

“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*

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IN WAYLAND DREW’S *Halfway Man* and M. T. Kelly’s *A Dream Like Mine* the problems of the infringement on Native land by a white, capitalist society are explored. In Drew’s novel, Aspen Corporation wants to build a tourist resort in Neyashing, a community that is primarily composed of Anishnaabe, who are, from the perspective of government and the corporation, squatters with no actual claim to the land. In Kelly’s novel, the central land rights infringement is the Dryden Mill’s pollution of the river that runs through the Heron Portage Anishnaabe Reserve. Through their characters’ reactions to this exploitation and invasion of their space by non-Native enterprise, Drew and Kelly wrestle with the challenge of how best to talk about, understand, and productively deal with struggles over land and resources. This paper examines the solutions or non-solutions offered up by each text to the historically fraught issue of land rights. In their exploration of land disputes, these writers take up the notion of resolution through peaceable dialogue, reflecting on and troubling both the possibility of such a back and forth and the possibility of a resultant resolution. As such, these texts make an important contribution to imagining ways of negotiating justice. Their contribution rests especially in the texts’ engagement with the role of violence in land claim conflicts. While the

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liberal humanism of our society by and large condemns violence, violence becomes complicated (or receives a complicated response) when it is in reaction to a larger systemic violence, such as the ideology of imperialism or capitalism. How, then, do we represent the violence of social protest? In particular, how does a politically conscious/conscientious white writer living in a colonial country represent the violence of an indigenous person reacting against colonial power? The value of the novels of Drew and Kelly rests in their confrontation of the topic of violence within the context of land disputes. Their value also lies in a refusal of simplistic responses to this violence; the representations of violence in both texts are ambiguous and placed within the context of the larger, systemic violence of the ongoing project of colonialism.

Published in the 1980s, *A Dream Like Mine* in 1987 and *Halfway Man* in 1989, these two novels sprang from a period of growing awareness and change in terms of Canada's relationship with its Aboriginal population. Of course, the 1980s were also a time of economic boom and development in North America. It is no surprise, then, that both texts depict an Aboriginal community facing a seemingly inevitable exploitation of their land. Aside from their common historical context, the novels are also worth comparing due to their surprisingly similar plots. The manner in which the Aboriginal characters in both texts deal with the exploitation of Native land is to take the white male, who is cast as being in a position of power in regards to the exploitative activities, on a sort of journey/quest into the wilderness that is being negatively affected by the corporations' activities. Despite these initial commonalities, what makes such a comparison interesting is the different manner in which the two authors present the violence. While violence is present in both texts, Kelly's novel seems to favour an unflinching depiction of violence that avoids condoning or condemning it entirely. Drew's novel, on the other hand, does acknowledge and even contain what is cast as a kind of necessary violence, but it opts primarily to either elide the violence or simply choose an alternative path. Ultimately, *A Dream Like Mine* and *Halfway Man* warrant close readings as they take on a number of issues still highly charged today: Native land rights, violence, and the necessarily tentative position of the white writer in discussing these issues.

Scholarly discussions about the representation of Aboriginal peoples in non-Native literature often posit that, as Daniel Francis puts it, "The Indian is the invention of the European" (5) or, as Terry Goldie explains, that the Aboriginal in literature is "a reified preservation" (*Fear and Temptation* 4). As Emma LaRocque points out, even with "Native-positive White

constructions”—texts, in other words, which do not adhere to the stereotype of “savage”—there is still no call “for an abandonment of colonial projects” (6). In other words, whether the Aboriginal is dehumanized, in what LaRocque identifies as the “civ/sav” dichotomy, or idealized, as mystical, peaceful, almost superhumanized because outside of our corrupt civilization, he is, ultimately, still constructed in a one-dimensional, ahistorical manner. More specifically, in terms of the focus of this paper, the Aboriginal peoples’ relationship to the land in many texts is framed according to the desires of white culture to impose a particular value on what is perceived as a sacred bond with the natural world, a bond that teaches both the white characters and the reader something about themselves and their own relationship with nature. Goldie, for instance, points out that the image of the Aboriginal has primarily been defined in “association with nature” (*Fear and Temptation* 14). The “Indian novel,” according to Goldie, typically features “a white in search of personal or national identity who turns to native peoples for assistance”; usually the white character is taken on a revelatory journey into the wilderness by an Aboriginal guide (“The Impossible Dream” 30). Certainly Drew’s *Halfway Man* and Kelly’s *A Dream Like Mine*, would seem likely to operate within this paradigm, both being novels by white writers who are focusing on Aboriginal communities. In fact, a criticism that could easily be leveled against Drew and Kelly is their seeming participation in this “Indian novel” formula. Goldie describes Kelly’s novel as “an interesting example of what happens when a white author obsessed with ‘getting it right’ tries to write right himself,” ultimately suggesting that Kelly does not “write right” (“The Impossible Dream” 30). Goldie, however, admits that this “worthy fight” will “dude other battlers as well” (“The Impossible Dream” 31).

In taking on the very real issue of land disputes in fiction, these writers are taking on a tricky subject indeed. At the heart of each novel is a struggle to represent the complex reactions to Aboriginal land rights in a way that avoids judgment or presumptions while simultaneously making a political protest. This struggle is irresolvable, which means that Drew and Kelly must hold both possible responses in tension, not allowing for the kind of concrete “victory” or solution for which Goldie seems to be looking. Ultimately, both novels contain a surprisingly sympathetic, realistic, and balanced response to land claim issues. While neither text condones the violence with which infractions of treaties are sometimes met, neither text dismisses this violence outright either, a move which, to my mind, signals an unexpected appreciation of the complexity of these disputes.

The critical response to the two novels remains minimal. The several short reviews of Kelly's text are mixed in tone. Terrence Craig and Mark Frutkin criticize Kelly for his inability to capture the sacred and spiritual nature of the Aboriginal experience, faulting his language choice in particular. On the other hand, in his *Globe and Mail* review, T. F. Rigelhof applauds Kelly's refusal to aestheticize the "continuing tragedy of race relations" in Canada (c19). What is telling is that all three reviewers, as well as Goldie, seem to recognize that, as Craig puts it, this is "a political protest novel" (156). The sole longer article on *A Dream Like Mine*, J. A. Wainwright's "Invention Denied: Resisting the Imaginary Indian in M. T. Kelly's *A Dream Like Mine*," also picks up on the central role socio-political activism plays in Kelly's narrative, praising Kelly's refusal to operate within existing paradigms in his construction of Native characters. Because the reader is never "allowed to fix on [any] positioning" of the main Aboriginal characters, Wainwright argues, the novel contains a "deprivileging" of "all previous texts that categorize Native people" (258). Further, Wainwright contends, the narrative "demands that we consider the inevitable and vital conflation of cultural and violent resistance to racist stereotypes and power-based inequities" (257). In other words, Kelly complicates any easy explanations for and representations of Aboriginal protest and revolt. In their reviews of Drew's *Halfway Man*, Penny Van Toorn and Pat Barclay note the novel's investment in environmentalism as well as the unusually optimistic lesson contained in its presentation of a civilization whose non-destructive relationship with the land transforms the thinking of the white male representative of capitalism. Van Toorn suggests, a suggestion that will later be explored in more detail, that Drew's "favourable prognosis for the world," to a certain extent, ignores the reality of the world in which the reader lives (324). That world at the time the novels were published was, and still is, one which often belies optimistic conclusions.

Written as they were in the 1980s, the tone of the novels of Drew and Kelly is linked to their historical context, a period of serious re-evaluation of Aboriginal land rights at judicial and governmental levels and amongst Canadian citizens in general. This decade is one in which some landmark decisions were made vis-à-vis Native land claims. New claims policies were adopted by the Canadian government in 1981 and 1982, policies which set about defining concrete processes of negotiation as well as concrete guidelines for settlements. These policies were later criticized and revised in 1985 when a task force suggested that "Contemporary policies ha[d] not really been effective, either in social or economic terms" (Frideres and Gadacz 237). The result of this report was a commitment by the govern-

ment to spend more money investigating and resolving claims. Despite some false starts, Canada in the 1980s showed a greater investment in recognizing and dealing with Aboriginal rights issues. For instance, the *Canadian Constitution* was repatriated in 1982 with a section added that protects Aboriginal rights. In 1983, the Supreme Court case of *Nowegijick v. The Queen* determined that treaties must be liberally interpreted and, where there is doubt, resolved in favour of Aboriginal peoples.¹ These developments and the model of earlier settlements (such as James Bay in 1975) helped finalize the Inuvialuit agreement in 1984.

Of course, not all government actions were sympathetic to or benefited Canada's Aboriginal population. Canadian courts in the 1980s required claimants to meet four conditions in order to "establish proof of Aboriginal title," conditions which derived from the 1980 *Baker Lake v. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development*.² These conditions, which were quite stringent, even unrealistic about what could be considered proof,³ would have been nearly impossible for many Aboriginal groups to meet. The "Baker Lake Test," as it was labeled, was not re-evaluated until the 1990 Supreme Court *Sparrow* case (Frideres and Gadacz 218). Apart from legal battles, leading up to and during this decade there were also several pivotal protests and blockades which drew the attention of the general population to Aboriginal rights issues. In 1981, the Quebec police raided the Mi'kmaq community of Restigouche, ostensibly searching for

1 Gene A. Nowegijick objected to his income tax assessment on the basis that he was employed and paid on the reserve and, therefore, his income should be exempt. The Supreme Court resolved: "treaties and statutes dealing with Indians should be given a fair, large and liberal construction and doubtful expressions resolved in favour of the Indians, in the sense in which they would be naturally understood by the Indians" (Canadian Law).

2 This Federal Court of Canada case concerned a request by the Inuit of the Hamlet of Baker Lake to restrain the government of Canada from issuing and using permits on their traditional lands. During the course of the trial, Justice Mahoney produced four criteria that the Inuit would have to meet in order to establish title (Asch).

3 The requirements were:

1. That they and their ancestors were members of an organized society;
2. That the organized society occupied the specific territory over which they assert the Aboriginal title;
3. That the occupation was to the exclusion of other organized societies; and
4. That the occupation was an established fact at the time sovereignty was asserted by England. (Frideres and Gadacz 218)

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“illegal” fishing (Notzke 64). In 1985, Haida, Clayoquat, and Ahousat First Nations groups in British Columbia blocked roads in protest of logging that was occurring on land that was the subject of unsettled land claims (CBC Digital Archives). Most notably, at the end of the decade, there was a seventy-eight-day standoff at Oka, Quebec, in which members of the Mohawk community set up a roadblock in reaction to a three-decades-old dispute over the use of their reservation land (CBC).

The region in which Drew’s and Kelly’s novels are set, Northwestern Ontario,⁴ has been home to a number of land disputes, especially in the years preceding the publication of these novels. In 1970, the people of Asubpeeschoseewgong First Nation and Wabaseemoong Independent Nations suffered from severe mercury poisoning due to pollution leaked into the Wabigoon-English River system by Dryden Chemicals Company. Part of the fallout from this crisis was a closing of the river to commercial fishing, which meant jobs vanished, and many Aboriginals in the area became dependent on welfare. This crisis led to some major changes in Aboriginal healthcare policies (CBC). Four years later, Anicinabe Park in Kenora was seized by the Ojibway Warrior Society as a means of demonstrating their discontent over contemporary assimilationist measures. The seizure of the park led to a six-week standoff (NativeWeb). The issue of mercury poisoning in the Wabigoon-English River system recurred in 1976 when the residents of the White Dog reserve blockaded a road in protest against Reed Paper Company (CBC). The decades following the novels have been equally fraught for many regions of Ontario. In 1989, the Tegamami dispute in Northeastern Ontario led to road blockades as Aboriginals fought the construction of a logging road in territory that was part of a land claim under review by the Supreme Court. Ipperwash Provincial Park was occupied by members of the Stoney Point Ojibway band in 1995 as a means of asserting their ownership of the land (CBC). In 2006, as part of a land claim dispute, a housing development and highway were blockaded by the Six Nations reserve near Caledonia (CBC), and in 2008 six leaders from the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation in Northern Ontario were sent to jail for fighting against mineral exploration in their territory (CNW).

Certainly this level of activism and protest would seem to indicate that Aboriginal peoples of the region remain continually vigilant and do

⁴ Kelly’s novel is set somewhere near Kenora, so we can assume that the reserve his narrator visits is located on Treaty 3. Drew’s setting is a bit more unclear—somewhere near Thunder Bay and on the banks of Lake Superior, which seems to suggest that it lies within the borders of Treaty 9.

not shy away from battle in defense of their territory. However, in their literary responses to land seizure and exploitation, Anishnaabe writers in Ontario question whether violence and anger are effective reactions to these types of disputes. For instance, while Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm expresses an almost helpless anger in her poem “stray bullets (oka re/vision)” —the description of her heart as “a stray bullet / ricocheting in an empty room” (6–7) seeming to imply a level of violence—the words “stray” and “ricocheting” evoke a sense of aimlessness, and the “empty room” suggests that no one is listening, and no one is there to take the bullet. In the poem “Mandate (For the angry young warrior),” Armand Garnet Ruffo tells the Aboriginal “warrior”: “What you say has been said / (time & time again)” (4–5). He criticizes the warrior for his backwards-looking approach to the world and reminds him “We are here / Touch this spot” (24–25). In other words, nostalgia and anger can be paralyzing both for the individual and the community. The “angry young warrior” is given a “mandate,” then, to “share” “this Earth” in the present.

Perhaps the text that most clearly represents the attitude that a position of non-violence is the only way to healing is Richard Wagamese’s novel *A Quality of Light*. The main character in this novel, Joshua, an Anishnaabe boy who is adopted by a white, Christian family, is forced to confront and reconnect with his Aboriginal roots, as well as with the treatment of Aboriginal people since colonization. In opposition to his white, American Indian Movement-identifying friend, Johnny, Joshua chooses an attitude of tolerance, patience, and forgiveness. He rejects the “frontlines” and “battle lines” that Johnny sees: “I can’t stand on your frontlines and be effective.... All I know, all I was raised in and all I’ve been taught ... is that the spiritual solution is the only solution” (251–52). The fact that, at the end of book, Johnny stages a mock hostage taking, one with no real weapons, signals his realization that Joshua’s refusal of anger has been the correct tack all along. As he explains to Joshua, “I had the warrior thing wrong for a long time. But now I know the truth. And the truth is that being a warrior is living principled and moral ... and dying the same way. It’s learning that the life all around you depends ultimately on kindness, respect, purity, harmony balance” (300–01). Wagamese works to redefine the term warrior with this novel: “You don’t need to kill or fight to reclaim yourself ... you just need to look in the right place for the gift of knowledge and of truth” (241). The warrior, in other words, is one who has fought an internal battle and who knows his truth; Joshua and, eventually, Johnny choose to become “spiritual warriors.”

Of course, as Renate Eigenbrod points out, *A Quality of Light* is a layered text and cannot be read only in one direction. In the novel's prologue, Joshua explains that this story is "about Johnny and me becoming Indians together, one because he wanted to, and the other because he had to" (9). In other words, part of "becoming an Indian" is acknowledging the mistreatment of Aboriginal peoples due to colonization. While Joshua does not choose the route of violence to protest historical inequity, he understands Johnny's choice and even admires it: "This was a man standing on and for better... A warrior. I was Indian enough to see the injustice that Johnny spoke of. There was indeed a farcical quality to the history of this land, and perhaps it might take a dramatic human comedy to bring the message into the living rooms" (299). When Joshua reads Johnny's letter at the end of the novel, it suggests that part of the creation of a new "framework" for this country is "the anger, the politics and the rhetoric. ... the barricades, road blocks and occupations" (319). Similarly, Ruffo's poem can be read in an entirely different manner. The word "for" in the subtitle could mean not "to" an "angry young warrior" but rather "on behalf" of an "angry young warrior." If we understand the subtitle in this way, then the rest of the poem becomes instead a dressing down of non-Native Canadians and their various assumptions and presumptions. The poem, therefore, becomes not a call for pacifism but, rather, a sort of battle cry.

In *Halfway Man* and *A Dream Like Mine*, Drew and Kelly, like Wagamese and other Ontario Anishnaabe writers, occupy ambiguous ground. Both novels acknowledge the injustice with which Aboriginal land rights are often treated while simultaneously exploring the possibility of a considered as opposed to reactionary response. Despite having a similarly nuanced argument, there are key differences between the two texts. Drew's protagonist/narrator, Travis Niskigwun, is an Anishnaabe who actually lives on the land under threat. Kelly's protagonist/narrator is a non-Native reporter who has come to the Heron Portage Reserve in order to learn more about traditional Native healing practices. Kelly's unnamed protagonist is swept along by the actions of Arthur, the Aboriginal character who kidnaps and tortures the manager of Spruce Lands Paper. Spruce Lands Paper owns the mill just upriver from the reserve in Dryden. This mill, the narrator explains early in the story, is dumping mercury into the water, and the manager, Bud Ricketts, "won't stop" its operations, regardless of negotiations (17).

Another key difference is the manner in which each text concludes. *Halfway Man* ends positively, with the promise of new life in Jenny's (Travis's girlfriend) pregnancy, and with the withdrawal of the Aspen Corpora-

tion from Neyashing, the community where it had planned to construct a massive resort. *A Dream Like Mine* finishes with the same ambiguity present throughout the novel. On one hand, nothing significant is changed by the actions of Arthur and Wilf, an elder member of the community; the mill continues to operate and Bud receives a promotion and, in the words of the narrator, “keeps his convictions” (153). According to Craig’s review of the novel, this ending is realistic because it “depresses the protest it raises, implicitly retaining the ideology it confronts” (157). On the other hand, however, the narrator, himself, evolves in the way he perceives the issue of land rights, an evolution that is meant to be enacted in the reader as well—the suggestion being that such a broadening of perspective and understanding is, in and of itself, significant enough to justify Arthur’s violent actions. As Wainwright points out, throughout the novel there is an implied complicity between the narrator and the reader, a complicity which is confirmed at the end of the novel when the narrator, in a direct address, suggests that the burden of unpacking the relationship between violent protest and government action rests with the audience: “Whether it had anything to do with the insane dark magic that took place in the woods, the specific vengeance and torture, I leave up to you” (153).

These differences in the texts’ resolutions are themselves indicative of the authors’ disparate ideas regarding the manner in which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians should engage with land rights issues. The novels point to very different ways of dealing with and seeking redress for the seizure and exploitation of Native land, past and present. Drew’s presentation of land rights in Northwestern Ontario is overwhelmingly optimistic, even idealized. His narrator, the young Anishnaabe, Travis, describes the connection between his people and the land as spiritual, holistic. For instance, near the beginning of the novel, Travis recalls a map his grandfather drew: “I have that map still—a maze of river-curves and lake-circles, full of spirits, like nothing from any government” (25). His grandfather’s map is drawn on birchbark, a material which, besides clearly separating this map from government documents, in itself seems to indicate a naturalness about the grandfather’s map, as though the charting is physically connected to the land being marked down. The map and the land it represents are also inextricably linked to storytelling, which Travis indicates is, in turn, intricately connected to identity. Reflecting on his grandfather’s tale, which became “narrative and landscape both,” Travis remarks, “I think I know what he was doing. He was telling both the land and me into being” (25). This connection between land, story, and identity reappears later in the novel, when Travis shares stories with some of the

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community's children. Each of these stories contains an implicit message about proper relationships with the land; for instance, in the story of Many Arms, the moral is that greed and taking more than one needs leads the Earth itself to revolt against overconsumption. This story signals the wrong-headedness of the way white men, emblemized by the Aspen Corporation, approach the land. Like Many Arms, they are all appetite, believing that everything they can see and touch is theirs for the taking, is theirs to own. The Anishnaabe who settled on and became linked to Neyashing always thought no one owned this land because, like a story and like a human being, land is not something to be possessed. However, in the meantime, the land had been bought and sold several times over, and, when the surveyors arrive, Travis begins to worry because "Their coming means somebody *thinks* he owns the land" (emphasis added) (68).

That the Many Arms of corporate greed have reached across and seized Neyashing becomes apparent when Eric Morrow, a lawyer from the Aspen Corporation, unrolls what Travis labels "a very expensive and powerful map" to show the sections of the land which will be developed (76). Morrow's map is, of course, contrasted to the map that Travis's grandfather drew on birchbark. While the grandfather's map refuses to "reduce that mystery [of the land] to something measurable, weighable, or countable" (25), Morrow's map, which smells of "surveyor-time and lawyer-time," contains "an eagle-eye view of Neyashing" (76), a perspective which symbolizes a position of detachment from and authority toward the land. The primacy of the grandfather's map is displayed when Travis takes Michael Gardner, the president of Aspen, on a journey to show him why the development project should be stopped. Travis relies on a mental image of this map (having accidentally forgotten a physical copy of the map) to guide himself and Michael back to Neyashing, the suggestion being that his grandfather's map is somehow entangled with Travis's own being and spirituality, a visual representation of his connection to the land.

The notion that the Aboriginal has a straightforward and natural connection with the land is challenged or at least complicated in Kelly's text. Wilf, an Elder in the community, initially seems to represent this assumed spiritual connection between the Aboriginal and the natural environment. He takes the narrator to the place where he grew up, and, his "eyes brimm[ing] with a kind of ... bright fondness" (29), explains that he can sometimes hear the trees talking to each other. Thinking of men he recently saw logging, Wilf states that he cannot understand "what some people are doing" (29). This bewildered reflection, however, is cut short by Arthur's frank reminder that "Hey, old man, you've cut them

down [too]" (29). Later, when the narrator asks Wilf what that place is called, he responds "We call that treaty ground," a statement that further disrupts and complicates the image of Wilf as a mystical Elder with matters of politics and practicality. Wilf, in some ways, acts as a symbol of the romanticized Aboriginal (the noble savage) that the narrator's reading of anthropology texts written by white, European men engenders, but this role is complicated by Wilf's complicity in Arthur's violence. Wilf's part in the violence, however, is vague and absent-minded, which means that he cannot be placed within the category of "Native Warrior" either.

Any fixed notion of the Aboriginal is further complicated by Arthur himself as well, a disruption that is reflected in Arthur's literal interruption of the narrator's reading of one of these Eurocentric texts. Debating over whether or not to pick up *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* or *The Children of Aataensitic, A History of the Huron People to 1660*, the narrator in his hotel room explains his "fascination with Indian culture" as being a "search for a way out" (44). In some ways, the rest of the novel itself is a dispute of this romanticization; "a way out" long ago became impossible for Aboriginal peoples like Wilf and Arthur who, instead, have to find a way in—into the heads of the white men, into the newspaper stories, into positions of political power—because they are unavoidably and unfortunately a part of the larger world. Arthur's appearance at the narrator's door interrupts his readings and thoughts about these people, just as the novel itself can be seen to disrupt ethnocentric or outdated and misinformed readings of Aboriginal peoples. Arthur acts as a sort of antithesis to both Wilf's sentimentality and the narrator's romantic ideas. Arthur refuses terms like "pollution," stating "we're through with 'pollution,'" "mocking the word using the clichéd effeminate tone people use when they say things like bleeding heart liberals" (49).

The white narrator, in fact, is the only character who acts as a mouthpiece for this "bleeding-heart" stance on First Nations' land rights. When Arthur first takes him hostage, the narrator tries to reason with Arthur by explaining his own support of Arthur's cause: "Look, I'm not unsympathetic. I'm on your side.... Do you know how many women are having miscarriages now? Nobody can explain them. I'm sure it's pollution.... Everybody's affected" (49). He repeats this phrase, "I'm not unsympathetic," several times in the novel, the corollary to which always seems to be "but ...". In fact, at one point the narrator actually voices this "but," responding to Wilf's story of a woman who died after her children were taken to residential schools. "Jesus that's awful," the narrator commiserates, "I'm not unsympathetic, but ..." (60). Wilf's response to this statement of

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conditional sympathy, “That’s what Trudeau said,” acts as a reminder of Trudeau’s White Paper and the Canadian government’s ineffective measures to address Aboriginal rights, in general; it also aligns the narrator and his “bleeding-heart” liberalism with the failure to properly engage with and solve Native-non-Native relations. As A. L. McCready argues in her discussion of the non-Native backlash at Caledonia, neoliberalism is “underscored by the belief that there is no alternative to capitalism” and that we’re all equal under capitalism (3); “historic injustices [and] inequalities ... become de-raced and discursively displaced under the banner of economic equality” (3), a move which “delimits the shapes which redress, reconciliation, and future constellations of Native and settler identities and relationships are able to take” (5). This vacillating stance is shown by the end of the novel to be politically problematic and dangerous in its passivity.

In contrast, Drew’s novel seems to reaffirm a more conciliatory engagement with Aboriginal land rights; it suggests that the sympathy of non-Natives might create a change in their treatment of the natural environment. That said, the method through which Travis attains this sympathy can be read as inhabiting a sort of necessary violence. Like Arthur, Travis is, ultimately, kidnapping the white character and forcing him on a journey through the wilderness. Instead of threatening violence, Travis and his friends drug Michael Gardner, allowing him to wake up once he and Travis are already stranded in the wilderness. Through this drugging and kidnapping of Gardner, Drew does seem to be suggesting that an initial act of violence is a necessary step of protest, or, at the very least, that it has a role to play and cannot be dismissed outright. While the method that Drew’s protagonist adopts to effect change is similar to that of Kelly’s Arthur, the attitude that precipitates this action is peaceful and optimistic, whereas for Arthur it is aggressive and vengeful. Travis and his fellow community leaders, in fact, reject the brand of revolution that Arthur offers in a meeting with a group of Aboriginal peoples who call themselves the Shadow Men Society. The Shadow Men approach the problem of development in Neyashing, and indeed on any Aboriginal land, in the same manner as Arthur: “with Power” (107), the only thing that white men can understand. The position of the Shadow Men is akin to Arthur’s; they believe that the white men are destroying the Earth. Their solution to this problem is also in line with Arthur’s: “Don’t waste more time talking to the whiteman about sharing, or how no-one should own the land.... You must plan for a time when you will confront your enemies and enforce your claim.... You must be prepared to fight” (107–08). Despite their name, the Shadow Men do not allow for grey areas; they encourage

the men of Neyashing to prepare to sabotage the operations of Aspen and to begin stockpiling guns and explosives. Ultimately, in the eyes of these men, all whites are the enemy. Drew's novel suggests the possibility that there is such a thing as justifiable violence—that violence is acceptable as the means to a positive end. However, and perhaps more interestingly, the drugging and kidnapping of Gardner (which is just as violent if not more so than the destruction of machinery) is almost elided by the narrative. It is easy to forget how Gardner ended up in the wilderness; in fact, Gardner himself makes little of his abduction and quickly forgives Travis. *Halfway Man* raises the question of whether violence can be constructive, while simultaneously condemning the rage-fueled violence of the Shadow Men.

Perhaps this rejection of an extremist viewpoint and its accompanying reactionary violence is a signal that Drew is more hopeful than Kelly about possible solutions to land rights issues. This rejection of the type of violent reaction Kelly explores in his novel could, however, also be read as coercive. The clear, even simplistic resolution of Drew's narrative seems to imply that Aboriginal people would have success negotiating land claims if they communicated in a peaceful manner with white people. In a text by a white writer, such an intimation is problematic because it seems to signal a desire, on the part of the non-Native community at large, to quell any voices of protest or rebellion.

Drew's novel is also more optimistic about the capacities of white men, and it effects a hopeful outcome to land dispute issues in the character of Michael Gardner, who, through his reawakened connection to the natural environment, realizes the value of the wilderness and the small communities dwelling therein. At the beginning of the novel, when he first meets Michael, Travis remembers his mother's advice: "*Horizons*, Mother told me when I was little. She drew a finger across her eyes. *Look for the horizon, here. If you see it, trust the man. If you don't, don't*" (8–9). In Michael's eyes, Travis does see a horizon, but it is "far back" and hard to see "over the rubble piled up in the foreground" (9). Michael is initially a halfway man because he is, in Travis's opinion, half the way to being a man. By the end of the novel, Michael regains his connection with the land, in part through the stories that he tells Travis; an act echoing the earlier parts of the novel in which narrative is linked to a healthy relationship with the Earth. Michael eventually realizes, through his act of self-narrating, that "*each decision* therefore creates the world" (201).

Upon such a realization, the act of developing Neyashing becomes a far more complicated prospect than it had previously seemed to this president of Aspen Corporation. Having Travis and his friends reject the

Shadow Men Society's approach to land rights issues and instead opt to try to connect with the "enemy" signals Drew's belief in communication as resolution. In effect, the solution that Drew's text offers for land claims disputes is one which rejects violence. As Travis explains to Michael at one point during their canoe trip, "I'm not forcing you to do anything" (161). Travis and his community reject the argument of the Shadow Men Society that all whites are enemies, perceiving this way of thinking as "the wrong path," the path "to bitterness and blood, blood and bitterness" (110). The narrator is suggesting that the violence of history eventually has to stop, that seeking revenge is not the way. *Halfway Man*, then, suggests not only that the non-Native who is half the way to comprehension can be saved by an authentic experience of the natural world but also that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians meet halfway and create a community that respects the land, its limitations, and its potential. The trouble with this halfway solution, of course, is the corollary that not just non-Natives but Natives too, who have already lost so much of their land, should compromise, again.

There is nothing halfway about the actions of Kelly's character, Arthur. Operating out of a space of hopelessness, Arthur is reckless and vengeful, but Kelly does not seem willing to wholly reject this type of violent response. In fact, the narrator is both horrified by and empathetic to Arthur's behaviour. Largely this ambiguity of emotion comes from the narrator's dislike of Bud and all that he represents. Right at the beginning of the novel, the narrator makes his opinion on this type of businessman clear: the used-car salesman type, Bud is like the businessman "in the legislature who said all the Indian Chiefs in Northern Ontario could be bought off with a case of goof" (17). Once Arthur has actually kidnapped Bud, the narrator is by turns impressed by Bud's unsuccessful attempts to manipulate Arthur—"as nakedly manipulative as Bud's frankness was, an air of authority in the way he spoke convinced me of his sincerity: he made you want to believe"—and disgusted by Bud's "condescension"; he recognizes Bud's attempts to negotiate for what they are, "an unobvious attempt to intimidate Arthur, to make him feel inferior" (77). Later, when Arthur blinds Bud, the narrator, looking at Bud's "square, red, mutilated face," sees "the indifferent look of power" and notes that Bud's profile is "reptilian in its privilege" (108). Recognizing that in his eyes Bud has become a symbol, the narrator wonders if Arthur has "infected" him and has to remind himself that "This is serious" (109).

A major part of the narrative's ambiguous treatment of Arthur's violence is tied in with the treatment of Aboriginal peoples during the explo-

ration and settlement periods of North America, treatment the narrator sees in a series of exhaustion induced visions. He recounts details of the Cripple Creek massacre and is visited by a vision of United States troops playing catch with the cut-off breasts of Navaho girls. Ultimately, these visions of violence are tied in with the question of revenge: “What good is revenge,” thinks the narrator, “It happened somewhere else. Then emotion surged through in me: there is revenge; there is revenge” (99). Kelly’s choice of examples of colonial atrocities from America as opposed to Canada signals a desire, on the part of the narrator, to displace these types of events, to believe that this sort of injustice does not happen in Canada. However, the setting of the novel itself, Northwestern Ontario, and the obvious parallel between the fictional dispute of the novel and the real-life problem of mercury poisoning in the Wabigoon-English River system refuses this attempt at displacement. In fact, Kelly seems to be associating, even leveling the more easily apprehended ignorance and hatred of the United States troops with the treatment of Aboriginal communities by government and big business in Canada. The suggestion here, as elsewhere in the book, is that everything is connected, that injustice is happening everywhere, including Canada; therefore, something has to be done, and it has to be drastic. As the narrator realizes, “Bud was no abstraction; he was a human being ... It wasn’t Bud I hated,” but, at the same time, it is men like Bud “who developed the atomic bomb” and someone has to “stop them before they kill everyone’s children. Kill them” (137). This argument that someone has to pay, that someone has to be held accountable is echoed by Arthur’s explanation of his seemingly purposeless murder of the Mounties who try to rescue Bud and the narrator: “They protect those who [poison the river]” (113).

Through the narrator’s reactions to Arthur’s violent revolt against the Dryden Mill and the white, exploitative culture that the mill represents, Kelly is able to demonstrate the complexity of land rights problems. In Drew’s text an old Haida woman at a protest over the logging of an old growth forest in British Columbia voices the pacifist position that Travis adopts. This Elder steps aside to let the lumbermen pass, saying “Nobody gets hurt” (67). More than a pacifist, Travis is a sort of optimistic activist, comforting Jenny’s despair and hopelessness over the state of the environment with the reflection that the things individuals do to counter such destruction are “Not trivial, just small. The way all life begins” (37). This sentiment is echoed at the end of the novel when Michael Gardner returns to Neyashing, and Travis says to him “And now you begin” (218).

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In Kelly's text there seems to be a greater sympathy for the position of Arthur and for the idea of revenge. Not that Kelly is suggesting that such a violent position leads to any undeniable or straightforward resolution. As the end of the text demonstrates, in some ways nothing is resolved or bettered as a result of Arthur's actions. However, this seeming lack of change is complicated by the realization of the narrator. The narrator himself emblemizes the potential impact of Arthur's reaction to land exploitation, and the text also reaches outside itself to the imagined reader, forcing a confrontation with the violence that seems to be the inevitable response to an unwillingness on the part of Canadians to recognize and address Aboriginal land claims.

In the first chapter of *A Dream Like Mine*, Wilf recalls the story of the "spider," a spirit that is "sacred to the Sioux, enemies of our people" (1–2). The spider, with its many and far-reaching legs is reminiscent of Travis's "Many Arms" and, thus, serves as an emblem of greed. The mill at Dryden and the massive corporation that runs it could be connected to this spider, then, just as Aspen and the type of capitalist consumption associated with such projects is linked to "Many Arms." In fact, the Lakota-Sioux often associate the spider figure with new technology, specifically with the internet (worldwide web) and other non-Native inventions (such as the telephone), suggesting that these technologies are a trap of a kind. Kelly complicates this straightforward analogy, however, because this spider is also aligned with Arthur, who, like the spider, comes from the West. At the beginning of the story, Wilf tells the narrator that two people who recently drowned in a nearby community "Maybe ... told things they shouldn't have told" and were punished by the spider. In other words, Wilf is here linking the spider with non-Native people who suppress information about Aboriginal communities; Wilf goes on to explain that he "think[s] more people should know what Indian people think. Sometimes we are too quiet" (3), thereby alluding to the spider's connection with communication. The spider, or Iktomi, like other Native trickster figures, is a complex being. Neither good nor evil, Iktomi makes trouble for the Lakota-Sioux people but also protects them from or warns them of danger. As such, in the novel Iktomi acts as a symbol of the complicated role Arthur plays for both the narrator and the reader. Iktomi, however, has also more recently been associated with non-Native people, and some Lakota believe the spider is their deity because they so often mimic his behaviour and fall into his traps.

At the end of the novel, the spider myth is revisited when Wilf suggest that Arthur is not the "first to come," that as long as the "white man kills what protects him," the spider will keep reappearing in different guises

(140). Arthur is, in fact, associated with the two drowned people to whom Wilf refers in the first pages of the novel, people who also spoke up for the Aboriginal people and were punished. The problem, as Wilf outlines it, is that the one “who protected us, protects the white man too” (140). In keeping with what seems to be Kelly’s overarching message, there are, then, no easy solutions to the problem of land issues, nor are there any simplistic conclusions to be drawn about the parties involved in these disputes. Wilf reiterates this idea of irresolution in the final line of the novel; looking over the lake in which Arthur drowned, Wilf states that he is still “there.... And he could come back” (156). Further, Wilf’s claim that Arthur, as a symbol of a particular reaction to the treatment of Aboriginals, is still there after his death and may someday return encompasses the threat of future violence if Canadians do not rethink in the way the narrator is rethinking. Kelly’s novel does not provide a straightforward or overly optimistic answer to the problem of land rights. In his text is the recognition that, in the real world, it will not be as easy as the battle in Drew’s novel.

Kelly’s journalist narrator visits Heron Portage Reserve with the intention of writing “a mini-feature; serious, but light, tight and bright” (2); however, through the course of the novel, it becomes clear that the disengagement required for such an article is impossible. By the end of *A Dream Like Mine*, the narrator and, not incidentally, the reader can no longer perceive these people and their reaction to the infringement of white culture in an uncomplicated way. While violence may not change everything (or anything), by refusing to discount it as a valid reaction, the novel suggests violence does have a place in any dialogue dealing with land rights. Alternatively, violence may have a place because there is no dialogue. Indeed, *A Dream Like Mine* is allowing for both possibilities, and although there is no resolution in the text itself the novel embodies the desire to at least begin such a conversation. Drew’s *Halfway Man*, on the other hand, not only imagines exactly what this dialogue would look like; it links this ideal dialogue to a positive outcome. While the novel may not always be “light” or “tight,” it certainly does try to maintain a “bright” outlook on the issue of land disputes. Yes, there is an acknowledgement of violence in the story, but this violence is elided or excluded from the type of conversation that Drew seems to be encouraging. Drew’s solution seems to be one of compromise and peaceful negotiation; through this dialogue, Drew suggests, a resolution to land rights issues can be achieved. This resolution overlooks the complexity that Kelly’s narrative charts. Drew’s text does not acknowledge, as Kelly’s does, that not all white men are

halfway. Many are the Bud Rickets, who are not interested in creating a community with Aboriginal leaders at all.

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