Island as a Figure of the Unconscious: Toward a Metaphorical Relation between Human and Place in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland*

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In *Configuration: Essays in the Canadian Literatures*, E.D. Blodgett suggests an effective way of looking at space in fiction through the poststructuralist and psychoanalytical lens of Gérard Genette and Jacques Lacan via Roman Jakobson. He regards a spatial object, such as the house in Anne Hébert and Alice Munro's fiction, as a rhetorical figure of either metonymy or metaphor: according to this distinction, the house as a trope "may be figured in either contiguous or analogous relation to the character" (Blodgett 54). Jakobson's use of the terms *metonymy* and *metaphor* differs, of course, from their conventional understanding in rhetorical or literary theory. Rather than being a trope predicated upon semantic resemblance, metaphor is taken as a process or a situation that brings together two analogous elements of the language (Mitosek 226), and, as Peter Brooks points out, in this process difference plays a function that is no less important than resemblance (280). The uniqueness of Jakobson's take on these traditional tropes, which explains Lacan's enthusiastic use of it in his analogy between the unconscious and language, is well explained in Genette's "Rhetoric Restrained." Genette emphasizes that "the classical opposition analogy/contiguity […] concerns the *signifieds* in a relation of substitution in metaphor and metonymy" (107); on the other hand, for Jakobson, this opposition "is confirmed by a perhaps overly bold assimilation to the strictly linguistic oppositions (which concern the signifiers) between paradigm and syntagma, equivalence and succession" (Genette 107). Roland Barthes even allows for a possibility "to develop

Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée
CRCL MARCH 2020 MARS RCLC
0319–051x/20/47.1/88

an entire literary criticism starting from the two rhetorical categories established by Jakobson: metaphor and metonymy" (Barthes 256).

Jakobson, whose structuralist way of reasoning urged him to think in terms of dichotomies, separated metonymy and metaphor along the lines of two different forms of aphasia: "Metaphor is alien to the similarity disorder, and metonymy to the contiguity disorder" (Jakobson 1266). In a series of articles on Proust, Genette —unlike Jakobson—discerns a symbiotic relationship and states that "many of the Proustian 'metaphors' are in fact metonymies or at least metaphors based on metonymies" ("Rhetoric Restrained" 113). Blodgett, who borrows Genette's understanding of *figure* as "l'espace sémantique qui se creuse entre le signifié apparent et le signifié réel abolissant du même coup la linéarité du discours" (Genette, *Figures II* 47), applies this disruptive character of "une *figure*" through Lacan's dismantling of the traditional "subject." He points out that "discourse for Lacan acquires signification not through its reference to whatever 'reality' a syntagm may produce, but rather by its manner of allowing the 'id' to speak through the 'bar' that separates a signifier from another signifier, permitting both revelation and transformation within the subject" (Blodgett 77).

This essay is intended to test this analytical tool of the metonymy-metaphor dialectic as Genette's *figure* through a discussion of Michael Crummey's novel *Sweetland* (2014), which features a relation of a place (Sweetland as island) with a human (Moses Sweetland). Blodgett notes that "Lacan's 'subject' is a kind of house through which character is projected" (77); thus, in Crummey's novel, by analogy, the house is functionally replaced by the island, which is no less complex than the house in Munro and whose role in the character development is hard to overestimate.

From a tropological perspective, the existing readings of Crummey's novel, those in Laurie Brinklow's "A Man and His Island: The Island Mirror in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland*" and Paul Chafe's "Entitlement, Anxieties of Possession, and (Re)Working Place in Michael Crummey's *Sweetland*," consider the relationship of the character and the place in terms that never depart from the metonymical equation of Sweetland-the-man as a synecdoche of Sweetland-the-island, in which the contiguity is either reciprocal and positive (Brinklow) or illusory and disruptive (Chafe). While Brinklow's reading provides a necessary and useful historical background and Chafe's an ecocritical-postcolonial deconstruction, I am making a case for the preponderance of a metaphorical relationship between the human and the place, which makes it possible to consider Crummey's Newfoundland landscape as a "cold pastoral," a metaphorical figure containing "the image of its own dissolution" (Blodgett 54). Moses is conceived as a character of the unconscious, who experiences the island as a *memento mori*, a spiritual exercise in which the landscape "play[s] off" a "crucial abstraction of human life" (Blodgett 80). Unlike Blodgett, however, who sharply distinguishes between the metonymical mode of Hébert and the metaphorical one of Munro, I want to show that Crummey's narrative, much like that in Genette's interpretation of Proust, is based on the continuity between the two modes.

Crummey develops complex syntagmatic chains that are based on the metonymic contiguity in order to achieve, through various disruptions associated with Freudian displacement and condensation, the effect of metaphor, which poses the island, the dominant figure of space, as Moses Sweetland's symptom—his work of mourning and unconscious desire for self-punishment.

To get to his point in comparing "structures in Hébert and Munro," Blodgett borrows from Genette his key term, figure, which the latter defines in "the spatial sense" (Blodgett 53) as "a gap, a space […] between the letter and the meaning, between what the poet has written and what he thought," and

> like all space, it possesses a form. This form is called a figure, and there will be as many figures as one can find forms in the space that is created on each occasion between the line of the signifier […] and that of the signified […], which is obviously merely another signifier offered as the literal one. (Genette, "Figures" 47)

Leaving for now the second, less transparent part of this definition, let us focus on the dominant shapes of the spaces between the letter and the meaning that Blodgett is interested in: the metonymy and metaphor associated with the image of the house. Following Jakobson's differentiation, Blodgett says that the house as a trope "may be figured in either contiguous [that is, metonymic] or analogous [metaphoric] relation to character" (54). Although he acknowledges that the house may also figure as "an aspect of the predominant mode of the narrator" (54), he prefers character and its various figural connections with the house that form the many ways of producing, developing, and sustaining that character.

Because later on, in his discussion of the character and space in Hébert and Munro, Blodgett engages in the Lacanian implications of the differentiation between metonymy and metaphor as "a grammar of self" (Blodgett 75), it is worthwhile to mention here that by dismissing the question of the narrator, at least with regard to *Sweetland* and its protagonist, we would miss the mark with what Lacan considers the main problem of the figurative language in relation to the subject that speaks of itself, thus positing itself as a signified by operating various signifiers—of "the philosophical *cogito*" that "is at the centre of the mirage that renders modern man so sure of being himself even in his uncertainties about himself" (Lacan 430). The problem is the indispensable presence of "I" in the operations of both metonymy and metaphor, a presence that occludes the simple fact that, according to Lacan, "I" is neither anywhere nor anything at all (430). Whether "I," afflicted by nostalgia, refuses to "[seek] any meaning beyond tautology" (metonymy) or "[dedicates] myself to becoming what I am" (metaphor), "can I doubt that, even if I were to lose myself there, I am there?" (430). Without engaging further in either structuralist or psychoanalytic implications of this process, suffice it to say that Genette's gap "between the letter and the meaning," being constitutive of a figure, would not provide us with the full image of the "signifying game of metonymy and metaphor" (Lacan 430) without locating the "I" of the discourse.

From the perspective of this game, *Sweetland*'s narrative mode, dominated by an otherwise conventional centre of consciousness—that of the protagonist—throughout the novel, is worth consideration. The narrator conveys Moses's attitude toward the government man who has just left after his first visit by saying "He didn't like the fucker, it was true. Not one bit" (Crummey 11). While, formally, this expression is a third-person narrative that relates the character's dislike, to which the pronoun "he" testifies, "the fucker," "it was true," and "not one bit" represent Moses's own train of thought, with its peculiar word choice, rather than the narrator's diction. This seeming unity of two voices masks the split that is in the core of Crummey's figuration in *Sweetland*: on the surface, it represents both; but in actuality, neither, since the "I" of such discourse is nowhere to be found. It is a story about Moses told from his own perspective, in which the narrator uses Moses's words without quotation marks in a third-person narrative; therefore, no "I" can be identified as the speaker.

This contrivance provides a leverage against Lacan's *cogito* concern, but it does even more on the structural level. In the first part of the novel, this split grants authenticity to various foreshadowings, which continues, with some augmentations, to the second part, in which it sustains the uncannily symbolic effects of the supernatural. The very first description of Moses's grandnephew Jesse, rendered from the protagonist's perspective, betrays the boy's fate as well as his contiguous (metonymical) relation to water (the ocean) and death: "Lank and pale, the boy was, like something soaked too long in water. The purple light making his face look sallow, cadaverous" (13). Such foreshadowings, with a split responsibility between the narrator and the protagonist, contribute to the magical realist poetics that reveals Moses's unconscious later in the novel; they are also different from merely structural foreshadowings, where the narrative voice departs from the character's perspective or reproduces his words directly in quotation marks.

An example of those structural foreshadowings is the first introduction to Duke Fewer's barbershop. The narrator reports that Moses indeed enters there; yet, from then on, the description of the place is executed in a language that loses the stylistic centre-of-consciousness features: "One wall mostly mirror, the other pasted with faded photos and newspaper clippings […] a chessboard beside a stack of magazines […] that dated from thirty years before and hadn't been touched in nearly that long" (20). The reader will not catch that those newspaper clippings point to the solution of the mystery in the novel: Duke will ultimately appear to be behind all the threatening notes, made of such clippings, that Moses has been finding everywhere, and the assertion that they have not been touched is structural irony.

Another example is the chessboard, which reappears several times in the novel regardless of the presence or absence of actual players. It is an allegorical field of play between Duke and Moses about the resettlement, and the intimations of its symbolic role are a puely structural feature that has nothing to do with Moses's centre of consciousness: "Sweetland took a seat, stared down at the game in progress on the chessboard" (20); "Duke played the white and never lost" (21). The end of that

chapter is a scene of structural irony that rewards the reader only upon a second reading, by tying the game together with Duke's clandestine threatening strategy. Moses asks Duke if he thinks Moses should take the government's package, but Duke avoids a direct answer and turns to the game of chess, urging Sweetland to make a move. The latter declares that he "needs to have a think on it" (23), and Duke's reply surreptitiously sends the reader back to Duke's strategy of persuasion, the newspaper clippings: "I got plenty of newspaper to get through yet" (23). Moses's last words in the chapter, "Don't you let Loveless touch that board" (23), turn out to be prophetic since it is Loveless who signs the resettlement agreement last, except for Moses himself, and thus puts the latter in an invidious position. The allegorical duplicity of the game is further confirmed when Sweetland accuses Loveless of spoiling the chess game with Duke and receives the answer "Duke told me it was a smart move I made" (40). Thus, *Sweetland* contains structural elements that do not require the suspension of the Lacanian "I" of the narrative discourse precisely because that discourse takes the form of a direct character's speech.

However, near the end of the novel, in order to convey the twists and turns of Moses's delirium and enable the protagonist's unconscious speech, Crummey uses the centre-of-consciousness technique again, to no lesser effect than in foreshadowings such as Jesse's portrait. Resorting interchangeably to the horror, the supernatural, or the psychological-thriller ruses, Crummey achieves the impression he needs by masking his third-person discourse behind the protagonist's point of view. The reader, who is never sure who is talking or reporting the events or perceptions, readily falls prey to the traps of the narrative. The government man's second visit looks suspicious from the start, and Sweetland himself realizes that this is a fruit of his delirium near the end of the dream. The next section of the story begins with a seemingly matter-of-fact third-person report: "The world was askew when he came to himself" (307). The centre-of-consciousness phrase "the world was askew" is offset with a factual report that "he came to himself." The following clause "All the angles wrong" sends us back to his perception, and then we follow his eyes that are "flicking" "around the room": "Daybed, stove. Silver legs of the chairs. Black boots facing him under the table. Someone sitting beside the window" (308). This someone turns out to be Hollis, his long-dead brother, and we realize that we are within his delirium again, having never actually been out of it. Sweetland chooses to play along by asking if Jesse is with Hollis, grounding his question on another uncanny whim, this time Jesse's: his claim that he has been in contact with Hollis, who died before Jesse was born. Needless to say, the reader becomes involved in this game as well. This and similar episodes, showing the productive symbiosis of the narrator and the character, make it impossible to dismiss the narrator in *Sweetland* as easily as Blodgett was able to do by putting her in parentheses in his discussion of Munro and Hébert. Crummey's narrator, nevertheless, is just a tool to present the character from as intimate as possible perspective but without compromising the oscillating balance that deprives the narrative of its subjective "I." On the character level, *Sweetland* is abundant in figura-

tive structures similar to both the metonymical Hébert and the metaphorical Munro.

Blodgett notes in Hébert a "kind of stylization" that "conjoins the character with her situation in a metonymic or synecdochic scheme" (55). For example, the description of a house locating the heroine in "L'Ange de Dominique" unfolds as a series of images comprising a "syntagm that connects sea, cliff, town, house, and *antre*" and "seems to create the girl at its conclusion" (54). The bulk of *Sweetland* yields a similar impression of the protagonist's cumulative image that grows out of his syntagmatic connectedness to his house, the ocean, and the cliffs, among other things, and is focalized in the King's Seat, the highest point of vantage, which occasionally makes Sweetland-the-man the King of Sweetland-the-island on his Seat, and thus a perfect synecdoche of the place. His metonymic, contiguous connection with the island, which is to some extent compromised in the second half of the book, even there often shows its undeniable viability—not only by dint of visual observation but also other senses. Having survived a lonesome winter, Moses briefly reconnects with the island with the coming of spring:

> He looked up at the hills surrounding the cove, sunlight making them ring with meltwater. He's always loved that sound, waited for it each spring. Hearing it made him certain of the place he came from. He's always felt it more than enough to wake up here, to look out on these hills. As if he'd long ago been measured and made to the island's exact specifications. (Crummey 280)

The sense of belonging, which places the character as a chain section along a syntagmatic axis, is metonymic in Jakobson's understanding of the term. The evolution of Sweetland's character, however, steers toward more frequent disruptions of such syntagmas as his solitude, mirrored by and predicated upon the isolation of the island from the outside world, reduces those blessed spaces and sensations. The space and the character are still a perfect match, but the island "seemed smaller and strangely intimate, as though it had shrunken down to fit his solitary presence" (194). The island becomes a synecdoche of itself and a metaphor of the character.

Moses's relationship with the island, turning metaphorical and analogous rather than contiguous (some details of this shift will be discussed later), is unlike any of his other relationships with the time-space continuum. The imaginary shrinking of the island is juxtaposed with his house, which felt larger after his mother died (194). In contrast to his, and the island's, isolation in the second half of the book, Sweetland ends up as a mere extension of his mother after her death: "He slept in what had been her bedroom, the same floral-patterned wallpaper, the same grey battleship linoleum on the floor" (184). He picked up even his mother's movements connected to the discomfort of the small-sized room: "The door caught on the bed frame before it could swing all the way open and he had to turn inside the room and close the door in order to lie down. It was a delicate dance step he's watched his mother perform a thousand times before it became his own, and he managed it blind now, without thinking" (184). The absence of "thinking," which suggests unconscious mimetic behaviour, is highly characteristic of all of Sweetland's metonymical syntagmas. Contiguity comes

naturally to him despite his conscious struggle with its disruptions: "Sweetland's mother was only nine months dead at the time and he was still adjusting to the house without her. The tiny rooms echoing like vaulted spaces" (71). Sweetland's connection to the house is also evident in the rituals that he continues to observe year after year, even contrary to his own preferences, like not working "on the Lord's Day" even though "enforced rest and contemplation […] to Sweetland had always seemed a form of torture" (58). This form of contiguity also returns to him after a disruption, specifically his years at the light house, and what is important is that it comes back when he returns to live in the house: "As if it wasn't his mother but the house itself that imposed the ritual observance" (58). Another important connection of this kind is his grandfather Uncle Clar's portrait, with which Moses establishes a growing communication when sinking deep into his solitude. He addresses the portrait as Uncle Clar himself, shares his news and thoughts with it—or him, the grandfather—and even plays some kind of mind games: "he caught sight of Uncle Clar leaning against the wall across the room, eyes averted, pretending to pay Sweetland no mind" (233). The portrait synecdochically figures the house in the same fashion as Moses's following his mother's gestures or rituals does. On the other hand, he willingly leaves his house—temporarily—if his privacy is threatened by intruders, such as the Reverend seeking company or Reet and other ambassadors of the government package.

At least a few objects on the island can be construed as the island's synecdoches. The most prominent of these is the protagonist himself: his last name, Sweetland, is eponymous, and as such, he stands for the whole island, being at the same time in a vital contiguous relationship with it. The house, the place, and the name are all aptly consolidated by the epigraph to the first part of the book, "The King's Seat," from Isaiah: "Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name" (1). The King's Seat itself, occupied by either Moses or Jesse, Sweetland's only male blood relation, points to Sweetland as the master of the island. After all, as a result of the stress he experiences in the wake of Jesse's death, his female relations also become interchangeable in his mind: he addresses his niece Clara as Ruthie, his late sister and Clara's mother (168), which is also essentially a metonymical slip. The metonymic content of the King's Seat is first and foremost spatial, as the best vantage ground on the island: "At the top of the climb he stopped beside the King Seat to take in the view of Chance Cove and the island north and south, even though Jesse wasn't with him" (12). The "tidy two-storey building" near the government wharf, Sweetland's fishing stage, figures another synecdoche of the island. This building, probably the oldest on the island, has not been used for storing cod for a long time, and Moses turned it into a "little museum," as Clara christened it (34): "he kept the building in pristine condition, the roof patched and tarred spring and fall, the outside walls ochred red" (33). The need to preserve and maintain his contiguous relationship with the island has grown proportionally to his factual loss of it due to his illness, isolation, and distress. Being completely alone, Sweetland discovers, to his own surprise, a need to perpetuate rituals that brought him back to the preapoca-

lyptic era of unity and harmony. In December, "he surprised himself by retrieving" his artificial Christmas "tree from the shed" (253)—a reminder of Jesse, or burned an effigy on Bonfire Night, "wanting to make something spectacular of the bonfire for the boy" (211).

The centre-of-consciousness narrative is not always conducive to revealing information about the character whose consciousness illuminates the surroundings. In order to stay consistent with this technique, Crummey sometimes has to allow his protagonist, who is not very sophisticated, to resort to estrangement as a mode of observation. Therefore, in order to reveal some of Sweetland's contiguous relationship with his house, both as space and time, Crummey makes Moses's consciousness alienate itself from that syntagmatic relation. This effect is achieved through the most negative character in the novel, for both Sweetland and the narrator: the government man, who appears to Sweetland and hence to the reader as a metonymy. The government official is depersonalized from Sweetland's point of view, as the sentence "He saw the government man walking up from the water" indicates: "The same fellow who came out for the last town meeting, or one exactly like him—there seemed to be an endless supply on hand" (5). The depersonalization deepens when the narrator observes, from Sweetland's perspective, that the man's voice is coming "from nothing where his mouth should be" (5). Therefore, at the end of the book, during the government man's imaginary visit with a delirious Moses, the outright and conventional metonymy of the official as "the suit" has a rather unconventional and profoundly personal meaning for the protagonist: "He glanced one more time at the suit across the table, at the face missing behind a shapeless welter of light" (307). The nebulous and disappearing features of the government man's phantom in this scene are aptly and inseparably mixed with Moses's principally metonymic perception of him, creating an impression that during both visits the man is nothing more than a figure of speech. For the scene of the first visit, however, Crummey uses the government man's briefcase, "looking for all the world like something that was in his hand when he left his mother's womb" (5), as another metonymic substitution. The briefcase as an extension of, and ultimately a substitution for, the man becomes a fetish object later on, when Sweetland uses it to assault him, indirectly, by "set[ting] a spoon and a sugar bowl on the flat surface of it," to which the man reacts defensively by withdrawing the case with the words "No sugar for me" (6). It is the metonymic or synecdochic reduction of this figure, which relegates it to the status of an abstract stranger, that allows the author to use the centre of consciousness for a purpose for which the bearer of that consciousness is ill-suited: to describe his household from an objective point of view. When the man took a seat, Moses "tried to think of when a stranger sat there last, seeing the kitchen for the first time." A description of the kitchen follows, concluding with the remark "All so familiar to him he hadn't noticed it in years" (6). Later, Crummey uses the same ruse to deliver a description of the harbour, without jeopardizing the centre of consciousness: "The government man was staring down to the harbour as well, and Sweetland couldn't help taking the place in

through the stranger's eyes" (11). A description of the harbour follows, similarly to that of the kitchen in the previous scene.

The novel features one ideally metonymical character: Queenie Coffin. Even a remark she throws toward Sweetland is essentially a metonymy that dominates the simile-metaphoric content in its figural characterization of his appearance: "You looks like the tail end of a good time, Moses Sweetland" (79). From her introduction, Queenie is a metonymic extension of her house, with the window as a medium between her and the external world and as a figural vehicle of this contiguous relationship: Moses "caught sight of Queenie Coffin next door, scattering a packet of seeds through her window onto the patch of ground below it" (11). After a toilet was installed in Queenie's house in 1969 or 1970, "she hadn't crossed the threshold of the house in all the years since" (31). The window has thus become not only her only portal to the outside, but also the outer world's dominant means of observing her, which is structurally important for a novel with a centre-of-consciousness type of narrative. For this reason, the window figures whenever the narrative turns to Queenie: "[Sweetland] passed Queenie Coffin at her window on his way along, blowing smoke into the open air. She called him over and he leaned against the window frame as she finished her cigarette" (30). In addition to the cigarette, another object of her constant contiguous attachment is a book, which is unfailingly "in arm's reach" (30). The house, the book, and the cigarette create one syntagma with Queenie, and all these elements are focalized in and by the window.

As such, Queenie can be seen as a Hébertian character. Blodgett points out that "[o]ne of the most poignant kinds of self-reflection of character by house is an extension of the character-at-the-window motif" (60). He traces back some implications of this motif in regard to female characters in a few of Hébert's works, such as "La mort de Stella," *Kamouraska, Les Chambres*, and "Le mariage d'Augustin." Blodgett notes that "the window not only extends character, it ironically suggests the limits of the house as prison and enclosure" (60). For Queenie, this is a self-imprisonment, a hyperbole of Sweetland's self-imposed isolation on the island; and the figure of Jesse is a link between those two different forms of enclosure: Queenie "had endless patience for the [autistic] boy. His monotonous interrogation one more tiny room she'd chosen to close herself inside" (Crummey 33). "The women at the window," says Blodgett, "are always two-dimensional and posses an iconographic allure […] It acts as a proscenium" (61). This proscenium-like function of the window is another motif that links Queenie to Moses: as an adolescent girl, she used to disrobe herself for him in front of the window, and the "iconographic" image of this scene from his childhood is something that has stayed with Sweetland to the end of his days. Similarly to Hébert's *Kamouraska*, the window in *Sweetland* also "facilitates relations between presence and absence" (Blodgett 61) as it constantly disturbs Moses with a phantom light in Queenie's abandoned house. Finally, the last names of the two characters share the most prominent allegorical appeal of the novel, in both cases with a significant tinge of bitter irony. Blodgett points out that in Hébert's "La mort de Stella,"

"the house serves predominantly as a proleptic coffin for the protagonist as she dies" (56). Queenie's house has been doing a similar service to its mistress during her life, thereby synecdochically and allegorically extending her name, Queenie Coffin, to the house itself. Indeed, she is the queen of her own coffin: her house. Her death solidifies the metonymic syntagma that has been established during her life: "Hayward Coffin came downstairs to find Queenie dead in her chair by the window, a half-smoked cigarette guttered in her hand. Her book face down on her lap" (Crummey 97). The contiguity of the window, the chair, the book, the cigarette, and the house-coffin fulfills and justifies her name.

Since Moses is the central consciousness through which the reader perceives the world of the novel, it is largely this consciousness that is responsible for the contiguity of the syntagmas. Conversely, the disruptions in his capacity for perception and cognition should be blamed for the instances of aborted contiguity. The second part of the novel, "The Keeper's House," presents a general account of a compromised consciousness, which is still capable of contiguous reminiscences but whose challenge—and plague—is the obscurity of the border between memory and immediate empirical experience. The phantom light in Queenie's window, for example, departs the sphere of contiguity and enters the domain of the paranormal; it is thus disruptive, disturbing, and therefore rich in figurative content that is different from the metonymical. When the situation becomes exacerbated to the point that Sweetland sees a shadowy figure in the window, he confronts the phenomenon, but what he witnesses is of a dubious nature: "The girl was naked and stared out at the night with the same brazen look she had sixty years ago"; but there is another figure as well: "a woman seated in the chair at the window" (279). At first glance, the scene is a perpetuation of contiguity, as the two embody a reminiscence and are represented by a metonymical reduction governed by the mechanism of memory selection: "The child's body stripling and oddly beautiful and distressing, just as he remembered"; "The woman in the chair turned a page with her free hand, a lit cigarette between her fingers" (279). The disruption comes in the middle of the contiguity: "They were holding hands, the girl and the old woman beside her, though they each seemed oblivious to the other's presence" (279). In spite of the intimate familiarity of both figures to Sweetland, the narrator chooses not to label the apparitions as "Queenie"; they are just "the girl" and "the old woman." Sweetland identifies them as Queenie by directly addressing them, "[b]ut neither acknowledged him or seemed to know he was there" (279). Abruptly ceasing to serve the contiguous narrative chain traditionally ascribed to the subject of consciousness, those metonymies become a symptom that manifests the work of the unconscious: "a spark […] that fixes in a symptom—a metaphor in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element—the signification, that is inaccessible to the conscious subject, by which the symptom may be dissolved" (Lacan 431). Jakobson associates metaphor with a type of aphasia characteristic of "the contiguity disorder" (1266), which seems to be consistent, to some extent, with the condition Sweetland suffers in the double-Queenie scene.

Unlike Jakobson, who stresses similarity as the domain of metaphor, Peter Brooks defines metaphor as "a synthesis of difference and resemblance": "If Aristotle affirmed that the master of metaphor must have an eye for resemblances, modern treatments of the subject have affirmed equally the importance of difference included within the operation of resemblance, the chief value of the metaphor residing in its tension" (280). The tension in the above episode occurs between the precision of memory, which delivers to Sweetland the two most vivid metonymies of Queenie, as the girl and the old lady, and the uncanny gap that stems from the disruption of identity between the two figures, as neither is conscious of the other's presence in spite of holding hands, as well as from their disconnectedness from Moses despite his direct appeal to "Queenie." A similar situation takes place when Sweetland is confronted with the vision of the shadowy figures. The congregation proceeds in single file, but "not a sound among them" (264). Moreover, Sweetland cannot identify any of them, although many seem familiar. For the two most recognizable figures, Crummey resorts to dramatic irony, presenting Sweetland's former girlfriend Effie and Jesse as metonymies that the reader is able to catch easily, but not allowing the protagonist to identify the persons behind them: "A woman in a headscarf […] The teeth in her head too small for her mouth" (264); "A boy brushed past him […] the seashell whorls of a double crown, a rogue lick of hair" (318). The disruption of the metonymic contiguity by the lapse of misrecognition creates tension and opens those scenes onto a broader spectrum of meaning enabled by metaphor.

Beginning with Jakobson, several scholars who have taken up his intuition of the metonymic and metaphorical axes—Lacan, Brooks, Genette, Blodgett—have underscored that in discourse, the two are not so much polarized as coexist in a kind of a symbiosis that resembles the synchronic (metonymy) and the diachronic (metaphor) aspects of language, or "horizontal versus vertical," according to Genette ("Rhetoric Restrained" 119)—"this signifying game of metonymy and metaphor," as Lacan phrases it (430). Commenting on Sartre's *La nausée*, Brooks sees behind this game a simple operation of the plot. He says that "the incidents of narration" shadow forth the promises of "final coherence: the metaphor reached through the chain of metonymies" (283). Later, Brooks confirms, "We must have metonymy in order to reach metaphor" (295). In several articles, Genette traces how Marcel Proust accumulates metonymies to produce metaphors as the final result of his narrator's involuntary memories. In "Métonymie chez Proust" (*Figures III*), Genette points out that metaphorical relationships in *A la recherche du temps perdu* can be established among the images that have already been connected by the spatial-temporal contiguity: "le rapport métaphorique s'établit entre deux termes déjà liés par une relation de contiguïté spatio-temporell" (60). Although Crummey's metaphors in *Sweetland* have different nature and purpose than those effected by Proust's involuntary memories, the direction of figural poiesis is the same: from the temporal-spatial contiguity of metonymy to the analogical substitution of metaphor.

One of these transpositions is the figuration of the King's Seat. The first part of the

book, which is titled "The King's Seat," suggests Moses as the king of the island seated on its highest point, the King's Seat being first of all a geographical location. However, at the beginning of the novel, Jesse is the one who claims the Seat for himself—habitually, when he and Sweetland walk there as part of their regular route—imitating his favourite scene from *Titanic*: "'I'm the King of the World!' he shouted, his voice rolling down the hill toward the cove" (Crummey 14). In the second part of the novel, when Sweetland is completely alone on the island, he continues stopping at the place regularly, "looking down over the cove and east and west to either end of the island. *I'm the king of the world* was the phrase that came to his mind, though he never spoke the words aloud" (197). The contiguous temporal-spatial relationship between these two episodes is obvious: Moses continues his old habit; he constantly revisits the place that is a synecdoche of the island; and Jesse's phrase comes to his mind triggered, like in Proust, by the object that evokes a memory, the *souvenir involontaire*. However, the narrator, who, as we remember, rarely ceases to maintain the centre-of-consciousness mode, omits Jesse from this relation; "*I'm the king of the world*" is just a phrase that comes to Moses's mind. It is neither directly ascribed to Jesse nor pronounced by Sweetland. Jesse is dead, and what comes to the character's mind could be both Jesse and Moses's own condition of being now actually the king of the world—the only proprietor of the island that represents and is the whole world for him. Both meanings, however, are barred, like the signified behind a chain of signifiers. "Metaphor," says Blodgett, interpreting Lacan, "is produced by a relationship of signifiers that issue in more than a syntagm. It is produced by the 'crossing of the barrier' that radically distinguishes signifier from signified" (76). The metonymic chain of signifiers runs uninterrupted on the surface; it is not a presence but an absence, a lack, that ushers in a metaphor—the lack of the actual utterance and, more importantly, the absence of Jesse from the narrative that is trying to imitate Sweetland's mind. In other words, the temporal-spatial syntagma of signifiers is called upon to effect Jesse as the signified that remains behind the bar.

Jesse, of course, is the repressed content behind many a metonymical chain that the novel's narrative constructs to reflect Sweetland's perceptions. Therefore, the psychoanalytical translation of the metonymy-metaphor dichotomy should be the most affective with respect to *Sweetland*, as it is effective in Blodgett's illustration of metaphor in Munro:

> discourse for Lacan acquires signification not through its reference to whatever "reality" a syntagm may produce, but rather by its manner of allowing the "id" to speak through the 'bar' that separates a signifier from another signifier, permitting both revelation and transformation within the subject. (77)

To make Lacan's idea clearer, we should add that the "bar" separates one signifier from the other that lapses behind that bar to become a signified. As Blodgett specifies, "Lacan's algorithm for metonymy is a connection of signifiers that does not permit a relationship with signifieds produced by the 'id'" (76). The metonymical

chain of the King's Seat effects the metaphor in the end because Sweetland's "id" speaks when Sweetland as the implied subject of the narrative—his "I"—withdraws his utterance and omits Jesse from the temporal-spatial syntagma, places him behind the "bar." Blodgett calls such a process "a spatialization of the subject, a hiatus which it is metaphor's privileged role to fill with meaning" (77). We can assert that, like Munro's character in Blodgett's interpretation, Crummey's protagonist "is a 'je' constantly interrupted by its 'ça'" (77).

Occasions on which Sweetland's "'ça' speaks, and speaks in such a way that a latent signified becomes perceptible" (Blodgett 76), are quite a few; therefore, this discussion focuses on the most salient ones. Because a Freudian analysis of the character per se is outside the scope of this study, suffice it to say that Sweetland's "id" speaks its latent content when the subject-object of the narrative (third-person centre of consciousness), or narratively objectified Sweetland's "I," represses a past traumatic experience such as his guilt over Jesse's death, over his failure to keep his mother's promise not to let her die among the strangers, over his aborted engagement with Effie, and finally, over his barrenness due to his mutilation, aided by his poor sexual experience. To these, we can add also some sources of smaller anxieties, such as Moses's grounded suspicion that the Reverend is the real father of Clara, his niece and Jesse's mother, or Jesse's lack of a real father, or Moses's guilt over using Jesse to substantiate his stubbornness regarding the government package. All of those factors together, or each of them separately, may be found at the bottom of Crummey's signified—metaphors—that reveal the repressed content behind a metonymic chain of signifiers.

The complexity of signifying chains leading to metaphoric revelations in *Sweetland* proves that the rhetoric of narrative plays an important structural role. For example, the motif of the Sri Lankans lost in the open ocean and rescued by Moses can be seen as an odd structural element, whose function is unclear, due to its persistent reoccurrence throughout the narrative, its largely disruptive quality of presentation as though separated from the general line of the plot, and its intensified impressionistic imagery that reflects Moses's perception: "Voice in the fog, so indistinct he thought they might be imaginary. An auditory hallucination, the mind trying to compensate for a sensory lack" (Crummey 3). Upon a closer inspection, however, this repetitive, surreal, and dreamlike motif appears to be syntagmatically related to other episodes or images, which together, interlacing and superimposing, produce a metaphor and point to a symptom. The imagery in Moses's perception of the Sri Lankans event is very similar to that of the big cod episode. First of all, it is the fog and the sense of being lost in the sea. One of Sweetland's fishing trips during his solitary existence on the island, when he caught "the goat-sized fish" (224), turns to be dangerous because of fog, exactly like on that day of his youth when he rescued the stranded refugees: "Glanced to starboard then to see how far he might have drifted offshore and there was nothing out there but the white muffle of fog that had closed in without his noticing […] Fog snug as a blindfold in all directions" (217). Second, the way out of this predicament is exactly the same: with the Sri Lankans, Moses is led by the voice of

"Tennessee Ernie Ford singing 'The Old Rugged Cross'" (25); in the big fish episode, the same miraculous voice, which Moses "picked out" as "a shapeless sound at a distance," appears as an incredible marvel since both the reader and the character know that there is no one on the island: "It was Tennessee Ernie Ford he was hearing, that southern baritone cutting clear through the fog. 'The Old Rugged Cross'" (219). The character's sanity is warranted by his recognition that "[h]e didn't think he would credit his senses if he was alone, if the dog wasn't hearing the impossible song as well" (220), but the very impossibility of the event makes the reader put in doubt the empirical existence of the dog, or accept magical realism as a lawful part of the narrative. In either case, we should not feel discouraged to apply a Freudian reading, that is, to construe the second event as a displacement, which is one of the two major operations of the dreamwork and which Lacan associated with metonymy.

The evidence of similar imagery leads us to explore the importance of the episode of the Sri Lankans, which has imposed itself on the giant fish event in Moses's, and thus also the narrator's, dreamwork. As we are told by the narrator, who, for the sake of flashbacks, has to separate himself from the delusional Sweetland: "The one night the Sri Lankan refugees stayed in Chance Cove he'd spent most of the evening alone in the kitchen, chain-smoking to tamp down the thought of Ruthie and the Reverend in the office behind the altar" (244). His sister's extramarital love affair was such a hard experience that "[h]e felt like setting a match to the church, burning the goddamn thing to the ground" (244). More importantly, this affair directly links Moses to Jesse: besides having an uncertain father, the autistic boy appears to also have an uncertain grandfather. Of course, Moses's tragedy, which is voiced by multiple signifiers that revolve around Jesse as the ultimate signified, or the Lacanian Real, is based on Moses's fatherly role with respect to Jesse and his indirect responsibility for the boy's death. However, before we arrive at that ultimate signified, there are other signifiers that contribute to the chain of metonymical displacement.

One of those signifiers is the recurring motif of a rabbit's head. As we learn at some point, Sweetland's friend Duke, whose advice in their youth had come at the great cost of Moses's mutilation and thereby, in the long run, his loneliness, was perfectly aware that expostulations would not work on Sweetland and therefore resorted to blackmail, using paperclipped threatening notes and decapitated rabbit heads to persuade Moses to take the package and relocate. Always an eerie find, the rabbit's head constantly persecutes Sweetland and thus fulfills the role of the return of the repressed and, additionally, of a harbinger of death. He throws the head into the ocean, but the ocean—an allegory of the vast realms of the protagonist's unconscious—always returns it. The first one to fish the head out of the ocean is Jesse, during their fishing trip together with the blind Pilgrim (Jesse's grandfather, not biological). Pilgrim's physical blindness is reinforced here by his unawareness of what Jesse caught: "'Well?' Pilgrim said from where he was standing aft. 'Did he get one?' […] 'He got one,' Sweetland said, not wanting to explain what the boy had hauled aboard" (129). This may symbolically be projected onto his possible unaware-

ness that Jesse is not really his grandson. Sweetland throws the head back into the ocean only to catch it again during the described above big cod episode. After his marvellous rescue and the no less wondrous fact that the giant cod was preserved unrotten under the pile of other fish, he finds "a rabbit's decapitated head" staring at him "out of the basin" during his gutting the cod. The repressed content returns, as usual, as an eerie end of a seemingly successful enterprise. If we further connect the rabbit's head—Duke's blackmail argument—with Moses's recalcitrance, which ultimately precipitates Jesse's death and finally Sweetland's own death, we can assume that in the first fishing episode Jesse catches his death, which, metonymically, Moses catches later one more time, and this time for himself.

Another displacement within this syntagma occurs during Sweetland's last "fishing" enterprise: his seal hunting. The seal appears within the breakwater at the end of March, just in time to save Moses from starvation after the lean winter, and the hunt seems at first to be a success. However, when Moses reaches for the animal's body, a creepy transformation takes place: "a young boy's lank head of hair broke the surface, the scalp glowing a tuberous white beneath it. He fell back against the far side of the dory, his feet kicking against the boards in spasms. He lifted his head over the gunwale and vomited into the ocean, choking on the bile" (295). If we follow the logic of this contiguity of imagery, the seal is a displaced fish, and the "young boy's lank head of hair" is a displaced rabbit's head. Again, as with the King's Seat metaphor, Jesse, who is the Lacanian Real and as such ineffable, beyond symbolization, is not named but instead is only suggested by way of synecdoche. But the structurally complex metonymical chain—the Sri Lankans' fog leading to the big-cod fog and the miraculous salvation, bridged by the return of the repressed in the form of the rabbit's head—yields the seal transforming into the boy's head as the ultimate signifier of this syntagma is evidence enough that in that last episode, the chain of displacements solidifies in condensation. According to Lacan, condensation "is the superimposed structure of signifiers in which metaphor finds its field" (425). The last signifier slips under the bar and becomes a signified: the chain of metonymies finally produces a metaphor, which, according to Genette, "is the stylistic equivalent of the psychological experience of involuntary memory, which alone, by bringing together two sensations separated in time, is able to release their *common essence* through the *miracle of an analogy*" ("Proust Palimpsest" 204).

Other "miracles of analogy" that result from metonymical chains circle around either Jesse or the island or both, since Moses's lonesome island experience becomes his work of mourning and self-imposed punishment. One of the smaller chains is Moses's trip to Little Sweetland, a deserted neighbouring island, right after he finally consented to accept the government package. The image of the abandoned island is the scene of desolation that structurally foreshadows what is going to happen to Sweetland-the-island, and Moses's experience there is contiguously related to his upcoming roams throughout his native island: "Walked up onto the beach then, strolled aimlessly across the hillside […] There were depressions to show where

the houses and root cellars had been, the overgrown outline of shale foundations" (Crummey 136). However, the analogy of perception here seems purely metonymical and does not show yet what the island truly signifies for the character's unconscious: Little Sweetland is a synecdoche of Sweetland-the-island, like Moses Sweetland himself, based solely on their contiguity and its symbolic reflection in the name.

On the other hand, Jesse, as the island's and Moses's signified, gives the island its metaphorical depth. Moses's perception, and thus the narrative's as well, of his tragic death is also foreshadowed by a metonymical chain. Apart from the rabbit's head, there is the dead calf, an unfortunate offspring of Loveless's cow, on which Moses stumbles when looking for lost Jesse. More closely, exhausted by the laborious search, Sweetland has a dream about his drowned brother Hollis, "staring up at him through cold fathoms of water, the white of his face fading as he sank down and swiftly down and no way on God's earth to reach him" (153). Not only does this dream foreshadow the subsequent finding of Jesse's corpse in the ocean, but it also superimposes itself on the uncanny outcome of Sweetland's seal hunt. The line of imagery involved here is obviously metonymical and based on displacement. Hollis, long dead before Jesse's arrival, is Jesse's supernatural friend, who is reported to have been "a bit touched" (200), like Jesse himself. Hollis's suicide is comparable with the uncertain circumstances of Jesse's death; in addition, Moses feels responsible for both tragedies. The image of Jesse, which is signified by Hollis as its metonymy, establishes its further metonymical connection with Sweetland that is predicated not only upon their familial and social bond but also upon the figure of the island: "For years he'd had the same lonesome feeling about Jesse—that the boy was stranded on the island of his peculiar self" (271). If Jesse and, by contiguity, Hollis were the islands of their "peculiar self," Sweetland is the third element of this metonymical chain, not because he is also peculiar—of which there is little doubt, though his peculiarity is of a different kind—but because he *is* the metonymy of the island. Sweetland-the-man has finally become one with the island of his name, both separated by eons from the rest of the world. This contiguity is the result of his unconscious desire to inflict punishment on himself by attaining the state of utter loneliness, resembling the one experienced by Hollis and Jesse: Moses Sweetland's work of mourning and self-imposed penance.

How can we tell that the island, figured metonymically in a number of syntagmas, finally crosses the bar separating the chain of signifiers from the signified, that is, becomes a metaphor? If we return to Lacan one more time, we should be able to qualify the island as the object of the protagonist's desire. Of course, it is not the island itself, or as such, but the images or figures of the island that are presented to Moses's mind: *objet petit a*. As substitutes for the "real," and thus never the "thing" itself, those objects, or images, are what constitutes "the rails of metonymy, eternally extending toward the *desire for something else*" (Lacan 431). Metaphor, on the other hand, according to Lacan, is a symptom of the real trauma that underlies all those unending metaphorical chains that never deliver satisfaction: "It is the truth of what this desire has been in his history that the subject cries out through his symp-

tom" (Lacan 431). Chafe maintains that Sweetland's desire is limited to "anxieties of possession" and are predicated upon "tired tropes of entitlement and interconnectedness" (7), which find their justification in inheritance and labour. This is true for the first part of the novel. In Chafe's ecocritical paradigm, it is only logical that in the second half "Moses is soon unhomed and undone by a landscape too formidable to be tamed by one person […] the tragic hero of *Sweetland* has his moment of *anagnorisis* and is jarred irreversibly from his assuring space of place-connectedness by an overwhelming bout of what Christopher Manes has termed 'ecological humility'" (20). According to this interpretation, building his identity on the concept of his congeniality with a place is Moses's ultimate desire. The second half of the book, therefore, appears to depict nothing more than the failure of Sweetland's conceited identity project, his hubris, in favour of said "ecological humility." Moses's failed survival experience in "The Keeper's House" shows as a mere disconnection or an outright destruction of the human-place ecological metonymies that comprise the first part, or a dismantling of one particular ideology. Although Chafe dedicates a few pages of his article to Moses's trauma and sense of guilt, he never allows for a possibility of a different goal, or desire, "beyond the pleasure principle" of identity building, of the one that is governed by contradictory forces of the death drive and suspended in an agonistic battle between self-punishment and self-preservation. If the second part of the novel is not just the field of an ideological defeat and the author's ecocritical message, then it is—and this is my position—an existential tale of one tragic individual's encounter with his own death, self-inflicted yet by no means suicidal, death that is experienced as solitude and crowded by ghosts of his personal history. This view would give us the image of the isolated island, figuratively disappearing from the map, as a metaphor that crowns a series of metonymies, or a symptom of the character's trauma.

Although Chafe acknowledges that Brinklow correctly diagnoses the tenuousness of the bond between humans and their place in *Sweetland*, he also criticizes her for personifying the place, for reading into it a special mirrored relationship between Moses and the island. Chafe, on the other hand, tends to interpret the novel as a pronouncement in which "Crummey establishes this cliché to write against it, to assume Buell's challenge to 'recognize the insufficiency' of 'place-connectedness' amplified to place-as-identity and produce a text that explodes these oft-expressed sentimentalities" (21). Although this ideological implication may be true, it seems secondary to the aesthetic value of the novel, which naturally defies depersonalization and insists on Brinklow's conclusion about the equation, metonymic in its essence, between Sweetland-the-man and Sweetland-the-island. The only aesthetic generalization that seems justifiable in this metonymic contiguity of human and place is metaphor as the final product of figuring the island in relation with the character. Sweetland-the-island becomes a metaphor as soon as we can qualify it, in Northrop Frye's words, as a symbol that is "a specific representative of a class or genus […]. Archetypal metaphor thus involves the use of what has been called the concrete universal, the

individual identified with its class, Wordsworth's 'tree of many one'" (124). We can agree with Chafe that Sweetland-the-island loses its metonymic connection with Sweetland-the-man, but it does so with one important stipulation, that is, to become a metaphor: *the* island becomes *an* island. The protagonist of Crummey's novel ends up as an island of his own self, like Hollis and Jesse before him. Moses has to become homeless on the island of his name in order to achieve what he has strived for, however unconsciously, in his work of mourning and self-imposed penance.

The dialectic of metonymy and metaphor in *Sweetland*, therefore, can be qualified as the dominant aesthetic mode that allows for the creation of the effects that produce Moses Sweetland as a unity of his immediate perceptions, involuntary memories, and delirium. The metonymic chains carefully built in the first part of the novel are solidified by the centre-of-consciousness narrative that goes beyond the character as the centre to contrive various instances of structural irony and complex symbolic syntagmas such as the chess game, the rabbit's head, the King's Seat, the big fish and the refugees episodes. These chains then become subject to figural deconstruction in the second part, as the rhetorical hiatus that emerges in the wake of the disrupted metonymical syntagmas becomes a space of the protagonist's unconscious, and on the basis of this interpretive transformation, the resulting metaphors turn out to be the symptoms of his trauma. Apart from possibly being an ecocritical statement, *Sweetland*, if anything, is a deconstruction of the subject, which is shown as a rhetorical play of metonymy and metaphor and whose precarious status is grounded on the structural homogeneity between the vulnerable character and the compromised narrative.

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