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MASTER THESIS

CANADIAN POSTMODERN REGIONALISM IN  
NEWFOUNDLAND: THE FICTION OF LISA MOORE

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EXPLORATIONS ON POSTMODERN SOCIETY IN

*ALLIGATOR AND FLANNERY*

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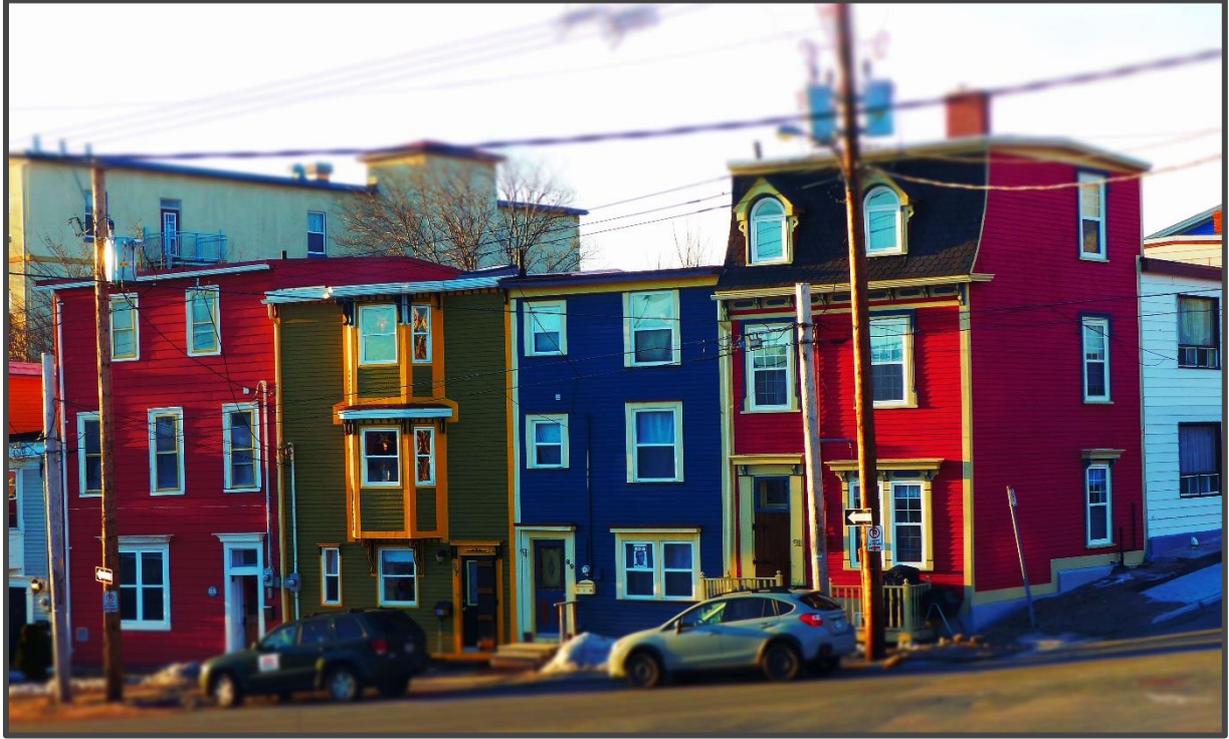
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JELLYBEAN HOUSES IN DOWNTOWN ST. JOHN'S, CANADA

PHOTOGRAPH BY RABANUS MITTERECKER

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## A GLANCE AT THE SHORELINE - INTRODUCTION

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*“Waves travel a long distance without effort. They curl because they cannot not curl. Because when a wave is punched in the gut it caves. Because a wave is all show and no substance. The curdling spew rushes ahead. Foam scribbling over the sand, a note to say the wave is over. Because the glare on the water is in Sanskrit. Because the sea smells like the sea and she’s got the dress wet already and it’s clinging to her shins. Because she believes in submitting and has made a minor religion of it.”*

– Lisa Moore, *Alligator* (224)

Walking in downtown St. John’s, one becomes aware of the surrounding colourful constructions dotting the streets. Those jellybean houses, named after the popular North American candy, are a local speciality. Glistening in the light of Newfoundland’s ever-changing weather, the jellybean houses can be seen as a metaphor for St. John’s thriving arts scene. The bright candy-coloured houses stand in stark contrast to the otherwise rather gray environment of the Rock, so it comes as no surprise that author and painter Lisa Moore displays a highly diverse and multilayered oeuvre.<sup>1</sup>

Since the publication of her first short story collections *Degrees of Nakedness* (1995) and *Open* (2002), Newfoundland author Lisa Moore has become a popular Canadian writer and is regarded as one of Canada’s and Newfoundland’s finest writers. Through her works, Moore has become known for her visual style, as well as her fragmented narratives. According to *The Concise Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, she “has magically created a colourful, eventful reality of her own” (444). This new aesthetics sets Moore apart from writers such as Alice Munro or Margaret Atwood. In a recent essay, “Canadian Celebrity Authorship Moves On” (2016), Lorraine York argues that popular Canadian writers such as Margaret Atwood have “become native-informers, producing a narrative of ‘Canadian-ness’ for export abroad” (81). Now authors such as Lisa Moore, as part of the post-Atwood generation, have

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<sup>1</sup> “The Rock” is the commonly used soubriquet of Newfoundland. It bears neither particularly positive nor negative connotations.

contributed to a diversification of Canadian Literature, doing justice to the versatility of Canadian society. In another essay of late, “Reading On: Forty Years of Canadian Literature” (2016), Cynthia Sugars suggests that “since 1976, Canadian literature moved from a nation-based and often bicultural [English and French] focus, to an expanded exploration (...) of a wide range of divergent voices and communities” (16-17). Lisa Moore is very much part of this new development and a general post-national approach in contemporary Canadian literature.

This thesis will focus on two of Lisa Moore’s works: *Alligator* (2005), her first novel, and *Flannery* (2016), her most recent one. It will be argued that Lisa Moore’s postmodern regionalist aesthetics in *Alligator* and *Flannery* put the spotlight on a fragmented and disoriented Newfoundland society, which is strongly influenced by capitalist and global forces.

The first part places Moore’s work in the broader context of Newfoundland literature. Hence, an overview of the Rock’s literary history as well as its core themes will be provided. Major cultural influences on the literary sphere will be pointed out as they had a significant impact on Newfoundland’s literary scene. The section will then be concluded by a concise survey of Moore’s writing style and her life as a Newfoundland artist.

After supplying a literary overview and underlining the special position Lisa Moore’s fiction assumes in the island’s literature, the second chapter will focus on the marriage of postmodern aesthetics and regional aspects in *Alligator*. For this discussion, a variety of theoretical frameworks will be employed, such as Linda Hutcheon’s elaborations on the Canadian postmodern or David M. Jordan’s theories on postmodern regionalism.

Finally, the third chapter will discuss Moore’s *Flannery* with an emphasis on deficient family structures in Newfoundland society and Moore’s flashback-technique. While being structurally less experimental than *Alligator*, *Flannery* assumes a new position in Moore’s treatment of a global influence on the Newfoundland region. Hence, it adds a new dimension to the discussion of Newfoundland’s literature.

One might wonder if a thesis on literature in general and Newfoundland literature in particular has any real-life impact or relevance outside the academic

circles of Canadian Studies. However, academic analysis can provide the reader with additional layers of meaning, and a deeper understanding of the texts at hand. Moore's work, ultimately, "is a literary model for becoming more compassionate, empathetic people" (Whalen 17). As such, an investigation of her themes and aesthetics will prove highly promising and rewarding.

## RESEARCH NOTE

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This thesis is partly informed by a research trip to St. John's, Canada, in March 2017. In the course of this one-month enquiry, a number of personal interviews have been conducted in order to grasp the real-life impact of Newfoundland literature and thoughts of current members of the St. John's arts community. This effort was undertaken to add a real dimension to this thesis, and to better understand the contemporary dimension of Newfoundland literature. Several people who had or still have a meaningful impact on the local arts scene were interviewed: first, Lisa Moore provides some in-depth and up-to-date information about her current projects as well as her overall aesthetics (27 March). Glenn Deir, vice president of the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador, presents some additional insights on the literature of the Rock (29 March). And, finally, folklorist and bookstore owner Matthew Howse offers another information concerning the topic from a different angle (29 March). Additionally, conversations with Moore's mentor Larry Mathews and Newfoundland author Michael Crummey deepened the understanding of contemporary Newfoundland literature. Transcription of the interviews are provided in the appendix; when quoted, the accord time stamp is provided.

## I. THE RISE OF CONTEMPORARY NEWFOUNDLAND LITERATURE

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*“Yes, there is a Newfoundland literature. It does exist.”*

– Terry Whalen, “Atlantic Possibilities” (32)

### **1.1 The Written Rock: The Literary History of Newfoundland**

The island of Newfoundland is a truly unique place, geographically, culturally, socially and historically. Its harsh climate, remote location and distinct economy once entirely depended on the cod fisheries and now mostly based on offshore oil sets it apart from other Canadian provinces. The introduction to 1994s *Extremities*, the first publication of the Burning Rock Collective, gives a good sense of Newfoundland’s singular position: “Geographically, we have always been an extremity: on the edge of a new, unknown world, the cusp of the Atlantic Ocean and the North American continent, our topsoil scraped by glaciers and dumped into the Grand Banks” (Winter et al. xi-xii). Newfoundland can even be considered an extremity in a temporal sense with its own time zone (UTC -3.30). In the rather recent *Pathways of Creativity in Contemporary Newfoundland and Labrador* (2015), María Jesús Hernández Lerena offers an overview of the imaginary Newfoundland: “Some of Newfoundland’s traditional paradigms for self-explanation have been: extreme geography, rugged individuals wrestling a life from the sea, the cohesive communities of the outports and a strong tradition in oral storytelling and other arts” (2). Quite obviously, the extreme is a strong part of Newfoundland, in terms of geography as well as lifestyle. However, the days of fishery and outport culture have long since passed and only few continue to live in the outports dotted around the Rock’s rough and edgy coastline. Life in Newfoundland shifted towards the urban centres, namely the provincial capital St. John’s on the Avalon Peninsula in the East, and Corner Brook on the island’s Westend. This chapter aims to present an overview Newfoundland’s literary history to provide some context for the following analysis of Lisa Moore’s work. The literary scene in Newfoundland, and St. John’s specifically, has been strongly influenced by cultural initiatives and developments; hence, some of the most important cultural shifts and influences will also be discussed.

A first anthology of literary works set in Newfoundland was published in 1974 by Peter Neary and Patrick O’Flaherty, *By Great Waters: A Newfoundland and Labrador Anthology*. The compilation contains “first-hand accounts of life in Newfoundland and (...) imaginative writing with Newfoundland as a setting” (xi), starting with excerpts from the early Vinland Sagas of Leif Erikson to some of the island’s literature from the 1960s. Indeed, *By Great Waters* can be considered a predecessor to O’Flaherty’s much quoted *The Rock Observed* (1979), the first literary survey of Newfoundland literature and widely acknowledged to be an essential work in the field of Newfoundland literary studies.<sup>2</sup> It focusses on “literary responses to Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders over the centuries (...) [in] the context of Newfoundland history” (ix). In his extensive review on the book, Terry Whalen praises O’Flaherty’s “investigative intensity that brings to mind a mad lover, someone intent on finding out everything that has been uttered about his beloved” (34-35). However, Whalen also holds that *The Rock Observed* suffers from a certain narrow-mindedness in its approach: “it is a study which underlines the virtue of Newfoundland stoicism and punishes other kinds of values on its behalf” (35). Despite those shortcomings, Patrick O’Flaherty’s *The Rock Observed* represents the first comprehensive study of Newfoundland literature.

Interestingly, O’Flaherty’s work trails off at a historically eventful time, when much of Newfoundland experienced major cultural changes, which had a significant impact on its literary scene. Following confederation in 1949, there was an “art boom” (Hernández Lerena 2) on the island in the late 1960s and 1970s. It is during this ‘Newfoundland Renaissance’<sup>3</sup> that the province saw a cultural revival, fostering a sense of regional identity and belonging. The arts experienced a considerable upswing and there were various new developments in the performing, literary, and visual arts (cf. Seifert 47-48). In an online article on the Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage website, Jenny Higgins provides a comprehensive overview regarding the large number of cultural developments in the area. Higgins suggests that, “in the coming decades, the arts remained a significant force in the province’s society and economy.

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<sup>2</sup> To name but a few examples, Martina Seifert frames *The Rock Observed* as a “ground-breaking literary history” (11), Larry Mathews calls it “the first and still the only scholarly work that attempts to present a comprehensive overview of the province/nation’s literary history” (1).

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘Newfoundland Renaissance’ was coined by Sandra Gwyn in an article for *Saturday Night* in April 1976, p. 38-45 (cf. Rompkey 70-71).

They explored the province's past and traditional heritage, as well as its place in the contemporary world.” In 1973, the province’s first publishing house, Breakwater Press, was founded. 1975 saw the establishment of the Newfoundland Independent Filmmakers Co-operative (NIFCO), which would go on to prove itself as a lasting influence.<sup>4</sup> The interest in the slowly vanishing outport culture grew rapidly and Memorial University continued its investigations by establishing the Folklore Department in 1968 (cf. Higgins). Newfoundlanders progressively became more aware of their own heritage and the island’s past. Simultaneously, the infrastructure to support artists experienced significant developments and the Newfoundland Renaissance was in full swing. It enabled upcoming artists such as Michael Winter or Lisa Moore to profit from the support provided by governmental institutions such as Memorial University.

Despite the growing interest in Newfoundland culture and its literature in particular, no other work drafting an overview of Newfoundland’s literature has been written since – which is surprising especially since there has been a vast amount of literature published as a result of the various artistic and cultural developments. However, there have been some in-depth explorations of certain authors and aspects of Newfoundland’s literature; for instance, in *Rewriting Newfoundland Mythology: The Works of Tom Dawe* (2002) Martina Seifert draws a multilayered picture of the diametric nature of the Rock’s literature, drawing on the works of poet Tom Dawe. Hernáez Larena deems the book a “substantial study of the literary tradition in Newfoundland and of its historical determinants” (5). Seifert’s work is particularly illuminating due to its exploration of various tendencies in NFLD literature before the 1960s. She identifies three predominating discourses in Newfoundland’s literature, which is strongly intertwined especially with the outport culture as the prototypical representation of the Rock. On the one hand, past works of authors such as Margaret Duley, Harold Horwood and Percy Janes depicted the outport as “a nightmare, a place of terror, dullness and despair” (32). Their writing stresses the straining daily routines of the fisheries, harsh weather conditions and also the overall lack of education. On the other hand Seifert refers to authors such as Arthur Scammell, Ron Pollet or Farley Mowat who represent the other end of the spectrum by painting “an idealized picture of traditional outport culture (...) [as] a response to the denial and devaluation of [the]

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<sup>4</sup> St. John’s continues to be a hub for the Canadian film industry to this day. For instance, the Canadian TV-series *Republic of Doyle* is set and filmed entirely in St. John’s.

Newfoundland experience and a reaction to the difficult social and economic conditions” (35). The latter authors celebrated outport culture, i.e. “the peculiar outharbour way of viewing the world: a way that combines shrewd understatement, funmaking, homely wisdom, acceptance, and stubborn pride” (O’Flaherty, “Writing in Newfoundland 798). Those two extreme positions are, as Seifert points out, enriched by a third stance seeking the middle ground. In this third position, the outport is neither glorified nor demonized but rather comprises “a heterogeneous microcosm that provides for evocative inspiration” (24). For instance, authors like Wayne Johnston, Tom Dawe or Michael Crummey are “sympathetic to the values of outport life, [yet] they do not try to recreate the ‘good old times’” (49). The outport experience – that is, life in small communities along the shoreline, in or out of tune with nature – still comprised the major discourse in Newfoundland literature at this point. This emphasis on “rubber boots and cod fish” (Howse 27:22-27-24), however, changed in the following decades.

Since the literary renaissance in the late 1960s and 1970s, Newfoundland literature has changed considerably. The once perhaps somewhat barren rock saw the emergence of the Burning Rock Collective, a group of writers who met from 1985 to 1986 in creative writing classes taught by Larry Mathews at Memorial University (cf. Winter et al. xi). A few students, amongst them Lisa Moore, Michael Winter, D.J. Eastwood, Jessica Grant, Ramona Dearing, Beth Ryan and many others<sup>5</sup> extended their class meetings to critique their works and to discuss life and literature. It was also in 1985 that Wayne Johnston published his first novel *The Story of Bobby O’Malley*, which generated a considerable interest of the Canadian reading public in Newfoundland writing (cf. Mathews 2-3). Johnston’s major role in generating an interest in writing from the Rock is not to be underestimated; he was the first of a new generation of writers. According to Larry Mathews, “Wayne Johnston’s reputation [even] dwarfs those of the others” (4). In her article “The Ends of the Earth” for the *Walrus* journal about Newfoundland and Tasmanian literature, Moore writes about the growing interest in literature from the periphery in general: “Tasmanian and

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that Newfoundland author Michael Crummey, although a personal friend of many of the collective’s writers, was never a part of the group; despite him being attributed to being so in newspapers (Sullivan, *A Captivating Collection* 11) as well as in academic articles (Tremblay 670). In a personal conversation with Michael Crummey on 23 March 2017, the author points out that his creative work functions outside a group environment.

Newfoundland literatures have captured the international imagination, to the extent that they have, partly because they are charting uncharted territory – the specific details of place, voice, cadence, and wit that come from living on islands at the periphery, at the ends of the earth” (87).

The Burning Rock Collective was less a sterile institution than an open group; some members were attending meetings but did not publish their work (McGrath viii). The group released two works in total, *Extremities* (1994) and *Hearts Larry Broke* (2000). The nature of the Burning Rock Collective is perhaps best described in this excerpt from the introduction to *Extremities*:

Picture this: a group of writers living in Newfoundland who have been writing short stories for the past nine years. They meet every two weeks, lugging cases of beer across downtown St. John’s, sitting in kitchens and living rooms (candlelight, tablecloths festooned with guacamole, tortillas, grapes, fruit pies, cheese scones), to read and critique their latest fiction. (Winter et al. xi)

Those meetings are a turning point in Newfoundland literature – or, as Paul Chafe phrases it in his online entry in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*: “The work of the Burning Rock Collective marks a significant shift in writing in Newfoundland.” Indeed, what at first appears to be quite an informal introduction becomes highly revealing: The mentioned guacamole, tortillas and grapes already hint at the island’s shifting realities and the different experience of the Burning Rock generation compared to the one of their parents. Instead, the urban realities of a cosmopolitan St. John’s came into sharp focus with stories such as Moore’s “Wisdom Teeth”, which resonated with the new generation: “‘Wisdom Teeth’ (...) represents one of the first times I opened a book and saw a Newfoundland I recognized (...) It wasn’t until the Burning Rock crowd came along that I picked up a book and said, ‘I walk these streets, I go to these parties, I know people like this’” (Fitzpatrick 53-55). Gone are the fishcakes and cod tongues; the writers of the Burning Rock grew up in a Newfoundland which progressively became a part of the globalized world.<sup>6</sup> In addition, most writers came from the middle class and enjoyed a university education, which certainly had an impact on their writing. Moore herself stresses the importance of the group for her own writing: “I know a lot of writers

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<sup>6</sup> The dichotomy of the global and the local will be explored later in the context of regionalism.

are really opposed to that (...) They see writing as an isolated act. But for me, I want as many hands manipulating what I'm doing as possible. (...) I don't feel protective about it or I don't care where it comes from. I just want it to come. I want it covered in fingerprints" ("Hot from the Rock" 2). Out of such vivid and lively commotion, a great many stories developed, and soon authors such as Michael Winter and Lisa Moore were publishing their own works outside of literary journals. In his online article on the Burning Rock Collective, Paul Chafe maintains that they "capture the reality of contemporary Newfoundland not defined by the fishery or folksy villagers." While earlier texts focussed on the outport experience and the Newfoundlander as a hardy but amiable stereotype, this new sort of literature refocused on the urban Newfoundland(er) instead, most prominently represented by life in the provincial capital St. John's.

The rising popularity of Newfoundland writers on a national scale in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was not a coincidence. The writers of the Burning Rock Collective benefited from a very particular cultural moment in which the government heavily supported the arts and culture. Between 1970 and 1990, "the arts and heritage were driven by a sense of national identity and, in their turn, shaped by it" (O'Dea, "Culture and Country" 385). A major point of influence in this period was the 500<sup>th</sup> John Cabot Anniversary celebrations in 1997, which brought much attention to the province. The "Year of the Arts" was funded with \$1.2 million, and although there were some issues in actually raising the money, it significantly contributed to the growth of the Newfoundland arts scene (Rompkey 75-76). In a personally conducted interview, folklorist Matthew Howse points out that it was partially this "cultural machine" (18:30-19:57) behind writers such as Michael Winter and Lisa Moore which enabled them to become widely popular and to gain the support they needed to become known not only locally, but also nationally and partially internationally.

Following this new literary push, scholar and writer Larry Mathews proposed a canon for Newfoundland literature in 2004.<sup>7</sup> He notes that there are far too many

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<sup>7</sup> Mathew's suggested list consists of the following ten works: Bernice Morgan's *Random Passage* (1992), John Steffler's *The Afterlife of George Cartwright* (1992), E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News* (1993), Patrick Kavanagh's *Gaff Topsails* (1996), Paul Bowdring's *The Night Season* (1997), Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* (1998), Joan Clark's *Latitude of Melt* (2000), Michael Winter's *This*

authors to consider and that, therefore, his list “is far from comprehensive” (2). Given his personal friendship with some of the authors, Mathews is also aware that his list might also not be entirely objective (4). However, quite obviously, any canon is selective and can be a point of discussion. The value in Mathews’ list lies in the initial proposal itself, supplying an overview of important Newfoundland works of literature from the recent past. Notably, writers of the Burning Rock such as Michael Winter and Lisa Moore are included also which is also crucial since they significantly shaped Newfoundland’s literary scene in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the context of this thesis, it is therefore important to note that Lisa Moore’s work is acknowledged as a vital part of Newfoundland’s literary landscape.

The emergence of the Burning Rock Collective has led to a new interest in Newfoundland, its literature and culture. Within Canada, the Rock gained a reputation for its productive, diverse and increasingly self-confident arts scene. Ronald Rompkey notes that by comparison, there exists a large amount of artists in the province in relation to its actual population (cf. 63). Yet, as multiple critics have observed, there has been comparatively little scholarly reflection on Newfoundland writing (cf. Hernáez Lerena 4; Wylie and Lynes 12; Löschnigg 88). This is not to suggest that there has been no interest in its literature at all; for instance, Moore’s *Alligator* has been the topic of multiple academic studies. Rather, academic attention has been relatively scarce considering the province’s “immense creative output” (Hernáez Lerena 4). This certainly holds true especially for the missing reflections on the province’s numerous plays and dramatic works, which most often remain academically unconsidered. Mathews notes that to this day, “excellent original stage plays continue to be written and produced” (3).<sup>8</sup> Those valid arguments notwithstanding, there has also been a fair share of articles on Newfoundland literature, which shall not be neglected. The recent *Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature* (2016), for instance, features a number of essays on Atlantic Canadian literature such as Tony Tremblay’s “People are Made of Places’: Perspectives on Region in Atlantic-Canadian Literature” or Paul Chafe’s “If I Were a Rugged Beauty...’: Contemporary Newfoundland Fiction”. Those works

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*All Happened* (2000), Michael Crummey’s *River Thieves* (2001) and finally Lisa Moore’s *Open* (2002) (2).

<sup>8</sup> Sadly, a detailed consideration of Newfoundland drama lies beyond the scope of this thesis. The drama enthusiast, however, may find a collection of recent Newfoundland plays in *The Breakwater Book of Contemporary Newfoundland Plays* (vol. 1: 2012, vol. 2: 2014, both edited by Denyse Lynde).

certainly do not comprise the majority of the book, but they show a continued interest in Atlantic-Canadian literature, which has found more recognition now than in earlier decades. As mentioned, there has been no comprehensive account on the overall situation of the current literature in Newfoundland. A more recent survey of this kind would certainly be illuminating and a valid academic endeavour, especially considering the radical shift Newfoundland writing took in the 1990s. Yet, as Paul Chafe points out:

Creating a simple continuation of O’Flaherty’s seminal survey of Newfoundland literature would be impossible today (...) Since the publication of *The Rock Observed*, Newfoundland has enjoyed at least one more literary revival – an increase in literary production so large that a text purporting to do what O’Flaherty did in 1979 would number in the thousands of pages. (*Rugged Beauty* 676)

Consequently, any future survey would have to be selective. The question remains: Where is the literature of Newfoundland situated at the present moment, in 2017? Authors such as Wayne Johnston, Michael Winter or Lisa Moore are established and can thereby take a certain readership for granted whenever they release a new piece. However, the storm and the once overwhelming interest in literature from the Rock has passed to a certain degree – or, as Lisa Moore puts it quite poetically in a personal interview: “The interest of the publishing world is like a roving spotlight that goes over” (12:03-12:10). The arts community of Newfoundland and St. John’s, however, continues to be highly productive and alive indeed. Today, the arts have become a flagship of Newfoundland culture, and also a fairly important part of the province’s economy (cf. O’Dea, “Culture and Country” 385). Emerging writers such as Eva Crocker with her short story collection *Barreling Forward: Stories* (March 2017) make their appearance on the scene, while the creative writing programmes at MUN are still in full swing and possibly producing new great writers ready to spin the Newfoundland narrative. Recently, Lisa Moore herself edited and released a story collection with some of her students, *Racket: New Writing in Newfoundland* (2015), containing new stories from the Rock. However, all these younger writers lack some of the government support and the interest of larger publishers that the Burning Rock generation was able to take for granted. At the present moment, Newfoundland literature is still defined by the well known authors that started publishing their work in the early 90s (Wayne Johnston) or around the millennium (Lisa Moore, Michael Winter, etc.). The Burning

Rock Collective was part of a particular social and cultural moment where the stars aligned to make book publications with national publishers possible. There was a search for new talent and Newfoundland provided that talent. This particular moment is hard if not impossible to recreate. It remains to be seen whether new writers will receive the chance to make a living off their craft and publish books nation-wide. Only one thing is certain: today, St. John's is a place with a literature as colourful and diverse as the jellybean houses that sprinkle its downtown streets. The question is, for reader and critic alike, which houses to enter.

### **1.2 Painting the World with Words: Lisa Moore**

As one of the most prolific members of the Burning Rock Collective, Lisa Moore plays a major role in the literary community of today's Newfoundland. To provide some context for the following text analyses, a brief overview of her artistic development, her main themes and the reception of her works will be provided.

Born on 28 March 1964 in St. John's, Lisa Moore is one of the central figures of the contemporary Canadian literary stage. She is widely regarded as one "of the most innovative contemporary short-story writers" (Löschnigg 108) in Canada and gained a reputation for her stylized novels as well. An emotional and magnifying writing style as well as a talent for deconstructing the rhythms of everyday life have become the trademarks of Moore's aesthetic (cf. Whalen, *Aesthetics of Intensity* 1-2). Her interest in the arts reaches back to 1984 when the then eighteen-year-old girl was nominated for the Actra Award for her radio play *The Magic Tunnel* (cf. Carew 3). Later, she was trained as a painter at the Nova Scotia College of Arts and Design in Halifax where, amongst other things, she learned about expressionist painting. Expressionism came to have a lasting influence on Moore's writing style (cf. Wylie, *All Over the Canvas* 117-118). After returning to St. John's, she studied Creative Writing at the Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) where she also became part of the creative writing classes leading to the Burning Rock Collective.

Moore started publishing single short stories in literary and art magazines such as *TickleAce*, *Prism International* and *The New Quarterly* until she released her first short story collection, *Degrees of Nakedness* in 1995. The collection was favourably received, especially due to its "funny, erotic [and] incisive" style (Sullivan, *Naked Truth* 15). In those early stories, the characters' emotional states were paramount for her.

Moore's reputations took off, however, with the publication of her second short story collection *Open* (2002). *Open* was short-listed in 2002 for the prestigious Scotiabank Giller Prize and establishing her reputation nationally as a young talent from the Rock. One critic concludes that "Open is a significant new collection on the Newfoundland and national literary stages" (Sullivan, *Extraordinary Collection* 4); another praised "the beauty of her tidy, relentlessly visual stories" and her "ability to choose just the right words" (Porter 3). The stories in *Open* also have distinct feminine undertones, featuring mostly female protagonists and, amongst other things, broaching themes such as pregnancy and abortion. One reviewer even called *Open* "ultra feminine, with stories that are impatient to skip from epiphany to epiphany" (Ruth 2). However, one can argue that the feminist sentiments in *Open* are but one of the collection's many prevailing themes. Ultimately, this collection opened the doors for Lisa Moore to the national stage of Canadian literature.<sup>9</sup>

What followed was a step into new territory: Moore published her first full-length novel, *Alligator*, in 2005. *Alligator*, an urban tale about the life of several characters situated in St. John's, gained Moore her second nomination for the Giller shortlist and won the Commonwealth Prize in 2006 for the Canada and Caribbean region category. In the following years, Moore established herself as a writer of fictional works inspired by real events: in *February* (2010), she explores the suffering of the wife of one of the workers who died during the Ocean Ranger disaster of 1982 in the early morning hours after Valentine's Day. This catastrophe, when an ocean rig off the Newfoundland coast sank and took all 84 of its workers with it, is deeply rooted in Newfoundland consciousness and is "indelibly etched in the minds of Newfoundlanders" (Callanan, *Trusting Change* 14). *February* won the Canada Reads

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<sup>9</sup> For the reader who is interested in the artistic processes involved *behind* this work of literature, the printed publication of the heated discussion about how to name the collection is highly recommended: "Open for Discussion" is the script of the conversation between Michael Winter, Lisa Moore, Michael Crummey and Stan Dragland about whether the book should be called *Open*, or *Mouths*, *Open* or *Mouths Open*. The topic is discussed at length (especially the comma), with wit and a certain persistency on behalf of Lisa Moore who likes *Open* best. The passion about literature seeps through when Moore writes to her editor: "So Martha, you're still with me on this thing right? It's airy. *Open*. It's an airy title, sun blown, pregnant, blasted apart, in love, modern, full of Christmases and whales and sex and vulnerability and brass knuckles, (okay, maybe no whales) and zest and surf and chocolates and guts, and liver and onions, and windows and pipes, and smokiness and grit under your contact lens and fog and. This title is a reason to wake up in the morning, I'm thinking. Lisa" (Winter and Moore 26).

awards 2013, yet the novel gained comparatively little attention on a national scale. This stands in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly strong reception in Newfoundland. In a personal interview, Deir Glenn, vice president of the Writer's Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, gives a detailed description of the stormy day when he heard of the ocean rig disaster (11:00-12:50). He also mentions how "all of the our hearts were collective breaking" (08:08-08-13). As a whole, *February* can be regarded as one of Moore's most influential books in Newfoundland, while being somewhat less relevant on Canadian scale.

Aiming at further diversifying her field of expertise, Moore's next book was a thriller. In *Caught* (2013), Newfoundland's thriving drug culture of the 1970s is explored. *Caught* was also nominated for the Giller Prize shortlist in 2013. Finally, Moore's most recent work follows the life of a teenager living in St. John's. *Flannery* (2016) is her first young adult novel, and shows Moore's capacity of branching out into a wide variety of genres.

In addition to publishing these novels, Moore has released short stories and art critiques in magazines as well as literary journals such as *Tickle Ace*, *Paragon* and *New Quarterly*. She has contributed columns for newspapers such as *The National Post* and the *Guardian*. In addition, Moore has edited and contributed to a number of anthologies including *The Penguin Book of Contemporary Canadian Women's Short Stories* (2006), *The first Man in My Life: Daughters Write about their Fathers* (2007, ed. by Sandra Martin) and *Great Expectations: Twenty-Four True Stories About Childbirth* (2008, ed. together with Dede Crane). Moore also introduced the works of Newfoundland photographer Sheilagh O'Leary in *Human Natured: Newfoundland Nudes* (2007). The range of these anthologies gives a sound impression of some of Moore's most prevalent themes and what she is mostly concerned with as an author; themes therefore include emotional and spiritual nakedness, family relations, sexuality, motherhood, vulnerability, pregnancy, loss, mourning, abortion, beauty and, the bliss of youth. Some of Moore's works also contain social criticism; *Alligator*, for instance, can be interpreted as a critique of capitalist sentiments, *Caught* as a critical take on surveillance culture.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Herb Wyle examines some of these themes in his essays, "February is the Cruellest Month: Neoliberalism and the Economy of Mourning in Lisa Moore's February" (*Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2010, pp. 55-72) and "The best stories ... we've known the end from beginning":

In 2004, Lisa Moore was a writer in residence at the Memorial University of Newfoundland where she presently also teaches creative writing classes. In 2015, she released and edited *Racket: New Writing Made in Newfoundland*, a collection of stories some of her students wrote for her class. As can be seen by this example, Moore is both professionally as well as personally engaged with moving the literature of Newfoundland forward. While she is widely acknowledged as a novelist (cf. Chafe, *Rugged Beauty* 677), some of Moore's more recent published works have been short stories, most notably "But Lovers With the Intensity I'm Talking About", published in *The Breakwater Book of Contemporary Newfoundland Short Fiction* in 2015. In a personal interview, Moore states that she is constantly interested in new forms of literature and unraveling new approaches towards perspective. Hence, she is currently working on a story based on Newfoundland as well as Caribbean folklore, aesthetically mixed with magical realism (00:45-04:48). In a similar vein, one of Moore's present projects is linked to Thomas Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*. In the interview, Moore maintains that she is particularly interested in Hardy's use of perspective, and that this might be a core of her next novel (17:30-18:43). In summary, Lisa Moore continues to push her own boundaries in almost every literary work she produces, while simultaneously maintaining her visual and emotional writing style. In the following, some of her works will be explored in more detail, particularly taking the postmodern, regional and spacial elements of her stories into account.

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Lisa Moore's 'Caught' and the Rise of the Surveillance Society" (*Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, 2016, pp. 262–85).

## II. EXPLORING DOWNTOWN – POSTMODERN REGIONALISM IN *ALLIGATOR*

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*“The margin or the border is the postmodern space par excellence, the place where new possibilities exist.”*

– Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern* (4)

### **2.1 : Break Up to Heal Again: Postmodern Aesthetics**

After publishing two short story collections, *Alligator* (2005) was Lisa Moore’s first full-length novel. It was shortlisted for the prestigious 2005 Giller Prize, won the Commonwealth Prize in 2006 for the Canada and Caribbean region, and resulted in much praise for the author. Reviews have been widely positive, *Alligator* was called “an innovative and bold first novel” (Rigelhof 3) as well as “a vicious, unpredictable beast” (Callanan, “Alligator Wrestling” 22). *The Concise Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature* acknowledges Moore’s postmodern aesthetic in its description of *Alligator* as a “cornucopia of visual details, abruptly changing scenes in the past or present [with] differing points of view” (444). Fuelled by its public success, Moore’s first novel has also gained some critical attention in academic circles, as a number of studies and articles testify.<sup>11</sup> Due to its richness in both theme and form, *Alligator* can be regarded as one of Moore’s most significant works within her oeuvre. The following section will discuss *Alligator* as a postmodern regionalist<sup>12</sup> novel and show how it highlights societal issues in a globalized Newfoundland community.

Lisa Moore’s *Alligator* tells the story of six main and four minor characters whose lives in St. John’s intersect at several points over the course of two weeks. The narrative begins with the story of Colleen Clark, a rebellious 17-year old teenager experiencing the awakening of her sexuality. She commits an act of ecoterrorism by pouring sugar into the bulldozers’ tanks which are responsible for destroying the

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<sup>11</sup> For instance, in “Branded Newfoundland: Lisa Moore’s *Alligator* and Consumer Capitalism”, Jonathan Parsons explores branding and capitalist critique in the novel’s context. Adrian Fowler discusses Moore’s representation of the city in “Townie Lit: Newfoundland Refocused in the Writing of Lisa Moore and Michael Winter” while Terry Whalen focuses on voice and writing style in “An Aesthetics of Intensity: Lisa Moore’s Sublime Worlds”.

<sup>12</sup> The term ‘postmodern regionalism’ was coined by David M. Jordan in 1994 (cf. Löschnigg 121).

woodlands, the last resort to the endangered Newfoundland pine marten. Her mother Beverley tries to deal with the challenges that come with being a single parent, while also struggling with the loss of her partner David. Colleen is absorbed less by her mother's daily struggles than by her aunt Madeleine. In the shadow of a looming heart-attack, Madeleine rushes through life at a rapid speed to finish her magnum opus in time, a film on Newfoundland prior to confederation. The aging actress Isobel is supposed to play the main part, however, Isobel lost some of her self-confidence while working in Toronto and returns to Newfoundland broken and disillusioned. It is here that she falls prey to the novel's main predator: Valentin, a Russian refugee who stranded on the Rock, is determined to leave the island, destroying any obstacles in his path. Isobel is not the only one suffering from Valentin's destructive influences: Frank, the hard-working young entrepreneur who is determined to make a fortune with his hot dog stand almost gets swallowed up by Valentin. When Frank falls in love with Colleen and sleeps with her, everything seems to be lost in an unexpected turn of events; in the morning, Colleen steals Frank's entire savings to visit an alligator farm in Louisiana. Towards the end of the novel, Madeleine dies before she is able to finish her film. Valentin burns down Isobel's mansion almost killing Frank, who manages to escape and start a new life. Moments of bliss sprinkle the narrative while lives collide, shatter and readjust their course – all driven by an unspeakable urgency to move on.

Before venturing into the depths of textual analysis and structural exploration, it is beneficial to propose a theoretical framework for the discussion of *Alligator* as a postmodern novel. Academically, the term is widely contested. As Canadian literary critic Linda Hutcheon points out, 'postmodernism' is often used, yet its exact signification remains quite unclear:

Despite the frequency of the term 'postmodern' in the criticism of literature, the visual arts and architecture, its definition remains decidedly vague. From what I can glean from the *usage* of the term, 'postmodernism' would seem to designate art forms that are fundamentally self-reflexive – in other words, art that is self-consciously art (or artifice), literature that is openly aware of the fact that it is written and read as part of a particular culture, having as much to do with the literary past as with the social present. (*Canadian Postmodern* 1)

In this definition, Hutcheon highlights the importance of literature as artifice and its interplay with cultural, literary and social forces of past and present. In addition, she argues that “postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 3). It “both sets up and subverts the powers and conventions of art” (*Canadian Postmodern* 2). Furthermore, Hutcheon claims that postmodernism is inherently paradoxical and that “the one thing which the provisional, contradictory postmodern enterprise is *not* is ‘confidently’ anything” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 19).<sup>13</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, postmodernism will be understood as defined by Linda Hutcheon, i.e. as a self-reflexive paradoxical aesthetics that questions the status quo.

Applying this definition, postmodernist texts break with the traditions and challenge established reading practises. This tendency of moving beyond the established cannot only be seen in Moore’s fiction, but in Canadian Atlantic literature in general as “the writing of the current generation [of Atlantic writers] reflects an increasing generic and stylistic diversification and sophistication” (Wyle and Lynes 9). That this is especially fitting for contemporary Newfoundland literature is underlined by scholar Paul Chafe when he suggests that recent Newfoundland fiction has a tendency of being “self-reflective, often meta-fictive” (“Rugged Beauty” 677). Ultimately, *Alligator*’s fragmented structure, its numerous shifts in tense and perspective as well as the missing of markers for direct speech render it a postmodern work.

One of the most prominent postmodern elements in *Alligator* is its fragmented structure. Although there is a larger narrative looming in the background, the chapters focus on individual scenes and detailed descriptions, often including colour imagery. This is enhanced by the chapters being named after the respective characters. Indeed, *Alligator* can be seen as a natural progression from Moore’s earlier work, i.e. her short stories. The text is constructed from a number of shorter narratives which are pieced together to create an overarching plot resembling a mosaic.<sup>14</sup> Similar to a mosaic, *Alligator* can only exist with all the single pieces properly put into place; with one of

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<sup>13</sup> Throughout this thesis, all italics within quotations stem from the original quotes.

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that the mosaic, as understood in this case, is seen as an allegory purely based on *Alligator*’s structure. It does not, however, allude to the concept of the Canadian multicultural mosaic, which has been introduced by texts such as Kate Foster’s *Our Canadian Mosaic* (1926) and John Murray Gibbon’s *Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation* (1938) (cf. Ernst and Glaser 8).

them missing, the whole picture would fall apart and appear incomplete. The pieces to this story are not completely interwoven, but rather either touch each other or, are adjacent to each another. Marshall McLuhan, one of Canada's most influential media critics, refers to the mosaic before his prologue in *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Typography of Man* (1962): “*The Gutenberg Galaxy* develops a mosaic or field approach to its problems. Such a mosaic image of numerous data and quotations in evidence offers the only practical means of revealing causal operations in history.” Although this note serves as an instruction to the reader of his book, McLuhan's shows how a mosaic can exhibit connections within a wide variety of topics. In one of the introductory essays to *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, Elena Lamberti elaborates on McLuhan's usage of the mosaic. Her observations can be aptly applied to *Alligator's* broken up structure. According to Lamberti,

All these ideas of mosaic in fact translate into a material or conceptual form based on fragments – or tiles, or tesserae – that is, discrete units whose assemblage creates a figure which acquire meaning *through the interplay with its own ground*. By doing so, a pattern gets created and in turn revealed through our active observation. (xxviii)

If the reader encounters a mosaic-like structure in a text, an active reading approach is required where the reader becomes “a fully engaged participant in the act of creation” (Moore, *Kernels* 43). This is very much the case with *Alligator*; the novel's unconventional and challenging structure poses a challenge to the reader who might only be familiar with conventional linear storytelling. In her review, Eva Tihanyi comments on Moore's writing: “Though she manages the transition [from short prose to novel], there is an element of awkwardness to the work overall, a sense of forcing separate pieces into a larger whole. The image of a patchwork quilt comes to mind. Though it has been sewn together with obvious care, the seams show” (12). This is not to say that no overarching narrative exists; the plot revolving around the relationships between Colleen, Frank, Beverly, Madeleine, Vincent and Isobel tells a broader story. The result of a broken up narrative is, however, that it requires an inquisitive reader. Lamberti remarks that when reading a text resembling a mosaic, “we participate in the process of giving meaning to what we experience” (xxix). The gaps between the chapters have to be filled by the reader, i.e. Moore's storytelling requires an involved, active reader. The novel merely provides the overall grid of a storyline that is less than

a fully formed picture. In *The Canadian Postmodern*, Linda Hutcheon elaborates on the function of such a fragmented text: “The process of reading a fragmented text is such that readers can be implicated directly in the challenge to the boundaries both between genres and between ‘real life’ and art” (84). Hence, the reader becomes aware of the text’s constructed nature and that it is a work of art written by an author. In an interview with scholar Herb Wyile, Moore stresses the intentional inclusion of gaps in her writing to directly induce a reader response: “It’s (...) forcing readers, through the layering of all those images and sensations, to make some sort of moral choice that, in their imaginations, they might not have come to before (...). It’s just the act of choosing that I think is interesting, to force readers into the act of choosing” (*All Over the Canvas* 114). The influence of reader-response theory is especially apparent in Moore’s way of approaching literature. In a personal interview, she states that she deliberately gives power to the reader; this empowerment, according to Moore, evokes emotional responses and is hence desirable (31:28-33:14). Linda Hutcheon also points towards the connection many postmodern Canadian authors have with reader-response: “Both metafiction and reader-response-theory have worked to make us aware of the active role of the reader in granting meaning to texts” (*Canadian Postmodern* 17). By employing this open approach, Moore includes the reader deeply in her own storytelling. As a result, the text comes into existence by the cumulative creative powers of two entities: Lisa Moore as the author and the decision-making of the postmodern reader.<sup>15</sup>

Colleen’s storyline serves as a fitting illustration of *Alligator’s* fragmented structure. The acts of vandalism she commits against Mr. Duffy’s bulldozers is explained in retro-perspective, and her actions are mentioned quite early on: “They were not speaking much these days. Beverly had taken the vandalism as a personal affront. Colleen was trying to protect the Newfoundland pine marten, an endangered species” (25). However, the other episodes and the actual execution of Colleen’s plan are revealed but later when she hitchhikes to the forest and pours sugar into the bulldozers’ tanks, “she closed her eyes and imagined the sugar falling into the guts of the machine, working its way through the pipes and gaskets (...) The noise of the pouring sugar, a loud, erotic gushing, caused her hairs to stand up on her arms” (67). A few chapters further on, the reader learns of Colleen’s near-fatal trip back to St.

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<sup>15</sup> As an emotional writing style is one of Lisa Moore’s trademarks, an in-depth examination of her stories by using reader-response theory would indeed be a worthwhile academic endeavour.

John's: while hitchhiking, "she had nearly been killed on the way back from sabotaging the bulldozers in the clear-cut" (149). As demonstrated by this episode, the individual story is revealed over the course of the whole novel and, slowly unravels. Thus, some parts of the narrative are revealed to the reader in an inverted fashion.

Moore takes a similar approach by offering an insight into Madeleine's past. Madeleine misses her ex-husband Marty intensely. Their shared past is explored in a number of flashbacks. Madeleine thinks about their "honeymoon in Europe" (93) where "they were both twenty-one and couldn't make love enough. There was never enough sex" (93). She remembers their trip to the "Alps, smoky and cold" (93) and their hitchhiking trip to Madrid: "The landscape had been slipping past them for weeks and it felt like having a tablecloth pulled from beneath an elaborately laid feast" (96). In Paris "they had walked all day, every cobbled street they could find" (124). Madeleine's musings about Rome affirm her strong yearning for a perhaps idealized past while being trapped in her troublesome Newfoundland present: "Being in Rome with Marty: if she could do that again before she dies she would be satisfied. What would Rome be like now? They'd eaten at an expensive restaurant in Rome (...) and they left without paying" (145).

Madeleine's travel flashbacks serve as a catalyst to underline her current state of loneliness and to stress her longing for the past. Similarly, the text's fractured nature also surfaces in some of Beverly's chapters. The reader learns about David's death early on when "Colleen's stepfather dies suddenly of an aneurysm when she was thirteen" (28). Yet, in a later chapter, David calls Beverley while she is working in the kitchen; he is hungover from an earlier rough night:

It's already winter in Toronto, David said.

Maybe you need a good meal, Beverly said.

Everything is white.

Get yourself some juice, she said.

I'm just looking out a big window, he said.

It makes me wonder, David. (104)

The flashback strengthens the reader's understanding of Beverly's and David's relationship. David "thanked her for their marriage which he said was the best thing

that had ever happened to him” (103). However, the marriage appears dented and fractured: Beverly told him that “she loved him too. She remembers saying that. Or she has the impression she said it. She left him with the general impression” (104). Beverly’s life is cracked, and the crack widened when David died. Beverly’s intimate loss becomes especially clear in this passage:

Colleen stared at the hair and thought that her mother had been hurtled into a remote solitude, far away from Colleen or anyone else, sealed away forever. She had been robbed of sex and the intricate privacy and rituals of a couple who have been in love for a long time – the aspects of her mother’s life that had been invisible to Colleen before David’s death. (59)

Beverly’s loneliness is amplified in the following passage where Moore employs strong imagery: “David had never cleaned the sink after he shaved (...) How white and cold a sink can look when you live without a man” (50).

The fragmentation found in *Alligator* on a structural level, therefore, is also reflected on the story level. It carries symbolic value and represents the ruptured lives of St. John’s citizens and their anonymity within a major city. When writing about Moore’s short prose, Maria Löschnigg observes that Moore “draws attention to the instability between a distinct sense of place and community on the one hand, and the fragmentation of local, communal and familial bonds in modern urbocentric [Western] societies on the other” (109). The characters’ lives are deeply fractured, if not to say shattered in one way or the other. Something, or often someone, is missing in all of them – hence, none of the characters seems to be wholesome and complete. Emotional loneliness appears as a recurring theme. Tracy Whalen remarks that “Moore’s books are mediations on intense longing, longing for something lost” (Whalen 13). Herb Wylie writes that “all the characters (...) have their heads in the mouth of the alligator” (“All Over the Canvas” 119). Beverly longs for David and her daughter Colleen floats in between teenage vanity and activism, in an attempt to find her place in an ever-changing world. Loyola, Madeleine’s ex-lover who now lives on an alligator farm in Louisiana sees in Colleen “a similar kind of sadness; the same dark thing his wife had” (*Alligator* 251).

Madeleine asserts that “she wasn’t married [anymore] because she couldn’t be married and she did not regret what she was” (186). Her emotional turmoil surfaces when she buys an artificial Christmas tree mid-August because it was on sale. In the scene, Madeleine converses with her ex-husband Marty on the phone while setting up the tree. The tree has to be assembled manually, just as the narrative has to be assembled by the reader:

She knew immediately how she felt about the tree; she hated the tree. It was as though she had unleashed all of her loneliness. Her loneliness had been imprisoned in a tree, which happens all the time; and she had been forced by some evil spell to walk up and down the aisles of Canadian Tire, forgetting why she was there (clothespins), until she found the tree. When she got home, the tree leapt out of the box, screaming absurd loneliness, in eight different languages. A burning bush of shame, how old she is and weak-feeling lately and the film is lost and how profoundly alone with a ball and chain of a film around her neck (...) She decided she loves the artificial tree. (184-186)

Although it is Madeleine who left Marty (158), there is no doubt that she misses him. The elaborate textual structure and implied symbolism (e.g. the Christmas tree) hint at the emotional complexity of human beings.

Similarly, Frank’s loneliness is prevalent throughout the novel. Frank is depicted as an immensely lonely character: “Something about this flicking made it real to him how absolutely alone in the world he was, because he looked absurd doing it but there was no one to see” (209). Also, while being a hard working, dedicated and a young entrepreneur, Frank seems to be haunted by bad luck. When “he stood in the rain under the umbrella (...) the rain came in sideways” (179). He is robbed by Colleen and deceived by Valentin who ultimately tries to kill Frank for an alibi.

Throughout *Alligator*, the protagonists develop a strong urge to move and to propel themselves forward. This urge as well as their bleeding into each others’ stories, lives and chapters can be seen as a search for true fulfillment in a society where the indicators of what signifies a meaningful life have become progressively obscure and unclear. As Hutcheon holds, it is very much in the nature of postmodern society to be convoluted, manifold, and to a certain degree therefore obfuscating; contemporary Western society is “pluralist and fragmented” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 3). Whether the overall goal is love (Beverly, Madeleine, Frank), self-fulfillment (Colleen, Isobel,

Frank) or money (all of the characters), it is those strong motivations which advance the narrative and move it along. The novel's deeply fragmented structure cannot only be seen as a postmodern structural device, but equally as an analogy to the fractured and incoherent lives of the protagonists.

The strong urge for movement is best exemplified by Valentin who wants to leave the Rock as quickly as possible: "He would not stay in St. John's for another winter. He had been in Newfoundland for more than a year and he hated the place as he had never hated any place in his life" (77). To achieve his goal Valentin transforms into a destructive force threatening the other characters. Valentin "was convinced that the way to escape a dark fate was never to stand still" (79). Throughout the novel, Valentin is a character of immediate action who realizes his plans as with an adamant determination, "plans came to him this way: fully formed and without flaw" (73). It is Valentin's belief transformed into action and intermingled with superstition that causes his disliking of Isobel's laziness: "She should have sprayed the worms, Valentin thought, as he waited by her front door. There was a suffocating laziness about her; she was too easily overwhelmed. If she had taken care of the worms he might have married her" (192). As Valentin's example shows, the characters' fragmented lives are amplified by the discontinuity of their respective narratives.

While *Alligator* is a mosaic-like text, the boundaries between the individual chapters and narratives are fuzzy and by no means definite. Thus, the respective chapters should not be seen as confined "islands of narrative" (Johnson 5), but rather as a sort of archipelago with a fair share of traffic in between. Characters' lives intersect and their narratives flow into one another. Some of these narrative strings are intertwined from the onset: Colleen and Frank meet early on in the novel when he sees her eating a Popsicle (*Alligator* 10). Frank was profoundly "transfixed" (11) by Colleen's sensual and vivid appearance. Furthermore, Colleen's narrative is strongly tied to Beverley's, who is constantly struggling with her daughter's awakening rebellious spirit. Madeleine and Isobel also meet on a regular basis to discuss the upcoming film project. Finally, Valentin's narrative ties in with Isobel's who enters into a destructive relationship with the Russian refugee. There are, however, some surprises at the intersection of individual narrative strings: Valentin enters Frank's story about half-way through the novel when he "stepped up beside Frank and he said he wanted Frank's stand and he wanted the permit" (139). To this moment, the two share no connection other than living in the same city, St. John's. Similarly, towards the end of

the novel, Isobel meets Frank – although “he didn’t know who she was” (304). This coincidental meeting at Frank’s new working place happens after Frank is almost killed by Valentin in Isobel’s house.

Towards the end of the novel, Moore introduces a number of new characters who, up to this point, have merely been on the periphery of the storyline. Loyola makes a living by showing tourists around on his alligator farm in Louisiana (246-254), Kevin, Frank’s childhood friend (267-270) and Carol, the housekeeper of Frank’s bed-sit (290-292). One could question Moore’s decision to supply the side cast with their own chapters: “Moore does make some questionable decisions in the last third of the book, in which three minor characters, previously mentioned only in passing, are thrust into the foreground” (Callanan, “Alligator Wrestling” 22). While these shifts in perspective towards the end of the novel can be particularly disorienting, each of the chapters serves as a particular narrative device. Carol’s chapter, for instance, showcases Frank’s notable absence. Until then, Carol always appears with Frank when they engage in after-work chatter. Now, Frank is gone and Colleen seems to look for him, supposedly to return some of the money (291). Hence, Carol’s chapter underlines the importance of Frank as a character. Similarly, Loyola is mentioned early in the novel when Colleen asks Madeleine about the man in the alligator video. Her aunt replies: “He lived through that (...) Loyola Rosewood” (9). And, Madeleine adds, “I had a thing with that guy (...) An ice cube in her glass busts open. The alligator guy? We had a little thing” (9). Loyola as a character is therefore by no means unknown. That he receives his own treatment in a dedicated chapter points towards his unique spacial positioning: he is removed from all the other characters since he lives in Louisiana. This is the place where Colleen continues to test boundaries and reaches a turning point. Loyola’s only direct interactions are with the Newfoundland girl who he protects from an alligator attack shortly before she leaves (286). Kevin is introduced to Frank’s narrative towards the end of the novel. The two had a “fragile, important friendship (...) [which they] had nursed since they were five” (261). Although on the periphery of the narrative, Kevin is a character of great importance. He offers Frank additional funds to satisfy Valentin’s demands, but, more importantly, he finds Frank a new job at a copy shop (298) after Valentin tries to burn Frank in Isobel’s mansion. It is Kevin who makes this new life possible for Frank by introducing a hopeful outlook. Kevin, Loyola and Carol all offer valuable new insights and perspectives towards the end of the novel.

The introduction of new characters in the last third of the novel contributes to *Alligator*'s versatility. In addition, the novel features a number of shifts in point of view, supporting the impression of the torn-up conditions of postmodern society. Hutcheon highlights this plurality in perspective as a specific postmodern technique:

Another consequence of this far-reaching postmodern inquiry into the very nature of subjectivity is the frequent challenge to traditional notions of perspective, especially in narrative and painting. The perceiving subject is no longer assumed to a coherent, meaning-generating entity. Narrators in fiction become either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate (...) or resolutely provisional and limited – often undermining their own seeming omniscience. (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 11)

This is very much the case in *Alligator*. The first chapter begins with Colleen's first-person narration: "My Aunt Madeleine made a lot of industrial training videos in the 1970s and 1980s (...). I was watching Aunt Madeleine's archival footage and came across a man who puts his head in an alligator's mouth" (1-2). The first person narration casts Colleen as the main protagonist and brings her closer to the reader. This initial impression is deceiving though since there is no single main protagonist in *Alligator*, but multiple. Yet, in the first chapter of the novel, the reader becomes familiar with Colleen's inner world of feelings via first-person narration: for instance, Colleen's admiration for her aunt Madeleine's activism becomes clear: "I love Madeleine because she has honey and multigrain bread (...) She's always rushing and she has grocery bags or video equipment or luggage because she's just off some red-eye from Paris or Madagascar" (5).

The second chapter, however, introduces third-person narration: "Frank got the windows open and the warm night breeze jostles the handful of forget-me-nots sitting in a Mason jar of yellowish water on the windowsill" (10). In what follows, the third person narrator appears less omniscient and rather close to the characters, emotionally as well as spatially. There is no singular perspective, or a fixed angle, offering an particular view on the unfolding events; rather, perspectives change constantly, underlining once more a "pluralist and fragmented" society (Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism* 3). Although perspectives and points of view change drastically throughout the plot, Moore mainly employs third person narration. This is why changes to Colleen's first person narration repeatedly call for attention. Not all of

Colleen's chapters are narrated in first person, but some are. For instance, in one chapter she challenges the boundaries of society. She acquires a bottle of liquor by tricking some shop attendants: "I walk into the liquor store at the mall and they've got four people working there. This is the day before the youth diversion meeting and I'm revved up and anxious" (120). Instantly, the reader is drawn back into Colleen's inner world and receives an insight into her character. She is anxious but she still succeeds and leaves the store with a free bottle of vodka. While she is not the sole main protagonist, Colleen's world of feelings receives another texture by the use of first-person narration by being more close and intimate. This is particularly the case when the reader follows Colleen on her trip to Louisiana. A scene at the airport illustrates her anxiousness as well as her self-confidence in a stream of consciousness:

I'm in the Toronto airport with a connecting flight to Louisiana in a few hours and I am so hungry I could pass out. I go into Swiss Chalet and the waitress has a tag that says Veronica. She's past middle age, perhaps forty, and she has her blond hair swept into a French twist and should I call Mom and tell her where I am? Not yet. Not yet. Veronica has a beauty mark on her cheek. I try to think who Veronica is in the Bible (...) I could get out of here and it would take Veronica at least five minutes to see I'm gone. (232-233)

This scene reveals much about Colleen's character in that she sees a challenge in any situation as well as an opportunity to prove herself. Her stream of consciousness adds another component to the already complex narration. It is with these instances where traditional reading practises are challenged the most. The plot is multifaceted, layered and complex. The same can be said for the make-up of the text. As the examples above show the emphasis is at times put on certain characters and their world of feelings.

In addition to various points of view, a number of tense shifts amplify the text's postmodern quality. The majority of *Alligator* is written in past tense, however, Colleen's first-person narration is written in present tense. As Tracy Whalen claims, "one might select the present tense for the depiction of an event to make it more real" (3). By the use of present tense, the "traditional verifying third-person past tense voice of history and realism is both installed and undercut" (Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism* 10). Thus, the moments in which Colleen offers an insight into her self are those where the distance to the reader is closed; the relationship between reader

and character becomes more intimate. The term ‘presence’, however, should not only be understood in terms of denoting time; it also infuses the text with an airy quality which stands in contrast to some of the darker themes discussed. Tracy Whalen emphasizes this particular quality of Moore’s writing and her “stylistic techniques produce a degree of (...) *presence*” (3). Ultimately, presence evokes immediacy.

This intensity directly correlates with Moore’s particular writing style while adding another postmodern quality to *Alligator*. In her essay *An Aesthetics of Intensity: Lisa Moore’s Sublime Worlds*, Tracy Whalen describes Moore’s aesthetics as follows:

Moore offers a hyper-realist style, a prose technique acknowledged by the author herself. Hers is a high-fidelity verisimilitude that does not simply reproduce approximations of the real, but attempts to improve upon the real, making it brighter and sharper. Sharpness is, indeed, one of Moore’s prevalent themes, carrying over into character traits and word choices. (3)

Indeed, Moore’s prose has, in parts, a strong likeness to poetry. This is partly enhanced by the missing markers of direct speech. According to Hutcheon, the “borders between literary genres have become fluid” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 9), challenging clear-set genre boundaries. This is not to argue that Moore’s *Alligator* is a work of poetry – it is not – but to highlight the specific poetic quality the book contains in some sections. Strong imagery and visual details give her writing a painterly quality. This is further enhanced by Alison Dyer who compares Moore’s writing to painting with words: Moore is “presenting the details of everyday life, building layer upon layer, adding ideas and images like adding texture and colour with a paintbrush” (19). There are numerous examples and *Alligator* is riddled with colour and light references.<sup>16</sup> Some examples should suffice to show Moore’s highly visual style. This type of strong imagery can create soft, intimate moments: “A rectangle of autumn light had come through the window and he [Frank] set the brass urn down so the light struck it and the urn looked like it might become warm to the touch if it sat in the sun long enough” (15). Occasionally, light and colour is also used to create atmosphere:

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<sup>16</sup> The same is also very much true for Moore’s short stories in *Open* and *Degrees of Nakedness*.

A passing car sent headlights zooming over the walls and they hit the fishbowl on the lid of the piano and the goldfish flared a fierce, pulsing orange and quivered all over and the aqua-coloured stones on the bottom and the plastic palm tree were all full of surging brightness and then, just as quickly, fell into shadows. The fish lost its colour and sank slowly to the bottom of the bowl. (277)

In a conversation between Madeleine and her cinematographer, Guy Leblanc, colour and light are also directly mentioned by the characters: Guy “didn’t care about cost, it wasn’t his job. He cared about light. That was his job: to care immensely about light” (123). Madeleine continues to think about colour: “She and Marty had met a German painter living in Marrakesh. Big abstract explosions of colour, orange embers falling through the night sky, smoke and it might have been the Big Bang or Dresden or a future apocalypse” (125). Colour descriptions can be like a powerful explosion. It can also be simultaneously fierce and beautiful, for instance when Frank is trapped in Isobel’s burning mansion. He is unconscious and sitting on a chair lit up with the flames dancing around it: “The armchair was a sunflower” (279). Finally, Moore’s writing also entails a strong sensual component that is often combined with colour as one of Madeleine’s flashbacks shows:

The branches were bare and it was always raining, or finely swathed in mist or soaked in with fog. Marty leaned her against a tree and ripped her jeans down to her ankles and he dropped to his knees and made her come and she was looking up into the woolly sky criss-crossed with black branches and when she pulled her jeans up the earth began to shake and thrum and a man in a fluorescent orange cap in a yellow bulldozer drove past, the first person they had come across in two weeks of walking through the Black Forest. He took off his cap and waved with his whole arm (148).

This scene is exemplary for Moore’s style: It has erotic as well as humorous qualities. The scene is set in the Black Forest, and light comes into the forest with the driver’s orange cap. His waving of it is genuinely funny. Moore’s colourful descriptions add an additional layer to the realities she is describing. As a result, her stories appear sometimes real, sometimes unreal and always overexposed.

Lastly, the novel's loose ends come into the foreground. While traditional narratives supply the reader with a proper ending, the case is not so simple with *Alligator*. One could argue that, and this is technically correct, the novel finds its conclusion with the last written sentence on page 310, in the chapter on Madeleine (who, in fact, has already been declared dead on page 295). However, the ending could just as well be the final words on page 306 where Frank appears in Isobel's final chapter and the two narrative strings align; or perhaps Colleen's final page (287) could constitute a final conclusion to the story. The anti-hero, Valentin, has been caught, and the other characters are now safe from him. Nonetheless, *Alligator* consists less of a storyline than multiple story threads which feather out towards the end of the book.

The text's fractured nature underlines the notion that these are mere insights into the characters' lives and that life will go on for each one of them: Valentin leaves for prison, Frank has a new life at a copy shop, Madeleine is dead and Beverly will continue with her daily struggles. Moreover, some questions remain open: most importantly, is Colleen pregnant from her sexual encounter with Frank? The text hints towards a potential pregnancy but does not give a complete answer: "Something had happened when she and Frank were having sex and she felt it and he felt it too because her eyes flew open and his eyes were open and he saw it. They both felt it, which, that's why she took the money and also because it was a lot of money" (223). *Alligator* does not supply the reader with a singular, closed ending; rather it remains somewhat open, and ultimately ambiguous. The mosaic is incomplete.

To conclude, Moore's *Alligator* proves to be a postmodern work breaking new ground in Newfoundland literature. The combined use of fragmentation, various points of view, stream of consciousness and tense shifts make *Alligator* a highly challenging, yet rich postmodern novel. The reader becomes aware of the text's artificially constructed nature, which very much resembles the artificiality of a globalized Western culture. Newfoundland society is, as part of the Western world, fractured and disoriented. *Alligator* challenges the idea of a linear narrative just as much as it challenges the idea of a single, uniform way of life. The postmodern condition is a multilayered one and as such cannot be boiled down into a singular formula.

## **2.2 : The Open Island: Aspects of Region and the Locale**

As previously shown, *Alligator* can be considered a Canadian postmodern novel due to its fractured nature surfacing both on a structure and on a narrative level. In addition, it can be argued that *Alligator* challenges clearly defined boundaries between the local and the global sphere. The following chapter will show in how far *Alligator* can be considered a regionalist text. Since the term ‘regionalism’ is variously used and strongly debated within literary studies (cf. Löschnigg 85), it is necessary to define it first to be precise about the regionalist approach which is employed here.

In her chapter on “Regionalism and Urbanism” in the *Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*, Janice Fiamengo charts the various concepts of region and the local in a Canadian context. According to Fiamengo, traditional regionalism “examines the impact of a distinctive terrain, topography, and climate upon the people who experience them, sometimes suggesting quasi-mystical explanations for the force of geography” (242). Thus, region was very much defined by the geographical connection between the fictional text and real world geography. As Wolfgang Hochbruck remarks, region was also associated with provinciality and a sense of cultural backwardness (14-15). Today, regionalism is viewed in a much broader and far less pejorative sense. Fiamengo holds that “contemporary literary scholars usually extend the meaning of region to include not only geography but also social, historical, economic, and cultural dynamics, casting a broad net over the experience of place and acknowledging differences within regions” (242). In this analysis of *Alligator*, region is seen as such a multilayered entity. Region, therefore, is seen as an encompassing local concept, taking into account a wide variety of sociocultural elements while simultaneously acknowledging the geographical and spacial realities of the respective locale.

In *New World Regionalism: Literature in the Americas* (1994), David M. Jordan distinguishes in a specific kind of regionalism which is intertwined with postmodern concepts. The prototypical space of this ‘postmodern regionalism’ is the margin, the “paradoxical middle-grounds” (107). Jordan specifically emphasizes the key role of the marginal in a postmodern context when he suggests that “to the postmodern regionalist, a region is neither an external fact nor an internal intentional object; instead, it occupies the void between intent and reality, between book and world” (107). Linda Hutcheon has a very similar idea of postmodern space. She holds that “the margin or the border is the postmodern space *par excellence*, the place where new possibilities exist” (*The Canadian Postmodern* 4). Both concepts, by Hutcheon as

well as Jordan, are suitable tools for a regional as well as a postmodern text analysis. Although Hutcheon does not mention the term regionalism as such, her concepts of the margin still very much apply. Newfoundland then, due to its secluded location, inhabits such a marginal position and is generally regarded to be ideal for borderland analysis (cf. Korneski 8).

Indeed, Linda Hutcheon puts a strong emphasis on what she terms the “ex-centric” (*Canadian Postmodern* 3) in order to stress the multicultural reality of today’s Western societies. Her ideas speak out against uniformity and flattening of complex communal textures: “The ‘ex-centric’ (be it in class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity) take on new significance in the light of the implied recognition that our culture is not really the homogeneous monolith (that is middle-class, male, heterosexual, white, western) we might have assumed” (*Poetics of Postmodernism* 12). For both, Jordan and Hutcheon, the marginal plays a fundamental role in the postmodern condition: “the postmodern ex-centric is very much a part of the identity of the nation. In postmodernism though, the center and the periphery do not simply change places. The periphery is also the frontier, the place of possibility” (*Canadian Postmodern* 3). The marginal takes center stage in postmodernism as a whole and – as exemplified by Moore’s prose – postmodern regionalism in particular. Within the general framework of postmodern regionalism, the ex-centric and the marginal play a key role in *Alligator*.

The overall consensus among critics is that *Alligator* is not a regional text. For example, Paul Chafe asserts that

The works of Moore (...) are either fierce in their rejection or restructuring of established Newfoundland archetypes, or radical in their complete indifference to them. The modern Newfoundlander of these texts is more often urban and (...) has very little attachment to the land, has no affinity with the rugged and romantic history, and is decidedly uninterested in defining himself as an extension or modernized version of the valorized Newfoundland fisherman and survivalist. (Chafe, *Rugged Beauty* 681)

Similarly, Lawrence Mathews holds that generally “neither Moore nor her characters are interested in explicit discussion of Newfoundland identity” (14). Indeed, Moore’s characters do not assume a typical, traditional Newfoundland position. They do, however, form a new kind of identity which – while being heavily influenced by the

global – is still connected to the Rock. Moore does not put an immediate focus on Newfoundland identity as such, yet she does create a picture of contemporary St. John's. In her essay "As if There Were Just the Two Choices': Region and Cosmopolis in Lisa Moore's Short Fiction", Susan Marshall holds that Moore "does emphatically move away from depicting a cohesive model of identity, but her work is, nevertheless, intimately concerned with the construction of regional identity" (80). In short, a postmodern Newfoundland identity with St. John's as main reference point entails not only local, but also global elements.

It is worth noting, at this point, that contemporary Newfoundland literature is mostly written and published in St. John's.<sup>17</sup> The newly introduced urban fiction which came about with authors such as Lisa Moore, Michael Winter, and others, depicts a Newfoundland with the provincial capital at its center. Historian Kurt Korneski points out that already in the nineteenth century, the "relative authority of different imperial, national, and indigenous claimants to territories shaped the lives, opportunities, and identities of a large number of people" (9). Ultimately, "the Avalon was far from homogenous. Other historians have aptly demonstrated that class, gender, and ethno-religious distinctions were important to this region" (13). Consequently, a discussion of Lisa Moore's *Alligator* to a certain degree takes for granted that literature set and published in today's St. John's has a strong influence on the representation of the entire province.

In *Alligator*, Moore's relationship with Newfoundland is ambivalent and paradoxical. This paradoxical quality is inherently postmodern. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon repeatedly stresses the contradictions and the complexity as an essential part of postmodern art (cf. 7-20). By applying this postmodern characteristic, it is possible to acknowledge the presence of both, a regional as well as a global identity in *Alligator*. Susanne Marshall observes the seemingly contradictory relationship between the local and the global: "Her work makes clear that globalization must be approached (...) not as a process of uniform, one-sided homogenization, but rather by taking into account the ways in which myriad global influences are indigenized within specific cultures, and in turn the ways in which specific cultures contribute to this network of 'global flows'" (82). Although Marshall refers to Moore's short stories, the following claim can also be applied to *Alligator*:

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<sup>17</sup> Local publishers include Breakwater, Killick Press, Boulder Press and others (cf. Deir 19:20-19-27).

If her work is to be read as regional, it must be read as work that explores and redefines what is commonly understood to be regional literature – that is, literature that emphasizes what are considered to be a region’s cultural attributes: a distinct sense of place, a shared social and economic history, a common sense of tradition, a shared dialect. (Marshall 80)

According to Marshall, Moore challenges existing regionalist conceptions by adding a global element to them. Her writing stands in between a more conventional description of Newfoundland identity and a more generalized global Western identity. *Alligator* features both, links to the micro as well as to the macro cosmos.

Three pages into the narrative, a description of Colleen’s room accentuates the local/global dichotomy: “This is in a bedroom painted pink and a pink canopy over the bed in a house in the suburbs of St. John’s, up behind the Village Mall. I have a high-speed connection to help with homework” (*Alligator* 3). Colleen’s high-speed internet connection is her link to the outside world. She downloads “beheadings off the Net” (2) and visually experiences elements of the global dimension. While being physically situated in the local, Colleen has a strong psychological relationship with the outside world. This is the realm of *Cosmopolitan* magazine (5) in which she learns about sexual subtleties such as “winding a scrunchy around your lover’s balls” to maximize one’s lover’s orgasm (5). *Cosmopolitan* magazine instantly evokes associations of a globalized culture, an urban and well, cosmopolitan social environment. With great attention to detail, Moore’s writing conjures the concept of the global village proposed by Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan’s coinage of the term in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* is quite revealing in regards to Colleen’s interconnectedness; McLuhan holds that “certainly the electro-magnetic discoveries have recreated the simultaneous ‘field’ in all human affairs so that the human family now exists under conditions of a ‘global village’. We live in a single constricted space resonant with tribal drums” (36). McLuhan speaks of a global family and indeed, Colleen does not watch the beheading on the internet out of pure curiosity, but because she does not want the soldier on screen to die alone; “I watch because how lonely to die so far from home with nobody in attendance. I’m attending. I stop watching before they commit the act, not because I’m afraid to, but out of respect” (*Alligator* 3). In McLuhan’s terms, the global family exists.

Furthermore, the mentioned Village Mall symbolises the *mélange* of local as well as global forces at play: it is a place rooted in St. John's, and as a North American mall; a place of social interaction. Yet, at the same time it is saturated with international products to be sold to the local population. In short, the Village Mall can be seen as an actual global village embedded in the narrative. As Jonathan Parsons contends, the "characters are connected to the world through media and St. John's is not depicted as an isolated place" (10). The global village then, in this case, is reflected in Colleen's internet connection, thus portraying St. John's as a truly cosmopolitan place.

The novel's global dimensions are further underlined by the characters' backgrounds and especially their occupations. The majority of them belong to St. John's middle class or are at least in contact with it: Colleen is the daughter of Beverley, who is reasonably well situated due to working in the tourist industry (52). Isobel works as an actress (38), Madeleine as a filmmaker who in a moment of early-day bliss, wears "her shiny red kimono" and makes herself a "cappuccino" (173). Yet, while all these characters are well situated, none of them is entirely content with his or her situation. Beverley is "tired of her daughter and (...) her own loneliness" (81). Isobel returns to Newfoundland only because she had failed at her acting career in Toronto (225). Madeleine is afraid of dying, and she is obsessed with her movie (38). Globalization has enriched the lives of those characters, given them opportunities. However, it indeed also leads to inner spiritual fatigue and alienation that ultimately troubles each of the characters. Frank serves as a notable exception to the focus on middle-class citizens; he is a member of the working class who constantly has to fight his way up the social ladder.

Moreover, the inhabitant's of *Alligator's* narrative have traveled far and wide, they are an international people. This does not come as a surprise; considering St. John's historical position as a hub, Newfoundland has always had a strong travel culture (cf. Marshall 81). As earlier text samples have shown, Madeleine has traveled widely across Europe with her ex-husband Marty; (92-97; 123-124; 145-148). Isobel has worked in Toronto. The international connection and the resulting multicultural society of St. John's is further represented by Valentin; he has "a son in St. Petersburg who was three, a boy with pale blond curls and brown eyes" who he loves with a "quick, hard, religious depth" (112). All these characters are involved with places other than Newfoundland, via memories, people, or past events. Their psychological condition is

partly a global one occupied by global goods, global issues, global attachments and, ultimately, global losses.

As a harbour town, the port serves as an actual as well as a symbolical link to the outside world. Ships bring in goods and tourists. The strong economic bonds St. John's has with the arrival of cruise ships and the respective tourist industry features prominently in *Alligator*. For instance, Frank works "every night until the cruise ships have left for the season and the university crowd heads back to school" (13). As Jonathan Parsons argues, the cruise ship "indicates (...) a broader discourse on cultural tourism, and more specifically the success of the branding exercise" (12) of the provincial government. In the novel, a large cruise ship looms like a shadow over its characters: "A cruise ship crept into the window frame. There were thousands of black portals and the ship was fiercely white, even through the tinted glass. It was a monstrous vessel casting a cool shadow over the families walking along the harbour front" (*Alligator* 82). The ship's negative connotations are further stressed in Colleen's apologetic outburst towards her mother: "I'm sorry this happened, Colleen blurted. She wanted to be rewarded with her mother's forgiveness, and then the sun would fire all the prisms in their empty kitchen, the cruise ship would pass, and the arms of the sun would reach beyond its massive, gliding bulk" (83). Once the cruise ship has moved on, everything would be fine and the struggles of daily life might have an end. This is, of course, an illusion since if all the cruise ships simply moved on, St. John's already substantial economic problems would multiply. In sum, the global dimension finds ample discussion in *Alligator*. The global is a part of the characters' daily routines. It is what satisfies them as much as it threatens them.

The global dimension, however, only receives its symbolic meaning in juxtaposition to the other half of the dichotomy; the local. *Alligator* exhibits a number of regional components rendering it a distinctly Newfoundland novel. While the global is mostly situated in the background, local places, food items and other local ties are mentioned frequently. In the narrative, St. John's is recreated as a setting with a careful attention to detail.<sup>18</sup> *Alligator* contains "enough images of the landscape, instances of

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<sup>18</sup> One reviewer argues that St. John's "almost assumes the importance of a separate character. One cannot imagine the people in the novel existing elsewhere" (Kear 8). Assuming that St. John's almost inhabits the space of another character would mean overemphasizing the regional references. The characters could indeed exist elsewhere – but the point is that elsewhere becomes everywhere, and everywhere is St. John's.

the dialect, and reflections on the history to provide a sufficient portal into that particular world” (Chafe, “Rugged Beauty” 686-687). A number of places relate to either Canada on a national or St. John’s on a regional scale. References to Canada include primarily North-American shops such as “Sears” (18), “Wal-Mart” (22)<sup>19</sup>, “Tim Hortons” (27) and “Canadian Tire” (184). Especially Tim Horton’s is considered to be typically Canadian and hence a clear reference to the country in the novel. The shops are a crucial part of the narrative, since the “cultural landscape is dominated by transnational brands and other icons of consumer capitalism, which contribute to the way characters categorize one another and understand themselves.” (Parsons 15) Class, therefore, is expressed via the characters’ attire. Those places situate *Alligator* in post-confederation Newfoundland; the Rock of the 21<sup>st</sup> century which is part of Canada and not a dominion anymore. While these references inform the reader about the novel’s general spacial and temporal setting on a national level, the local references to St. John’s are much more prominent: the Village Mall (18), the Avalon Mall (22) Moo Moo’s ice cream shop (24); the Atlantic Place (25), Mount Pearl (48), Water Street (118), George Street (133), the Ship Inn (135), “Signal Hill” (165), Bell Island (204), Harbour Grace (204), the Holy Heart high school (222), Duckworth Street (230), Gower Street (260) and Ches’s fish and chips (294). A number of the places mentioned are considered iconic for St. John’s. Some also carry a strong cultural meaning such as George Street or the Ship Inn. In an article for the *Arts Atlantic* journal, Lisa Moore highlights the Ship Inn’s singular cultural position:

Many would consider the Ship Inn a major chakra point in the map of the artistic hotspots of St. John’s (...). In fact, there are two Ship Inns: the one with the dark wood panelling and cozy fireplace to which artists bring their hearts, brains and lovers to revel, and the imaginary bar, the one that appears in the paintings, songs, literature and films of St. John’s (58).

It is at the Ship where Frank sees Colleen dance for the first time and starts “to fall in love with her” (136). The scene underlines Frank’s shyness and loneliness because he has to think about how to approach Colleen. However, he hesitates until she eventually dances with someone else. Nonetheless, Frank rescues Colleen in a different scene

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<sup>19</sup> The symbolic position of Wal Mart is investigated in great detail by Jonathan Parsons (17).

when she attends a wet T-shirt contest. There she recognises him as “the guy she’s seen at the Ship who was watching her dance” (206). The Ship, therefore, functions as a key locale in the narrative to bring those two main characters closer together, culminating in them spending the night together and Colleen stealing Frank’s entire savings.

Another meaningful place embedded in the narrative is George Street. Jonathan Parsons identifies George Street as a suitable example of Newfoundland branding and center of capitalist actions in the novel (11). This bar-lined street is where the annual George Street Festival takes place and an important part of St. John’s music scene as well as North American drinking culture. It is here, at the corner of George Street and considered the “best spot in the city” (*Alligator* 133), that Frank sells his hotdogs. This seems to be the only location where Frank can escape his almost omnipresent sense of loneliness: “The taxi drivers keep him company” (134). The back alleys of George Street impart a sense of belonging to Frank with the taxi drivers belonging to the working class just like him: “At 4 a.m. everyone wants a hot dog, the taxi drivers tell him as they pull out their wallets and hand him a five and look off into the fog or rain and wait while the wieners barbecue (...). Frank has never given a hot dog away. The drivers understand this perfectly” (135). The taxi drivers acknowledge and even admire Frank’s determination to advance his social standing by working hard at his hotdog stand. On a whole, George Street is depicted as the novel’s back alley; it is a dark liminal space where we can find both middle-class characters such as Colleen as well as working class figures such as Frank; it is here where moments of bliss (e.g. Frank and Colleen sleeping with each other) as well as undoing (her stealing his money) have their origin. It is a place of transition, constantly veiled by “fog or rain” (135). The shady nature of George Street, combining both pleasure and pain, serves as an example of the ambivalent storytelling in *Alligator*. This impression of somewhat dangerous surroundings is further emphasized in Moore’s description of the local bad weather.

As a locale and a windy island located at the Atlantic not far from Greenland, Newfoundland is generally considered to be rough country. This image of the region is also reflected in *Alligator*. Nature has a real and immediate impact on the characters’ lives. In the context of the novel natural forces are most prominently symbolised by storms. As a raw power, the storm influences businesses, university activities and personal appointments alike; in short, once it arises, it is the all-dominating force influencing all of St. John’s life: “The storm had hit St. John’s (...) everything shut down in a few hours” (105). In one of the chapters on Madeleine, the narrator later exclaims

that “here was going to be an ice storm, the power lines knocked out, the streets would be glass and it came to her all at once” (160). This creates a powerful opposition to postmodern urban culture, which is represented as being removed from reality. Characters in the novel are pulled back from their fictional existence into real life; for a moment, the global ceases to exist and only the regional realities of the Rock matter.<sup>20</sup>

St. John’s dire economical situation also features prominently in *Alligator*, adding another regional layer. For instance, Colleen’s coat stems from a shop which no longer exists: “the coat had been purchased at an expensive children’s clothing boutique on Duckworth Street, the first of its kind in St. John’s, which had closed after only one season” (23). Although most protagonists in the novel are firmly placed in the middle class, there still is not enough money circulating to support something as exquisite as a classy boutique for children’s clothing. The omnipresence of money plays a major role and it has been identified to be one of the novel’s prime themes (cf. Parsons 19-20). In an interview with *Quill & Quire*, Michael Crummey holds that “money is the alligator in the book (...) this incredibly ancient reptile that flows in and out of everybody’s life ... it seems benign but it’s incredibly dangerous” (Dyer 19). Parsons takes up this argument in characterizing *Alligator* as capitalist critique while simultaneously being part of the system (25). The protagonists’ movements throughout St. John’s can be seen as a search for meaning in a society where the only purpose is to accumulate capital. In his only chapter, Loyola, the ‘alligator guy’, reflects on the qualities of money and how it defines his own life: “What he did: he attached himself to an idea. The idea was to make money. He had no need for money other than the action of making it (...) Money moves by instinct, he’d found. It will lie still and then it will move” (252). Money, ultimately, behaves just like an alligator with predatory instincts. The people in cosmopolitan St. John’s have equally succumbed to the capitalist idea, not to say ideal: to accumulate as much wealth as possible. The dominance of money in *Alligator* and the protagonists’ simultaneous urge to find

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<sup>20</sup> The bad weather, storms and power-outs in particular, is a favourite of anecdotes with authors and scholars introducing Newfoundland to a wider public. In “Away on the Burning Rock”, Jane Urquhart for instance writes about her experience with the weather: “All went well for the first few days and then a furious wind storm knocked out all the electricity and telephones for a week as well as tearing up several old trees in an ancient Anglican cemetery and scattering bones onto the street” (58).

meaning in life is a testimony to the spiritual fatigue prominent in Western cosmopolitan society.

Besides naming specific localities, Moore also refers to the cultural landscape of 21<sup>st</sup> century St. John's. Local food such as "bakeapple jam" (200) and "partridge berries" (255) supply culinary texture next to typical national food items such as "Kraft Dinners" (230). Maria Löschnigg holds that the adding of food items to a story can contribute to a general "regional coloring" (Löschnigg 116). While bakeapple jam and partridge berries add local context, Kraft Dinner connotes welfare society due to its cheap pricing. After Colleen steals Frank's savings, he muses that "She'd never been in a welfare office. She had never had to get a brown paper bag from the breakfast program at school (...). She had never eaten Kraft Dinner for supper unless she wanted to" (230). Overall, food items do not feature overly prominently; however, they add to the general local flavour to recreate an imaginary St. John's.

Another essential local layer is represented by the urban society of St. John's itself. The local dimensions of St. John's society can be further observed in Mr. Duffy's threats towards Colleen after she jeopardized his bulldozers:

My goal is to let Miss Clark know there are perfectly acceptable, legal ways around the law, which I intend to employ to make her life miserable. Should Miss Clark apply, for example, to be a teller at a supermarket or to work in some crappy little corner store she may find she does not get an interview. (169-170)

Mr. Duffy's threats only seem feasible due to St. John's nature as an urban center which still exhibits strong bonds to family and community. Mr. Duffy's connection could have a serious impact on Colleen's life, and would only work because of the bonds still inherent in St. John's society. Adrian Fowler also hints at those connections when referring to Beverly's attempt to settle for an agreement with Mr. Duffy (101-102). Fowler remarks that, "the reaching out to identify strangers as not really strangers, a familiar obsession in Newfoundland, transcend class boundaries and reveals a shared assumption that one can embrace non-family members as members of some larger cultural entity" (101). Mr. Duffy's remark highlights that St. John's is, despite its cosmopolitan vibe, after all a small place rooted in family ties.

Finally, Newfoundland's marginal position in a national and geographical context is reflected in the depiction of marginal characters. As an island, Newfoundland has natural boundaries, and "this isolation is really a form of marginalism and it is this marginalism that has determined (...) [Newfoundland] culture" (O'Dea, "Culture on the Margin" 73). Interestingly, Newfoundland's borderland position relates to Canada as Canada related to the rest of the Western world: "Since the periphery of the margin might also describe Canada's perceived position in international terms, perhaps the postmodern ex-centric is very much a part of the identity of the nation" (Hutcheon, *Canadian Postmodern* 3). Newfoundland before confederation is situated at the very edge of the narrative; it is not overly prominent, but it does exist. For instance, Colleen symbolically makes a cut with pre-confederation Newfoundland when, as a toddler, she accidentally breaks an egg-cup Beverly received from her grandmother (35). This grandmother is "a fisherman's wife with a loose, shiny grey bun and a network of delicate blood vessels over her cheeks" (36) and was a born Newfoundlander; a relict from the times before confederation. When the egg-cup broke, so did Colleen's connection with some of her local past. She is more concerned with the present and the ecocritical spirit by wanting to save these pine martens. Similarly, Madeleine's movie solely focuses on Newfoundland before confederation. The filmmaker is strongly interested in the province's past: "She wanted Newfoundland before confederation because what kind of people were they?" (199) This interest in the region's past might find its origin in her individual past. Madeleine remembers:

Mrs McCarthy, the housekeeper, [who] had skinned the rabbits on the kitchen counter. Her knuckles whitening as she ripped the fur from flesh. The purplish flesh wrapped over tiny bones lined with skeins of yellow fat. Five rabbits in the sink, cold water splashing over them. (255)

Mrs. McCarthy does not play any actual role, yet she stands for a long lost past. It is notable, however, that this past still informs present day St. John's and is hence of interest to some of the characters. It is at this stage that Newfoundland's early days shine through the otherwise cosmopolitan narrative. The past is not forgotten, despite the reality of lives having moved on. Archbishop Fleming (39), "a nineteenth-century

Newfoundland cultural icon who features in her movie” (cf. Parsons 14), is constantly haunting the filmmaker.

Another marginalized or, to speak in Hutcheon’s terms, ex-centric character, is the Inuit, Frank’s neighbour who hung himself in his room (18-19). In this instance, Moore hints at another local issue, namely the question of inclusion, both socially and economically. The Inuit character has not successfully been integrated into society, which is emphasized by the fact that he bears no name. Also, Valentin, the intruder into many of the other characters’ lives, adds another perspective on Newfoundland: “He had come to a cold and ugly island that hardly existed, could not be found on many maps. He was nowhere” (80). For Valentin, this is hostile ground. His own concern is personal survival. Characters such as the Inuit, the Newfoundlanders or even Valentin inhabit the ex-centric in the narrative as well as in society. It is only Valentin who, by his well-developed predatory instincts, manages to leave this marginal space.

In sum, *Alligator* features obvious links to both the global as well as the regional sphere. The text inhabits a postmodern peripheral space in between both; it is therefore, that *Alligator*, as a novel, resonates with those who read it as a novel set in Newfoundland, as well as those who read it as an allegory of global culture. The global influence on Newfoundland society is ambiguous: it is depicted as both a blessing as well as a disturbance. Numerous characters only inhabit a marginal space and are, eventually, completely pushed off the story. Newfoundland society in *Alligator* is in the process of changing, and it facilitates enough space for new developments. Without doubt, *Alligator* is an ambivalent piece, leaving room for interpretation and added meaning. It is precisely those gaps which situate it as a postmodern regional novel of contemporary Newfoundland literature.

### III. WHERE DO YOU BELONG? – FAMILY AND HOME IN *FLANNERY*

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*“When we are speaking to another Newfoundlander, we will say: ‘Where do you belong,’ or ‘Where do you people belong?’ Belonging suggests more than just being born in a particular cove or bay or shore, it is more than having family or ties or a house still there. It really does mean belonging – as in you are part and parcel of that place.”*

– Marjorie Doyle, “Where You Are From”(32)

#### **3.1 Postmodern Journeys into the Past: Flannery**

The above-mentioned quote from *The Newfoundland Quarterly* is just one of the many examples of how deeply Newfoundlanders are concerned with identity, home, and the question of belonging. Newfoundland journals, books and art in general intimately deal with the question of what exactly constitutes a post-confederation Newfoundland identity. In an accompanying essay for an exhibition at the Eastern Edge Gallery in St. John’s, entitled “Home is Where the Art is”, Lisa Moore writes about the idea of home: “Home is a negotiation between interior and exterior landscapes, whether it is defined by the boundary of language, skin, clapboard, or the political boundaries between community.” In the introduction to the same work, Kathleen Knowling writes that “home is parents, family, common memories. An old great-aunt in a tall red house. Home is friends, community, roots. Meeting, talking, laughing, supporting and encouraging. Mourners filing past a coffin in a darkened room.” Indeed, home can be many things and Knowling’s list only offers one possible notion of what constitutes belonging; it is something different for everyone. The idea of where one belongs deeply connects with regional identity as it has been discussed earlier. *Alligator*, for instance, charts a very particular kind of home, a home that has been transformed by outer forces and yet remains to be the place where one belongs. In *Flannery*, questions of home are strongly intermingled with communal bonds and an identity based on family ties.

This chapter will discuss Lisa Moore’s most recent novel, *Flannery* (2016) with a focus on how it differs from *Alligator*. Juxtaposing the two works, *Alligator* is by far the more convoluted one. *Flannery* is Moore’s first young adult novel. After she dealt with stories loosely based on real events in *February* and *Caught*, *Flannery* underlines

Moore's versatility as an author, as she once again chose a new genre. *Flannery* has been nominated for a number of awards, for instance the Quill & Quire Kid's Book of the Year 2016 or the CBC Best Books of 2016. It has also been short-listed for the Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Children's Book Award 2017. Reviews have been overwhelmingly positive. For instance, in the *Quill & Quire* online review, Serah-Marie McMahon suggests that "*Flannery* accurately captures the confusion and drama of being a teenager while keeping readers squarely in the real world. Moore's characters – even ones we meet for less than a paragraph – are three-dimensional and interesting." In the online *Canadian Review of Materials*, Wendy Phillips holds that Moore "maintains her vivid voice and finely-tuned ear for dialogue, as well as an evocative sense of place, both specific and universal." And Cheryl Cowdy enthusiastically exclaims that "*Flannery* is a coming-of-age novel that artfully employs the conventions of the young adult 'problem novel' to beautifully and emphatically render the culture of youth in contemporary St. John's, Newfoundland" (377). As these reviews show, the relation between the characters and their surroundings, i.e. their regional ties, play a major role. However, as in *Alligator*, *Flannery* also takes place in a highly globalized culture. Due to its quite recent release, no essays about *Flannery* have been published as of yet. Therefore, an examination in respect to postmodern tendencies and regional sentiments will be the first scholarly treatment of the text.

*Flannery* tells the story of 16-year old Flannery Malone who is madly in love with Tyrone O'Rourke. She is a dreamy, likeable and reliable young girl for whom "the truth is important" (74). Simultaneously vulnerable and strong, romantic and realistic, Flannery tries to find her place in a troubled society. A certain vulnerability shines through, while she is depicted as the strongest character in her family. Flannery and Tyrone are paired up for their final project of the entrepreneurship class. They decide to invent love potions of varying intensity and in different colours. However, Tyrone hardly attends school and instead escapes his abusing stepfather Marty by jumping on his motorbike and spraying graffiti all over St. John's. Nevertheless, Tyrone's troublesome tangibility is not Flannery's only concern. Her mother Miranda, a passionate artist who runs a parenting blog in the hope of living off the advertising money, has no domestic talent to speak of. She ignores the family's difficult financial situation by spending the welfare check on presents for Flannery's younger brother Felix rather than on the biology book Flannery urgently needs for school. Flannery's father, a sailor from France and an environmental activist, is somewhere overseas and is only

present in the narrative in form of a chocolate heart he gave Miranda as a present at the night of Flannery's conception. Still, Flannery would have been able to deal with all of these daily troubles more easily if her best friend Amber had not suddenly fallen into love with singer Gary Bowen. With the onset of this relationship, Amber abandons Flannery entirely neglecting their once precious friendship. Throughout the story, Flannery struggles with shifting between working on the entrepreneurship project, hoping to catch Tyrone somewhere downtown, and avoiding Gary's suspicious friends who have started harassing her. On top, she also tries to fix the family's problems. With wit and colourful descriptions, the novel takes a peek at the inner world of a teenager in 21<sup>st</sup> century St. John's.

The first major difference between *Alligator* and *Flannery* is the description of the title. While the title 'Alligator' refers to the predatory tendencies of some of its major characters, e.g. Valentin, 'Flannery' puts the main character into the centre of the story. In a postmodern approach to break-up the text's structure, Flannery is introduced in form of an "All About Me" (30) she has to do for a class in grade one. The descriptions in parenthesis refer to the crayons Flannery used:

Name: Flannery Malone

What I Look Like:

- 1) Freckles (Burnt Sienna)
- 2) Pale skin (Silver)
- 3) Green eyes (Sea Green)
- 4) ... with little hazel flecks shooting through the green (Raw Sienna)
- 5) Limp, whip-straight orange hair to my shoulders (Sunglow)
- 6) 5'6" on tiptoes
- 7) Skinny, except for my boobs, which are, I think we can say, big

Secrets: I've had the school glockenspiel hidden under my bed since I quit band in grade five. I quit because I couldn't do the glockenspiel justice and the teacher was threatening me with the triangle. (31-32)

This focus on the Newfoundland teenager is also mirrored on a structural level. In contrast to *Alligator*, Moore adopts a first person limited narration which situates Flannery in the centre of the narrative. This first person narration is established right at the beginning of the novel: “I’m walking up Long’s Hill, hoofing it because I am about to be late for school. Again” (9). Other than in *Alligator*, the point of view does not change in any of the following chapters. Additionally, chapters are simply numbered and therefore do not represent the multitudinous perspectives as in *Alligator*. This way, Moore caters to her new target audience because a convoluted structure such as in *Alligator* would make for a highly confusing read. By restricting herself to one perspective only, Moore can put a strong emphasis on Flannery’s personality and voice which is tender, and strong. On the whole, the reader can form a close relationship to the character because she is not unreachable, but instead accessible.

Nonetheless, Moore’s narrative is not purely conventional in the traditional sense. While the overall storyline is about Flannery, other characters such as Tyrone, Amber, Miranda and Felix are emphatically moved forward by first person narration employing flashbacks to illustrate key moments in Flannery’s life. As Wendy Phillips points out in her online article, Lisa Moore’s “flashback style weaves past and present, creating a richness of plot and character that lends both authenticity and perspective.” Hence, the flashbacks give more texture to Flannery’s character, while divulging the backgrounds of the side cast as well. Flannery’s distinct voice thus serves as a guide through all these past experiences. It is noteworthy that Flannery’s first person narration is reliable; the reader can trust her memories, as they logically connect with the rest of the main storyline and does not supply any reasons to doubt them. Although more coherent, these flashbacks can be seen as an introduction for young adults to a postmodern reading experience – strictly speaking, *Flannery* operates on multiple timelines, but the transitions between them are at times barely noticeable.

*Flannery* utilizes flashbacks throughout the novel’s entirety. To help orientate the young adult readers, they are indicated by signal words: “Unlike my mother, I actually love it here at the mall. Some of my fondest memories happened here” (39). Likewise, chapter 11 begins with “Tyrone and I had just turned ten. Almost seven years ago. Before Felix was born. Before everything. Or almost everything” (89). Chapter 15 opens with “this is the way it was when Amber and I were twelve, I’d started my period at Amber’s house on a very hot, sunny summer afternoon when time had pretty much stopped” (136). Likewise, the opening of chapter 19 reads as follows: “I’d come home

from a sleepover at Amber's one day when I was nine" (160). Those indicators make it easier for the reader to follow the narrative.

A clear example of this is the mall episode in chapter four, which underlines the generational divide between Flannery and her mother Miranda. While Miranda hates shopping (36), and despises the mall, deeming it a temple of capitalism, Flannery takes a genuinely different position:

We bought Krazy Glue at Walmart and glued condoms to the floor. We tied a piece of fishing line to a wallet and hid behind a pillar and whenever someone tried to pick up the wallet, we gave the fishing line a yank. We all squashed into the photo booth and hooked our index fingers into the corners of our smiles and pulled them wide and crossed our eyes. Every third picture, our eyes were closed because of the flash. (39).

To Flannery, the mall is less a place of consumption than a playground, an exciting place where you are "running from (...) security guards" (40). Moore uses this episode to highlight the major difference between Flannery and her mother.

Another flashback reveals the backstory between Flannery and Tyrone. They have known each other since their birth because their "mothers gave birth to Tyrone and (...) [her] a few hours apart in Grace Hospital" (12) and they "ran around in diapers together at Happy Kids daycare" (13). The incident is used to contrast how Flannery, who had played with Tyrone at kindergarten, now differs from the young teenage girl who falls deeply in love with him. Furthermore, the flashback also sheds some light on the complicated relationship between Tyrone and his stepfather Marty. Indeed, the introduction of Marty already hints at his troublesome influence: "Marty, was in silhouette because the sun was a big maraschino cherry behind him, sinking fast" (89). This powerful imagery evokes notions of a man darkening the sun – in this case, very much so, for Tyrone.

This event is set at a wedding where Marty is driving a boat and takes the children waterskiing. Tyrone is somehow neglected and is the last one to go waterskiing although he was "the first in line" (90). The waterskiing incident turns into a point of contention between stepson and stepfather who "had hated each other pretty much from the beginning" (93). Marty drives the boat so fast that Tyrone is barely able to hold onto the rope and causing him to bounce about violently. While this is happening,

Flannery is sitting next on the shore away from the party guests and watches Tyrone get thrown about: “Tyrone would have an audience of one. Me” (91). It is in this moment when Flannery falls in love with Tyrone:

They roared around the other side of the lake. They flew past the wharf where I was jumping and clapping and when Tyrone was passing me, he lifted one hand off the wooden bar and waved at me. I could see the thrill of it and how audacious to let go with one hand, the fastest wave you ever saw, and he slammed his hand back down on the bar and his whole body crumpled, one ski lifting off the water, wonky and boneless, bent and tipping, left, right, and then he was up straight again. (...). Was this when I fell in love? Was it that little wave? (92-93)

It was. Flannery knows that she was “in love with Tyrone O’Rourke” (104). Moore uses this scene to allow the reader to accompany Flannery on her journey into her personal past to give depth to the present relationship between her and Tyrone. The flashback continues to explore the troublesome relationship between Tyrone and Marty. The latter demeans Tyrone by telling him to “chew with his mouth closed (...)” (93) in front of all of his friends. He further insults him: “I don’t want to see what you’re chewing, what are you, a little pig?” (93) From this moment on, Tyrone turns into a rebel, and an outcast, questioning the status quo among other things. In school for instance, the “boys made fun of him (...) and he had to sit with the girls” (94). Tyrone’s reputation was further tarnished when other people started labeling him as a troublemaker. Hence, for Flannery, “adults could be evil” (96). Marty is an example for an adult who exploits the powers given to him.

All of these events in the past reveal why Flannery is so fascinated with Tyrone. He is distinctly different from all the other children around; he is “goofy” and “everything he did was all or nothing” (193). Both of these are qualities the young Flannery admires deeply. The flashback closes with Flannery’s musings about her love for Tyrone: “It’s a big, out-of-control, jumping-jack love that makes me crazy and lonely” (195).

The next excursion into Flannery’s world of memories shows the close connection between Flannery and her once best friend Amber. The two spend a peaceful time at Amber’s home. They actually did not have to talk much, since they had an intuitive, mutual understanding of each other which required no words: “We were

telepathic” (138). The memory connects with a unique moment in Flannery’s life, that is, the beginning of her period: “But that day, when I started my period, the house was empty. Just Amber and me. Sitting there on the side of Amber’s bed, I could feel the warm blood leaking out of me in a gush. I’m going to bake you a cake, Amber said” (139). Amber’s little gesture of making a cake for Flannery highlights their mutual friendship, and its intimacy. In this scene, Flannery felt safe in Amber’s company.

Moreover, the chapter reveals why swimming plays such a vital role in Amber’s life. While Flannery spends time at her friend’s home, Amber “had cut off most of her hair [and] all of her curls lay in the sink like a big nest” (140) so she will be able to swim faster. She attends the national swimming competition and for the most part it seems as if she swims for personal enjoyment and out of ambition. However, the flashback reveals the psychological reasons behind her strong determination to continue swimming: “She was terrified her father would leave her mother, because of the drinking. And if her father did leave, she was afraid she’d be left behind. She knew swimming was the one thing that made her father happy. So she swam as fast as she could” (140). Indeed, after Amber quits competitive swimming, her parents are “in the middle of separating” (265). Just as the previous flashback deepens the understanding of Tyrone’s and Flannery’s changing relationship, this one highlights the strong friendship between Flannery and Amber, and their mutual trust for each other.

A final flashback exposes the fragility and vulnerability of family relations in general, and Flannery’s family in particular. After coming back from a sleepover from Amber’s place, Flannery finds her home oddly quiet. In Moore’s description, Flannery’s home gains a magical as well as uncanny quality:

The window was open in the living room and a square of bright sunlight lay over the hardwood floor and a billowing curtain had knocked over a plant. The pot had cracked and the roots of the banana plant were poking out through the black soil and the roots were white and hairy. Something about the great mass of those twisting hairy roots and how very translucent they looked gave me goosebumps. (161)

The house seems profoundly abandoned. Flannery eventually finds Miranda asleep in her study; and she equally seems somewhat removed from reality:

I knew at once that Miranda had been enchanted. Something powerful had cast a spell and drawn her away. She had been possessed. Or taken over by an alien life form. (...) She looked like my mother, sure, but – like the Big Bad Wolf after he'd eaten Red Riding Hood's grandmother and put on her clothes – there was something unfamiliar in her expression, in the flush of her cheek. (161)

There is a underlying intimacy in the moment where the daughter examines the mother; the roles seem somewhat inverted since usually it is the mother who watches over her children's sleep. Flannery has to say Miranda's name multiple times to wake her, and even then, Miranda seems somewhat drowsy. When she wakes, she reveals to Flannery that she is pregnant: "I'm going to have a baby. You're going to have a little baby brother. It's not just going to be the two of us anymore, Flannery. We have a beautiful new baby on the way" (162).

Flannery struggles with this revelation, she "felt the sting of tears. They were rolling down my cheeks and my neck" and she asks herself whether she is enough and why there has to be someone else (162). She remembers this key moment in her life and the feelings she had had. Felix' birth comes as a major disturbance in Flannery's life since Miranda's contractions start while mother and daughter are on their way back to St. John's from a hiking trip. Flannery feels somewhat betrayed since "it was supposed to be *our* trip, a mother-daughter thing. A day in the woods together before the baby came. We'd even had a little bonfire" (166-167). The situation becomes problematic when Flannery is again pushed in the position of an adult. She wishes for a "special red phone with a flickering red button that you can use only once in a lifetime, when all is lost. Not when all is almost lost. Not when a few things are lost. This would be a phone that you'd use on that very singular occasion when *all* is lost" (163). She would "pick up this magic phone and somebody would say, This is big stuff, kid. Life and death. This is a job for adults. Step aside" (165). There is no magical phone, however. Although Miranda dials 911 with her regular cell phone, Flannery is left in the situation of being responsible for her mother who is just about to give birth.

In this context, Sheilagh O'Leary's comment about what it means to live in Newfoundland seems particularly apt: "This place is too challenging to be complacent. It's fantastic and terrible, wonderful and cruel, and we are at once fragile and strong" (iii). Flannery is sketched simultaneously a strong and vulnerable character, as highlighted by this scene. She does what she can to make Miranda comfortable, but

ultimately she also has to wait for the ambulance. This final flashback underlines the daughter-mother relationship, as well as giving additional context to Felix' birth. Quite noticeably, there is no father, and in this moment another adult is distinctly missing. Once born, Flannery loves her smaller brother. She realizes that when the two of them "wake up early and get two big bowls of vanilla ice cream with bananas and chocolate sauce and maraschino cherries and watch cartoons (...) all had not been lost" (*Flannery* 168).

As the examples at hand show, Moore employs her flashback technique to deepen the reader's understanding of the character's relationships. These relations are rooted in the past, yet they also bleed into the present. Although Flannery's memories are an important part of the novel, the narrative does not appear as fragmented as *Alligator*. This is due to the persistence of the first person narration; in offering the reader more support and points of orientation, Moore shows an understanding of her book's target audience. She walks a fine line: on the one hand, the flashbacks introduce several locations as well as new timeframes; on the other hand, they are closely linked with the main narrative. In the end, *Flannery*, with its flashback-style, serves as an introductory read for young adults into the world of postmodern literature.

### **3.2 Behind the Curtains: Family Structures**

As in *Alligator*, St. John's serves as the general setting for *Flannery*. Numerous recognizable places situate the story firmly in the Newfoundland's provincial capital. The opening line already gives a sense of the overall environment: "I'm walking up Long Hill's, hoofing it because I am about to be late for school. Again" (9). Long Hill is situated in St. John's downtown, a gradual slope between the upper town with the Basilica and the downtown area with Duckworth Street and Water Street. This opening line, in a spacial sense, highlights Flannery's somewhat liminal position. She is late for school and has to run uphill, which is reminiscent to her actions throughout the narrative. Flannery juggles multiple issues at once; she is struggling to keep Amber's friendship, while also dealing with Tyrone's unreliability.

Long Hill is not the only place mentioned, St. John's is recreated with great attention to detail. According to Wendy Phillips, "The strong sense of place gives *Flannery* a particularly Canadian flavor." Direct references include but are not limited to Grace Hospital (12), Holy Heart high school (13), Bannerman Park (15),

Ches's fish and chips (15), Mount Pearl (18), Second Cup (39), Walmart (39), Sears (40), the Avalon Mall (44), the Eastern Edge Gallery (72), Water Street (78), Allandale Road (83), the Arts and Culture Centre (83), the Signal Hill trail (84), Sobeys (96), the Aquarena (141) and, last but not least, Tim Hortons (136). While those regional elements flesh out the setting, the young main characters live a modern life, directly influenced by global factors. The text is riddled with references to a life dominated by modern technologies such as Xboxes (95), Facebook and GoPro cameras (86) as well as Instagram, Tumblr and Google glasses (179). When Amber and Flannery look for a fortune teller for an interview, Amber uses her smartphone and Google maps (125) to find directions – despite St. John's being a rather small place. In one instance, the local and global sphere overlap, i.e. when Flannery watches Captain Newfoundland, “the superhero who appeared after midnight on NTV back in the nineties, dressed in a hooded cape and a face mask with the map of Newfoundland drawn on it” on YouTube (19). However, Miranda cannot afford costly technological gadgets and is not interested in them; this is underlined by the fact that she “never texted in her life” and does not know how to open text messages (108). In fact, Flannery and Miranda both share one old-fashioned cell phone. In comparison to her peers, Flannery appears to be somewhat less depended on smartphones, however, this might be simply due her family's problematic financial situation.

It can be argued that in *Flannery*, Moore criticizes the unequal wealth distribution in North American society. As an artist whose work does not sell and is not supposed to (71), Miranda does not earn a lot of money. After she had an ovarian cyst removed, Miranda decides to apply for welfare. Flannery summarizes their predicament as follows: “A word about my family's financial situation. Dire. It's a dire situation right now” (68). This situation is seemingly less problematic for Miranda who to a degree ignores the issues at hand; on the surface, she has no problem “to ask for help and there's no shame in that” (72). She only acts if it is absolutely necessary and otherwise tries to avoid complications; for instance, when Newfoundland Power calls because Miranda repeatedly did not pay the bill, she wants Flannery to pick up the phone:

We all know it's Newfoundland Power and I am refusing to answer it.

Answer it, Flannery.

I'm not answering it.

Answer the phone, Flannery.

I'm not lying, Miranda.

Miranda flings out her arm, finger pointing at the phone.

Flannery, answer the phone this instant, she says.

Look, Miranda, I say, I am *not* telling the bill collector that my mother, unfortunately, died in a deep-fat fire just yesterday, leaving two orphan children to mourn.

I'll say it! Felix yells. Let me do it. (74)

This scene demonstrates the major difference between mother and daughter; Miranda eventually picks up the phone, but it needs a stubborn Flannery for her to do so. Due to the next to nothing financial income, the whole family is located rather at the margin, the ex-centric, of St. John's society. Miranda, however, does not see the consequences of her flamboyant lifestyle for her daughter. Flannery seriously struggles with not having the money to purchase the biology book for school:

It's the third week of school and we still haven't been able to buy my biology book, which everybody else has already purchased and which, by the way, is a *required* textbook – if not exactly a potboiler, despite the acclaimed and no doubt compelling chapter on Bunsen-burner safety which I haven't had the pleasure of reading yet. (55)

The biology book becomes a symbol for the family's troublesome financial situation. Amber, on the other hand, stems from a rather wealthy middle-class family. With the start of Amber's and Gary's relationship, Flannery becomes secondary to her friend. Hence, Flannery's marginal position is further stressed. Throughout the narrative, she repeatedly tries to get into contact with Amber and sends her numerous text messages. She knows that "the only time Amber doesn't text back, [is] when she's swimming" (48). Flannery gets disillusioned, however, when she realizes that Amber was "just ignoring" her (66).

The further the story develops, the more Flannery becomes marginalized in school. She is not a complete outsider – for instance, the quirky and handsome Kyle Keating shows an honest interest in her – but she is also not invited some of the parties.

Flannery is distinctively conscious of her family's financials. Yet, the girls she describes as Welfare are vastly different from her: "These new ones are girls from the east end (...). They have greasy hair and too much blue eyeshadow and clothes from Pipers and everybody says they're skanks and skeets and Welfare. Just like I'm Welfare" (150). Flannery is aware that something is amiss. This is best expressed about two thirds into the novel when Amber and Flannery talk about their friendship and when, ultimately, it breaks. In an explosive outburst, Amber cries out:

I am sick to death of you, Flannery, she says. I'm sick of you trying to make me feel guilty all the time. Looking at me with those big stupid puppy-dog eyes. I'm busy, okay? Do you get that? I have a life. I have a boyfriend. It's not my fault nobody's in love with you.

And stop salivating over my biology book. I'm sick of that too. It's not my fault your mother doesn't have any money and my parents do. You can just stop rubbing that in my face. My parents work. That's why they have money. Why doesn't Miranda get a job like everybody else? You're not my problem, Flannery.

Trying to pretend there's something superior and *chic* about vintage clothes from the Sally Ann. They aren't 'vintage'; they're just *used*. And they smell. Just leave me alone. Just stop, okay? I don't have time. You're Welfare. (197-198)

Amber makes unmistakably clear that there is a class difference between her and Flannery. Reading in between the lines, Amber seems to be unsure about her behaviour towards Flannery, and that she has been ignoring her earlier. Ultimately, Flannery moves from the once central position she inhabited in Ambers life – and vice versa – to the periphery. Flannery's financial issues therefore channel into a social marginalization.

Social marginalization has already been a topic of Moore's in *Alligator*, yet, in this instance it is voiced in a different manner. This time around it is not those who came to Newfoundland for work (the Inuit) or by chance (Valentin), or those who desperately try to make a living (Frank) who inhabit the ex-centric.. In *Flannery*, it is the main character of the book, an innocent teenager, who has to struggle with the inflexible boundaries of Canadian society.

Moore's social criticism on North American society is further expressed by the various deficient family relations throughout the text. Moore does not draw an overly romantic picture of family life, instead she puts issues such as domestic violence, drinking issues and patchwork families into the foreground. Flannery has never seen her real father. Miranda's long-term ex-boyfriend Hank, who wrapped Flannery in her Mickey Mouse blanket" (98), has found someone new. Flannery indeed has very fond memories of him: "Hank was smelling like Hank and Miranda was paying the [taxi] driver and they were tipsy and she caught up with us and leaned in for a kiss in the red taillights of the taxi and my head was squished between their chests" (98). Again though, money turns into the main issue; Flannery muses that "I had the feeling Hank had left Miranda because he couldn't bear the responsibility of me. Who wants to take somebody else's kid? Miranda had a big student loan and a degree in fine arts and not a whole lot of prospects, financially speaking" (101). Ever since Hank, Miranda had a number of different boyfriends; Miranda is still in love with Hank, who is Felix' father but who is left in the dark about his parentage (69). Despite Miranda's shortcomings at times, moments of bliss show the deep affection between her and her children. For instance, Miranda consoles Flannery in a moment of serious self-doubt: "She hugs me and it feels good" (176).

Amber's family constellation serves as a possible example for domestic issues in a middle-class household. As mentioned above, is constantly afraid that her father might leave her. She swims a lot so her father stays with the family. This is despite the fact that the family does have enough money to sustain themselves; Amber does have all the required school books and her family owns a house and Flannery used to visit often. Here, Moore hints at the fact that financial independence and affluence does not necessarily come with affectionate family life.

Additionally, Tyrone's family is also in a dire state. From the very beginning, he is sketched as a queer character who seem to not quite fit with society. Tyrone "made a Tyrannosaurus rex out of Play-Doh in kindergarten when we were supposed to be making farm animals" (13). In this scene the teacher did not show any understanding for Tyrone's artistic talents. Instead, she "squished it, telling him to start again. A dinosaur is not a farm animal, she said" (14). Miranda has an insight into Tyrone's family, since she is good friends with his mother. As shown by the waterskiing scene earlier, Marty is a troublesome character and no good company.

Physically abusive, Flannery. He's hit Tyrone's mom. He's blackened her eyes. Once he broke one of her ribs. Marty is a terrible drunk. I'm trying to talk to her, get her out of there. But it's not easy. There are shelters, but she's not ready to leave yet. She's afraid he'll come after them. (175)

Tyrone tries to escape Marty's violence by roaming the streets of St. John's on his motorcycle and loitering at the mall. Channeling his creative energies, he becomes the infamous "SprayPig" (15) who sprays highly sophisticated graffiti all over the city. Ultimately, he wants his mother to be strong, "like a superhero" (211). For Tyrone, his home has become a contested, even dangerous, place. Ultimately, Tyrone's, Amber's and Flannery's family constellations reveal a great deal of domestic issues which are a part of contemporary St. John's and Canadian society. In the end, however, Flannery's family is the one which lasts due to an unconditional love between her, Miranda and Felix.

In an interview, Glenn Deir points towards the importance that adversity (50:00-53:00) plays in literature. Without obstacles, there can be no achievement. Throughout the novel, Flannery encounters "stoppages" (12) in various places. Moore introduces the stoppage as something which has to be loosened, or plugged at the beginning of the narrative when Flannery thinks about what she could invent for her entrepreneurship class: "Maybe there's room for a plunger with pizzazz. After all, the humble plunger has a noble function; it removes stoppages. That's what they're called: stoppages. Things that get in the way of the natural flow. Why not celebrate that simple service with a few polka dots?" (12). Instantly after this thought, Flannery experiences her first stoppage: "I see Tyrone O'Rourke flying through a red light on his motorcycle. He takes the corner and a huge splash flies up and he's gone. I feel the stoppage under my ribs (...). This is how Tyrone makes me feel: *boom, boom, boom.*" (12) In Moore's narrative, those stoppages stand for obstacles which have to be overcome in one way or another. They signify moments when the world holds still because of a major moment for Flannery. For instance, she is madly in love with Tyrone, and she experiences another stoppage when he asks her to meet for discussing their proposal for the entrepreneurship class (51). In this instance, the stoppage represents Flannery's insecurity in how to handle the situation of Tyrone asking her to spend time together.

Another stoppage occurs when Flannery enters the school's cafeteria and sees Amber and Gary sitting side by side having lunch; although Flannery has "eaten lunch

with Amber every day since – what, kindergarten? – it’s as though they have an invisible force field around them” (52-53). At this point, Flannery is still wondering why Amber is not replying to her text messages: “I stand there with my tray. Another stoppage” (53). Flannery is not quite sure how to act in this situation, and the force field surrounding the young couple is something she instinctively recognizes and avoids. This episode can be seen as a foreshadowing moment of Flannery’s upcoming marginalization from Amber especially. It is Flannery’s ultimate goal to resolve all the stoppages she encounters through the narrative. She has to take over a number of responsibilities which the other girls in the novel, for instance Amber, do not. Flannery therefore grows up becoming a responsible person, and she is somewhat concerned of being boring. In the story, she tries to juggle a number of important elements in life – family, school, love, friendship – all at the same time and succeeds in the end.

Ultimately, *Flannery* offers multiple insights into the world of a teenager in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although there are some regional references in the text, the issues discussed are recognizably universal throughout Western society. Global elements are mostly reflected in how Flannery’s generation deals with electronics, and how it depends on them on a daily basis. The intimate first person narration offers a coherent, intimate reading experience which stands in stark contrast to *Alligator*. In conclusion, *Flannery* adds a new dimension to Newfoundland literature via its critique of domestic issues which are simultaneously informed by local as well as global factors.

## SETTING SAIL – CONCLUSION

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*“My experience growing up in Newfoundland has been a driving force in my work. I choose to live here because the landscape makes me feel more alive. It brings me closer to my humanity, because living here one is very much on the edge. That feeling never leaves you. There is no hiding in this spare landscape. We all stand out. The geography forces us out and exposes us.”*

– Sheilagh O’Leary, *Human Natured: Newfoundland Nudes* (ii)

This quote by Sheilagh O’Leary almost says everything one can say about Newfoundland. According to history, living on the Rock never has been an easy, overly comfortable experience. It is a place full of roughness, struggle and – to use Glenn Deir’s words – adversity. It might very well be that it is this overcoming of obstacles which nurtured the emergence of a great number of skilled and successful writers and artists in general.

Newfoundland and its capital, St. John’s, are borderland places which mostly function on the periphery: geographically, socially, as well as politically. A notable exception is the sphere of literature; since the emergence of the Burning Rock Collective, Newfoundland writing has become recognized throughout Canada for its fresh and new voices.

One of these voices, a particularly distinguished one, is that of Lisa Moore. Her first novel *Alligator* stands as one of the prime examples for Newfoundland postmodern literature. Its fragmented narrative, full of perspective shifts, displays a Western society which has lost its orientation. The represented postmodern region is a marginal place in between, defined by global and local forces alike. The society in *Alligator* resembles a mosaic, and just as Madeleine’s Christmas tree, it has to be assembled manually.

While *Alligator* is a somewhat darker treatment of contemporary Western society, *Flannery* offers glimpses at a world that seems complicated and full of wonder at the same time. Flannery’s flashbacks offers the young adult an introduction into the convoluted postmodern world, the sphere of what Linda Hutcheon terms the ex-

centric. The novel offers a world that is simultaneously modern and global, as well as rooted in the neighbourhoods of St. John's. Newfoundland becomes a resemblance of a global society, while still retaining some of its own culture and defining qualities. Both novels serve as an excellent example of Lisa Moore's versatility as an author who does not shy away from walking new ground and pushing her personal aesthetics to the next level.

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## APPENDIX: INTERVIEW NOTES

### **Interview Notes 1: A Conversation with Lisa Moore**

This interview has been conducted at Lisa Moore's office at the Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) on 27 March 2017.

<i>Time Stamp</i>	<i>Content</i>
00:00	New short stories in 2018; magic realism; political criticism (Trump, loss of truth etc.)
01:30	'The old hag'; floaters; details on a new story based on Caribbean and Newfoundland folklore; an old woman (succubi) sucks the breath out her victims
04:20	Newfoundland's economic precarious situation
04:58	Moore's "But Lovers with the Intensity I'm Talking About"; short story
05:20	Moore's journeys to India, Central America, Tasmania, Australia, Morocco, Germany, France, Iceland, Greenland and the Yukon; Newfoundland's travel culture
06:00	Newfoundland's broken economy
07:11-07:16	"Michael Crummey, he says that my work is always about money." ( <i>Alligator</i> )
07:27	wealth inequality; influence from art school (Philip Glass)
08:35	Place now more important in her work than in earlier books; search for identity; cannot defined entirely
09:30	Short stories; strongly concerned with emotions (love, etc.)

09:45	Place becomes more important in her work; postcolonialism
11:00	Ocean Ranger tragedy; <i>February</i> ; <i>Caught</i> ; both books based on real events
11:30	Where is Newfoundland literature heading?
12:03 – 12:10	“The interest of the publishing world is like a roving spotlight that goes over.”
14:50	Emerging Newfoundland writers; 1980s publishing boom
16:25	Influence of Thomas Hardy; <i>Tess of the d’Urbervilles</i> , <i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i>
17:30	Moore is interested in how Hardy employs point of view; her next novel might be based on <i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> ; concentric circles
18:02	<i>Tess of the d’Urbervilles</i>
20:55	<i>Alligator</i> : point of view approach; deals with Newfoundland neighbourhoods; considers to write a novel about the same neighbourhood now, 12 years later
22:18	Short story: “Melody”
23:16	Every book a stylistic challenge; she tries to push the form; “Melody”
23:34	Time in literature; collapsing time; moments
25:20	Abortion; pregnancy
26:46	Maternity; <i>Great Expectations: Twenty-Four True Stories about Childbirth</i>
27:40	Sexuality in fiction
28:10	Sex = physical manifestation of emotion; spiritual nakedness; physical nakedness
28:59-29:05	“Fiction has to be dramatic. There has to be action, there has to be movement, there has to be gesture”; intensity, emotion
30:53	She enjoys when the reader is aware and in control of the story; story changes with every reading; leaving open spaces

31:28	The power of reading; giving up power of control; active reader
33:00	There is also a risk in giving the reader power; trust is required, giving over, submitting to the story
34:04	Style: no quotation marks

## Interview Notes 2: A Conversation with Glenn Deir

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The interview with Glenn Deir, vice president of the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador, took place at Fixed Coffee & Baking, St. John's, on 29 March 2017.

<i>Time Stamp</i>	<i>Content</i>
00:00	Introduction: Glenn Deir, vice president of the Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador; chair of a literary awards committee
01:00	Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador (funding etc.)
03:40	Membership programme of the association
04:30	<i>The Money Shot</i> , by Glenn Deir
05:20	Literary journals in Newfoundland; e.g. <i>Paragon</i> , <i>Riddle Fence</i> as outlets for emerging writers
06:40	Lisa Moore's <i>Alligator</i> and <i>February</i>
07:05	<i>Alligator</i> ; fragmented narrative
07:40	<i>February</i> ; the Ocean Ranger disaster in 1982
08:02	<i>February</i> captures the sorrow and heartache the whole province felt at that time (Glenn Deir was a working as a journalist then)
08:09-08:13	"All of our hearts were collectively breaking."

09:12	Short stories; <i>The Breakwater Book of Contemporary Newfoundland Fiction</i> (2015); Moore's "But Lovers with the Intensity I'm Talking About"
10:30	The cultural importance of <i>February</i> in Newfoundland
11:00	Glenn Deir recalls the day of the Ocean Ranger tragedy; details on the event; the day after Valentine's day; part of Newfoundland's cultural memory
14:40	Established writers from Newfoundland
15:50	The void of the current literary scene
16:30	The Fresh Fish Award (for emerging writers); winner 2015: Susie Taylor
18:10	Fresh Fish Award finalists & local writers having contracts with national publishers (Sharon Bala, Eva Crocker)
19:20	Local publishers: Breakwater, Killick Press, Boulder Press, Peddler Press, Creative, Flanker
21:00	The publishing industry in Newfoundland; the recently introduced, highly contested provincial book tax (15%)
23:45	Lots of small libraries in danger of being shut down; they have not closed yet due to the involvement of the public
24:50	Newfoundland; very high illiterate rate
25:35	Writers' Alliance of Newfoundland and Labrador; interest in recruiting and attracting younger writers
27:40	Currently ~ 350 members in the whole members
28:04	The Burning Rock Collective
29:30	Lisa Moore's introduction to <i>Racket: New Writing Made in Newfoundland</i> (2015); teaching creative writing; writing as a craft; question of talent
31:40	Rewriting; though one can also spend too much on rewriting
32:20	The Winterset Award; Michael Crummey one of this year's finalists

33:13-33:30	He paraphrases Michael Crummey: "Writing poetry comes from inspiration, writing a novel is like digging a ditch."
33:50	Question of talent; the genius
34:10	Emerging young writer: Sara Tilley, <i>Duke</i> , won the Winterset Award last in 2016; broke lots of conventions (mixing upper case & lower case, crossed out lines, fragmented writing style etc.)
36:00	Newfoundland writers often rooted in the province as a place (no nostalgia though)
38:20	<i>Alligator</i> ; unsavoury characters; Newfoundland interest place as a setting
39:00	Global dimension of Newfoundland writing
41:00	Many stories are not completely distinct to Newfoundland as a place
42:00	Exception: literature set in the outports
43:00	St. John's a remote place, still influenced by Canadian and global forces
45:25	Exception: bakeapple jam only locally available
46:00	There are many talented writers in Newfoundland, especially considering the province's small population
47:00	Newfoundland writers sell their books successfully nation-wide
50:00	Newfoundland inspires stories because of adversity
51:00	The Moose hunting anecdote
52:40	Wealth can stifle creativity at times
53:00	"Atlantic Blue"; song about the Ocean Ranger; by Ron Hynes
56:00	<i>Caught</i> ; <i>Flannery</i> , has an Irish ring to it
57:00	Good stories require struggle, conflict
57:30	Oral Culture (songs etc.) in Newfoundland; closing remarks

### Interview Notes 3: A Conversation with Matthew Howse

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The third and final interview was with Matthew Howse, trained folklorist and now owner of Broken Books, a rather new and popular bookshop in St. John's (founded in April 2014). As a local bookseller, he has an intimate knowledge of the Newfoundland writing scene. The interview took place at the store on 29 March 2017.

<i>Time Stamp</i>	<i>Content</i>
00:00	Introduction; founding of Broken Books
01:50	Fixed, the café above the bookstore, as a hip place for young artists
02:33	Young customer base mostly (university students etc.)
03:40	Lisa Moore's demographic mostly 50+
07:00	Global quality of Lisa Moore's short stories; universal human situations
09:10	Moore's work has been translated in many languages; translating Newfoundland dialect into other languages
11:20	Short stories are being picked up occasionally; <i>February</i> best selling book of Lisa's Moore's work at Broken Books; <i>Caught</i> sells the second most
12:36	<i>Caught</i> ; flashbacks take place in Newfoundland
13:00	Inspired by a real story; Newfoundland drug smugglers
15:15-15:28	"The Newfoundland literary scene now is like the Canadian literary scene in the 70s."
15:32	Canada Council of the Arts; exporting Canadian literature and culture; Michael Ondaatje, Margaret Atwood etc. products of this development
17:00	Michael Winter, Michael Crummey, Lisa Moore etc. in a similar situation on a provincial level (Cabot 500 celebration in 1977); benefited from marketing

18:10	Perhaps it will be difficult for new writers to become popular since they are missing the support of this cultural machine Moore etc. could take for granted
19:10	There are some authors also who stopped writing
19:50	The Burning Rock Collective
21:10	<i>Racket: New Writing Made in Newfoundland</i> (2015); similarly set up as work from the Burning Rock; excellent seller at Broken Books
22:00	Literature from the Burning Rock Collective reads somewhat similarly; <i>Racket</i> very diverse
23:10	The Canadian publishing industry (intersection between book industry/capitalism)
24:25	Megan Coles; <i>Eating Habits of the Chronically Lonesome</i> ; about Newfoundlander out of their element and outside of Newfoundland
26:25	Megan Coles won der Winterset Award 2014; local publishers usually used as a stepping stone to then publish the second book with a national publisher
27:22	Outport culture: rubber boots and cod fish
27:37	Place in Lisa Moore's books
28:00	Muskrat Falls; a local political issue also featured in a short story
29:20	<i>Down to the Dirt</i> by Joel Thomas Hynes; important in the context of NFLD literature, getting away from "rubber boots and cod fish"

## AFFIDAVIT

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I hereby certify that the submitted work is wholly my own work, and that all quotations and lines of reasoning from primary and secondary sources have been acknowledged. Plagiarism and other unacknowledged debts will be penalised and may lead to failure in the whole examination and degree.

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Ich erkläre hiermit, dass die von mir vorgelegte Arbeit gänzlich von mir verfasst wurde und dass alle Zitate und Argumentationslinien aus primären und sekundären Quellen als solche gekennzeichnet wurden. Plagiat oder die Verwendung von nicht ausdrücklich als solche gekennzeichneten Hilfsmitteln hat rechtliche Konsequenzen und kann dazu führen, von der Prüfung und dem Studiengang ausgeschlossen zu werden.

R. M.

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