

## APPENDIX A

### EXAMPLES OF SENSE OF PLACE

Expressions of sense of place may range from simple statements like "we love it here" or warm nostalgia for childhood places through to dramatic reactions to the loss or destruction of significant places. Some examples follow.

Dewey Nickerson, an old fisherman from Sable Island off the coast of Nova Scotia, who crawled around the deck of his father's Cape Island boat before he could walk, tells broadcaster Bill McNeil about his affection for Sable Island, in a simple, unadorned way:

My people were always fishermen as far back as anyone can remember, on and around Sable and Seal Islands, off the shore of Nova Scotia ....A lot of people wonder why we stay here on Sable Island. I suppose it's not much of a place for anybody looking at it from the outside. It's really just a long strip of sand--twenty-two miles long--no trees or anything like that, and the weather can be gosh awful--gale winds, storms and that--but we love it!<sup>1</sup>

Another man of the sea, Otto Kellerman, tells the story of a young sailor trying to get home from the Boston docks in the 1920's-- a story which echoes his own feelings about his native Newfoundland:

"Why don't you stay here. A lot of Newfoundlanders are making good money up here." [said the Captain who refused to let the young man on board his ship]. "No," said the young man, "I'd rather be back on my western boat, fishing off Cape St. Mary's, on one meal a day, than five meals up here."

I thought about that young man many times over the years, because that's the way I feel about Newfoundland myself. I'd rather be poor here than rich anywhere else in the world.<sup>2</sup>

John McPhee has written about the New Jersey Pine Barrens, an enormous stretch of near wilderness located incongruously in the most

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Bill McNeil, Voice of the Pioneer (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978), p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Ibid., p. 180.

densely populated state of the United States. He comments on the "pineys'" affection for their forests and hills and bogs:

I have met Pine Barrens people who have, at one time or another moved to other parts of the country. Most of them tried other lives for a while, only to return unreluctantly to the pines. One of them explained to me, "It's a privilege to live in these woods."<sup>1</sup>

He describes one resident, a quiet loner called Bill Wasovich, who has grown up in the Pine Barrens and who has been engaged in the back-breaking job of clearing out a four acre bog (given to him by his employer) in order to grow cranberries:

I asked him if the land was actually his. He said that his employer had given it to him, but that he had no deed. "It's as good as my bog," he went on. "They can't take it away from me. They could, legally. But they'd have to get the state troopers. They take this bog, they take me with it. I'll get up here with my rifle. I took out stumps in here the size of chairs."<sup>2</sup>

Boyd Gibbons has written about the clash between the residents of the Eastern Shore of Maryland and developer James Rouse over the proposed residential development of Wye Island, which is almost uninhabited. He describes some of the natives of the Eastern Shore who used to live on the Island:

Like people anywhere who have lived in one place their entire lives, the natives of the Eastern shore have an intimate sense of their surroundings....Although it has been forty years or more for some, since they left Wye Island, they remember the island as if their departure had only been yesterday. Howard Melvin says he can draw a map of every field on Wye Island. Sam Whitby says that if you took him blindfolded to any place along its river banks he could tell instantly where he was. "I know this island", he says.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John McPhee, The Pine Barrens (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1967), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>3</sup>Boyd Gibbons, Wye Island (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 71.

Boyce Richardson has described the clash between the Cree Indians of the James Bay area of Quebec, many of whom still hunted and fished in the wilderness of "the bush", and the provincial government of Premier Robert Bourassa, which wanted to flood much of the area for the massive James Bay hydro-electric scheme. He discusses the plight of one young Indian, Charlie Bossum, who, like many of his contemporaries, seems to be caught between two worlds, the white man's world (he works part-time in the mines and has two houses, one in Chibougamau and one on the Mistassini reserve) and the Indians' world (he hunts part-time on his "territory"):

"When I first started hunting, there was an abundant supply of fur-bearing animals and fish and fowl, but you can feel the white man is coming closer and closer. Even if there are hardly any animals left on my territory, I would still feel much better to be there than where I am right now. I think everybody who loves and respects the land would feel the same way."

He admits to a great confusion about his two houses, one in Mistassini and one in Chibougamau. For neither of them is really home to him. "I do not have that true feeling about them. Home is when I'm in the bush."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the book, Richardson gives evidence of the Indians' profound attachment to their land. He describes one gathering of Cree hunters (who had been flown out of the bush specially to discuss a government offer of settlement):

I went to the meeting in Mistassini. Weather-beaten and ragged from their months of hard work in the bush, the hunters gathered in the school auditorium, and when they got to their feet they spoke of only one thing, their land. They spoke with the passion, feeling and perception of poets. They talked about the purpose that the Creator had when he created the earth and put the animals on it and gave them to the Indians to survive on. They talked of how they had worked and suffered for the land, and of how the animals and the land had helped them to survive. They talked about the white man, and his thoughtless ways, his failure to ask

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<sup>1</sup> Boyce Richardson, Strangers Devour the Land (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1975), p. 99.

their permission before he invaded their lands, the things they had silently observed him do over the last two decade . Over and over again they declared their affection for the land and their knowledge that its destruction meant their destruction.<sup>1</sup>

This theme of attachment to the land is emphasized by Robert Coles in his study of children of migrant farm workers, Southern sharecroppers, and Appalachian mountain people. He writes:

Yet, for all three [despite the differences] the land means everything, the land and what grows on it, what can be found under it, what the seasons do to it, and what man does to it, and indeed what long ago was done to it by a mysterious Nature, or an equally baffling chronicle of events called History, or what it was made by God....

For all the distinctions to be made, the classifications and comparisons, the "cross-cultural" similarities or the psychological and sociological differences, what is shared among these people might be called something of the spirit: a closeness to the land, a familiarity with it, and despite the suffering and the sacrifice and rage and hurt and pain, a constant regard for that land, an attachment to that land, a kind of love.<sup>2</sup>

In one of many examples of this profound attachment, Coles describes how Appalachian children he has observed "are almost symbolically or ritualistically given over to the land"<sup>3</sup> and tells of a newborn baby being taken outside to see his "daddy's land" in Deep Hollow:

Danny's first encounter with the Appalachian land took place minutes after he was taken, breathing and screaming, from his mother. Laura describes what happened "...When Danny was born Dorothy took him over and showed him the blackberries and said it won't be long before he'll be eating them....Then he was still crying and she asked me if I didn't think he ought to go outside and see his daddy's corn growing up there good and tall....Ken held him high over his head and pointed him around like he was one of the guns being aimed. I heard him telling the baby that here was the corn, there was the beets, there was the cucumbers....He [came in to see

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. 307-308.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Coles, Migrants, Sharecroppers and Mountaineers - Volume II of Children of Crisis (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), pp. 5, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 203.

me and] said did I mind the little fellow lying out there near his daddy's farm, getting to know Deep Hollow, and I said no, why should I, and he's better off there than in here with me..."<sup>1</sup>

Attachment to place is not only a rural or wilderness phenomenon. Michael Young and Peter Willmott, for example, studied the East London working class district of Bethnal Green. Some of the residents gave rather simple statements of belonging in one spot, and of not belonging in another:

"It's all right on this side of the canal," said Mrs. Gould, who lives in Bow. "I wouldn't like to live on the other side of the canal. It's different there."<sup>2</sup>

More dramatic evidence of attachment to the area was provided during the Blitz of World War II:

Other researchers have reported how difficult it was to get people to move even in the war:

Many stories were told of families who would rather camp in the kitchens of their uninhabitable blitzed houses or sleep in public shelters than accept accommodation in another area of the borough.<sup>3</sup>

Sense of place may be felt for a currently known place or for a remembered place. Robert Thomas Allen writes warmly and vividly about growing up on the Danforth in Toronto during the 1920's. He describes a summertime visit "up the bush" (as he and his friends called it) to their camp in the Don Valley (which now contains an expressway and is over-looked by highrise apartment buildings):

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 212-213.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Young and Peter Willmott, Family and Kinship In East London (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962; originally published 1957), pp. 111.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 111. They quote R. Glass and M. Frenkel, "How They Live At Bethnal Green," Contact: Britain Between East and West (London: Contact Publications Limited, 1946), p. 43.

Nobody today can get farther away from the city in a hard day's drive (or even flight) than we used to get when we disappeared into that small curve of valley. Each section had a character and mood of its own: a dry, breezy ridge of oak trees; a dark swampy grove where we once saw an owl, a fierce and watchful visitor from another world; a muddy stretch of the bank of the river where the water gurgled and rolled around a big smooth granite boulder with underwater weeds streaming downstream like pennants; a patch of sandy beach about twenty-five feet long that had the feeling of a tropical island; and an eroded clay-and-sand bank, known as The Cliffs . . . .The immediate surroundings of the camp became intimate parts of our lives--every stump, log, weed, and stone; a patch of jewelweed that sent up a spray of dew and popped seeds when we walked through it; a fat smooth, barkless log that felt warm and friendly beneath our pants.<sup>1</sup>

He describes a more recent visit to this much loved, but much changed place and his ability to project himself back to the earlier era:

But for me everything is still there, just the way it was when we left it years ago. So are the other places I knew when I was a kid, although most of them have disappeared physically.<sup>2</sup>

Wallace Stegner, on a visit to his prairie boyhood home of "Whitemud" forty years after leaving it, describes his reluctance (and refusal) to revisit the site of his family's former homestead, some forty miles out of town. For him (unlike Robert Thomas Allen), the visit would be too painful. He would be all too aware of the changes:

It would be no more than thirty or forty miles out of my way, now, and yet I do not turn south to try to find it, and I know very well why. I am afraid to. . . .I don't want to find, as I know I will if I go down there, that we have vanished without a trace like a boat sunk in mid-ocean. I don't want our shack to be gone, as I know it is; I would not enjoy hunting the ground for broken crockery and rusty nails and bits of glass. I don't want to know that our protective pasture fence has been pulled down to let the prairie in, or that our field, which stopped at the Line [U.S. - Canadian

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Thomas Allen, My Childhood and Yours (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978), pp. 19-20. This is a marvellously evocative reminiscence which is redolent of the sights, sounds, smells, feelings and moods of childhood and of well-remembered childhood places.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

border] and so defined a sort of identity and difference, now flows southward into Montana without a break as restored grass and burn-outs. Once, standing alone under the bell-jar sky gave me the strongest feeling of personal singularity I shall ever have. That was because it was all new, we were taking hold of it to make it ours. But to return hunting relics, to go down there armed with memory and find every trace of our passage wiped away--that would be to reduce my family, myself, and the hard effort of years, to solipsism, to make us as fictive as a dream.<sup>1</sup>

The loss or destruction of places frequently provides the most poignant and dramatic examples of a sense of place. Tuan recounts the well-known (reported) reaction of a citizen of Carthage to the Romans' proposed punishment of banishing the Carthaginians and destroying their city. He writes, in part:

From the historic period of the ancient Mediteranean world we can find many expressions of love for place. One of the most eloquent was attributed to a citizen of Carthage. When the Romans were about to destroy Carthage at the end of the Third Punic War, a citizen pleaded with them thus:

...We propose an alternative more desirable for us and more glorious for you. Spare the city which has done you no harm, but, if you please, kill us, whom you have ordered to move away. In this way you will seem to vent your wrath upon men, not upon temples, gods, tombs, and an innocent city.<sup>2</sup>

War, unfortunately, all too often provides examples of places that have been destroyed. Harvey Cox describes two more recent incidents which occurred as a result of World War II. First, the village of Lidice. The occupying German forces shot all the men over twelve,

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<sup>1</sup>Wallace Stegner, Wolf Willow (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, Laurentian Library edition, 1977), p. 8. Stegner also describes the importance to him of the paths they made, because they were part of taking possession of the prairie, of humanizing it and making it a distinctive "place".

<sup>2</sup>Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1977), p. 151. Whether this really happened, we cannot know. But, as Tuan rightly points out, even though the account was written several hundred years after the event, "the pleas at least made good sense to the Roman readers for whom it was written, whereas to us it verges on the incredible." (p. 152)

shipped all the women and children to separate concentration camps, burned the entire village, destroyed all the trees and foliage, ploughed up all the ground, and even ordered that the name be erased from all maps of Czechoslovakia. Cox goes on to describe the reactions of one survivor:

I can recall quite vividly a conversation I had two years ago with one of the women who had survived the Nazi destruction of Lidice in Czechoslovakia....The woman survivor confessed to me that despite the loss of her husband and the extended separation from her children, the most striking blow of all was to return to the crest of the hill overlooking Lidice at the end of the war--and to find nothing there, not even ruins.<sup>1</sup>

And, second, he describes the rebuilding of the Old City of Warsaw:

Warsaw provides an incomparable example of the symbolic role a place with a name plays for people. When the Poles began to rebuild Warsaw, ninety percent destroyed by the Germans, they began with the ancient Stare Miastro, the "Old City", a tiny core of buildings, monuments and churches at the centre of the city. Although the Stare Miastro was not terribly useful in any practical sense, it provided an indispensable symbolic focus. The rebuilders, using detailed paintings by Canelletto and referring to yellowing floor plans and drawings, reconstructed the Stare Miastro brick by brick as it had originally stood. The Germans believed they had wiped Warsaw from the map, and so did many Poles. But once the Stare Miastro was reconstituted, the rest of the enormous task of reconstruction seemed worthwhile. "Warsaw" was once again something, some place. Life could go on.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, Relph cites an example provided by R.J. Lifton in his study of the survivors of Hiroshima:

a history professor described his reaction to the destruction thus:

"I climbed Hijoyama Hill and looked down. I saw that Hiroshima had disappeared....I was shocked by the sight....What I felt then and still feel now I just can't explain with words. Of

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<sup>1</sup>Harvey Cox, "The Restoration of a Sense of Place: A Theological Reflection On The Visual Environment," Ekistics 25 (June 1968), pp. 422-423.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 423.

course, I saw many dreadful scenes after that--but that experience, looking down and finding nothing left of Hiroshima--was so shocking that I simply can't express what I felt.<sup>1</sup>

Governments of all sorts, with professed good intentions and expressions of the social value of various policies, have been responsible for the loss or destruction of significant places and the consequent unhappy results. Marc Fried studied the displaced former residents of Boston's West End, who had been forced to move because the West End was demolished in the course of an urban renewal scheme. He reports:

At their most extreme, these reactions of grief are intense, deeply felt, and, at times, overwhelming. In response to a series of questions concerning the feelings of sadness and depression which people experienced after moving, many replies were unambiguous: "I felt like my heart was taken out of me," "I felt like taking the gas pipe," "I lost all the friends I knew," "I always felt I had to go home to the West End and even now I feel like crying when I pass by," "Something of me went with the West End," "I felt cheated," "What's the use of thinking about it," "I threw up a lot," "I had a nervous breakdown."<sup>2</sup>

Fried reported that although some people were overjoyed with the change and felt no sense of loss, "at least 46% gave evidence of a fairly severe grief reaction or worse."<sup>3</sup>

In Newfoundland, under the government policies of Premier "Joey" Smallwood, many of the small out-ports (isolated fishing villages strung out along the extensive coastline) were closed up and residents moved to larger centres (where, the government felt, they

<sup>1</sup>E. Relph, Place and Placelessness (London: Pion Limited, 1976), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Marc Fried, "Grieving For A Lost Home," in The Urban Condition, ed. Leonard Duhl (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 152.

could benefit from the facilities available only in larger centres— better schools, recreation facilities, hospitals and so on).<sup>1</sup> The human cost, however, must also have been high. In researching his book, Salt Water, Fresh Water, Allan Anderson encountered a Newfoundland broadcaster, Les Stoodley, who told the following story about an old "Skipper" who reacted to the closing of the outports with quiet, even dignified, resentment:

"Old Skipper" I called him, and this was a sign, a word of respect. I said, "Skipper, what are you doing now?" "Not very much at all. We're living in Red Harbour with our daughter." "Where are you from?" "From Flat Islands. They called it Port Elizabeth after Confederation [1949] to dress it up a bit, but it was still Flat Islands." And I said, "What do you think of the centralization that Joey has brought in?" "Ach...a pack of foolishness that is. God damn nonsense." He said, "I'm telling you something, sir, we lives in Red Island, but my home is on Flat Islands, and I'm going to tell you something else. Joey Smallwood and that bunch in St. John's can do all they wants to, but every spring I'm going back to Flat Islands 'til the day I dies, and I'm going to be buried there." "Why is that, sir?" "Well, my son, I'm going to tell you something. You can't take people away from where they come from. My mother and father is buried over there and my children was buried over there, and they was born over there, what's alive, and my 'ouse is over there--I built myself before we was married." He said, "you can take people off the place where they lived, but you can't take them away from home."

Finally, nature itself may destroy places and give rise to emotional expressions of loss and sense of place. Betty Kennedy, writing about the major natural disaster to affect Toronto in recent years, Hurricane Hazel, which struck on the night of October 15, 1954, describes one woman's reaction to the destruction of an entire street,

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<sup>1</sup>See Joey Smallwood's account, "Closing Up the Outports," in Allan Anderson, Salt Water, Fresh Water (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979), pp. 62-65. For another reaction to the closings, see "No More To Safe Harbour," pp. 65-66. After a traumatic visit back to Safe Harbour, including a desperate search for her father's grave, this lady vows never to return.

Raymore Drive, where all the houses were swept away and over thirty people perished:

As the rising waters drove people out of their houses, emergency shelters had to be provided for them; supplies to fight the storm were badly needed. One of the gallant people who helped at the height of the hurricane was William Solomon, a druggist. He was called upon by the Red Cross to help, and his panel truck was soon at work delivering things like rubber boots and ropes where they were needed. He took them to a church on the outskirts of the flooded area: "I'll never forget the sight. Hundreds of people, babies crying, everyone huddled together, people looking for friends and relatives, a woman in shock, saying over and over again, 'The whole street disappeared.'"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Betty Kennedy, Hurricane Hazel (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1979), p. 60.