [P. 66]

Here in summary are the notions I have traced in this essay. Space in the West has been conceptualized insistently through a sense of its near disappearance. The landscape is erased; the landscape is a subtext, a dream, or perhaps a buried seed. In his meditation on the long poem, Kroetsch quotes Gerald L. Bruns, *Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language*: "the very inadequacy of language becomes a resource"; and again, "Modern poetry is nondiscourse: the modern poetic act is not intentional; it is a refusal to mean."⁴¹ Any search for the poetics of plain/s space is likely to come, as Kroetsch does in his poem, "up against it." But Kroetsch shows us that a way out of the frustration lies in a paradox such as Bruns defines. For the prairie poet, that is, the very inadequacy of the landscape becomes a resource. Both Kroetsch and Dorn confirm this recognition by conveying some sense of language's elusiveness through the tradition of a plain plains space which, so the prominent metaphors insist, refuses to mean.

NOTES

1. Stephen Scobie, *McAlmon's Chinese Opera* (Dunvegan, Ont.: Quadrant Editions, 1980), p. 11.

2. Garry Raddysh, "Suspension Bridge," in *Eye of a Stranger* (Moose Jaw, Sask.: Coteau Books, 1978), p. 16.

3. Robert Kroetsch, "Preface," in *Dreaming Backwards: The Selected Poetry of Eli Mandel* (Don Mills, Ont.: General Publishing Co., 1981), [p. 8].

4. Arthur Adamson, "Identity through Metaphor: An Approach to the Question of Regionalism in Canadian Literature," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 5 (Spring 1980): 93. Adamson continues the study in "Notes from a Dark Cellar: Ruminations on the Nature of Regionalism and Metaphor in Mid-Western Canadian Poetry," in *RePlacing* (Downsview, Ont.: ECW Press, 1980), pp. 223-41. Much of this book is relevant to the topics discussed in this paper.

5. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, trans. by Robert Czerny

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 7.

6. William Stafford, "In Response to a Question," in *Heartland: Poets of the Midwest*, ed. by Lucien Stryk (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1967), p. 213.

7. Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, p. 3.

8. I am particularly fascinated by the directions in which a feminist poetic might take this study. But, certainly, a separate essay would be necessary to present this approach adequately.

9. Jonathan Holden, *The Rhetoric of the Contemporary Lyric* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), p. 57.

10. Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, especially pp. 76-87; Owen Thomas, *Metaphor and Related Subjects* (New York: Random House, 1969), pp. 47, 55.

11. Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, pp. 58-59.

12. Here I develop a comparison introduced by Eli Mandel in "The Border League: American 'West' and Canadian 'Region,'" *Crossing Frontiers: Papers in American and Canadian Western Literature*, ed. by Dick Harrison (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1979), p. 110.

13. Terrence Heath, "The harp is strung," in *Interstices of Night* (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1979), p. 46.

14. John Ciardi and Miller Williams, eds., *How Does a Poem Mean*, 2d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p. 241.

15. John F. Nims, "Midwest," in *Heartland*, ed. by Stryk, p. 150; Edward Dorn, *Views*, ed. by Donald Allen (San Francisco: Four Seasons Foundation, 1980), p. 13.

16. Joseph Langland, "The Wheel of Summer," in *Heartland*, ed. by Stryk, p. 101.

17. There is an entire article devoted to this subject: John J. O'Connor, "Saskatchewan Sirens: The Prairie as Sea in Western Canadian Literature," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, nos. 28 and 29 (1980): 157-71.

18. Michael Heffernan, "A Figure of Plain Force," and Ted Kooser, "A Place in Kansas," in *Heartland II: Poets of the Midwest*, ed. by Lucien Stryk (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1975), pp. 107, 136.

19. Robert Sward, "Turnpike," in *Heartland*, ed. by Stryk, p. 225; Gary Geddes, "Noon Train," in *Snakeroot* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1973), unpaginated; Ted Kooser, "Phoning My

Son Long Distance," in *Heartland II*, ed. by Stryk, p. 138; William Stafford, "Long Distance," in *Heartland*, ed. by Stryk, p. 217.

20. Eli Mandel, "Saskatchewan Surveyor," in *Twelve Prairie Poets*, ed. by Laurence Ricou (Ottawa: Oberon, 1976), p. 105; Raddysh, "The Land is Flat," in *Eye of a Stranger*, p. 5; Marcia Lee Masters, "The Man, My Father," in *Heartland II*, ed. by Stryk, p. 154.

21. George Bowering, "A Sudden Measure," in *Twelve Prairie Poets*, ed. by Ricou, p. 43.

22. Harley Elliott, "Outside Abilene," in *Heartland II*, ed. by Stryk, p. 72. A fine compendium of these associated metaphors is Howard Schwartz's "Map" in the same anthology, pp. 192-93.

23. Thomas McGrath, *Letter to an Imaginary Friend: Parts I and II* (Chicago: Swallow, 1970), p. 37.

24. Kenneth McRobbie, "In Open Prairie," in *First Ghost to Canada* (Winnipeg: Turnstone, 1979), p. 38; William Stafford, "The Peters Family," in *Heartland*, ed. by Stryk, p. 216; Douglas Barbour, "Poem: The Distances," in *Twelve Prairie Poets*, ed. by Ricou, p. 23; McRobbie, "Against Light," in *First Ghost to Canada*, p. 36.

25. Stephen Tudor, "Harold," in *Heartland II*, ed. by Stryk, p. 224.

26. Naim Kattan, "Space in the Canadian Novel of the West," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 4 (July 1973): 104.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 105.

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31. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

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34. Robert Kroetsch, "Seed Catalogue," in *Field Notes 1-8, A Continuing Poem: The*

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36. Frederick Philip Grove, *Fruits of the Earth* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, New

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37. Kroetsch, "For Play and Entrance," p. 62.

38. Thomas, *Metaphor*, p. 6.

39. Peter Thomas, *Robert Kroetsch* (Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas & McIntyre, 1980), p. 27.

40. Kroetsch, "For Play and Entrance," p. 72.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.